



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

February 11, 2016

**CONTACT:**

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

[press@cityofchicago.org](mailto:press@cityofchicago.org)

**MAYOR EMANUEL OPENS WINGS METRO SHELTER AND SAFE HOUSE FOR FAMILIES  
TOUCHED BY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

*First domestic violence shelter to open in Chicago in more than a decade will increase citywide shelter space for victims of domestic violence by more than a third*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel joined WINGS CEO Rebecca Darr, Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) Commissioner Lisa Morrison Butler and members of the community today to open the WINGS Metro for families touched by domestic violence. The two-story, 18,000 square-foot building accommodates 40 beds and increases citywide capacity to serve families by 35 percent, and builds on previous initiatives by the city to expand care for families and women affected by domestic violence.

"No victim of domestic violence should ever have to suffer in silence or feel that they are alone. With the help of this new shelter, more women will have the support they need to break the cycle of domestic violence and move forward into a hopeful new chapter of their lives," said Mayor Emanuel. "I want to thank WINGS and all of the community partners who never gave up on the effort to get this new shelter open. But as we increase our support for families impacted by domestic violence citywide, we remain committed to eradicating it so that our families and our communities can thrive."

The new shelter and transitional housing has been constructed under a partnership that includes WINGS, Metropolitan Family Services, and the Greater Southwest Development Corporation. This collaboration will provide comprehensive services to domestic violence victims and their children, and is expected to serve more than 100 families in its first full year of operation.

"WINGS Metro is only possible because Mayor Emanuel, our donors and directors, and all those who worked to plan and build this beautiful place have made a safe home where families will begin to pursue a happy and healthy life," said Rebecca Darr, WINGS CEO. "We hope awareness of what WINGS Metro provides now will inspire Chicagoans to help us raise the \$3 million still needed to pay the balance of our construction loan. Thanks to the Canning and Foglia families, who each have issued a million-dollar challenge grant, we believe this goal is very achievable."

The WINGS Metro site converted a former Police District facility and a new annex building, and will effectively increase the number of beds available citywide for domestic violence victims and their families to more than 150 total. In addition to providing family suites, the new two-story, 40 bed

121 NORTH LASALLE STREET, ROOM 507, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602

WINGS Metro safe house and long-term stay apartment complex will feature retail shops to generate income to support programs for families who stay there.

“This new added transitional housing for families, coupled with on-site social services, will benefit domestic violence victims for years to come,” said Lisa Morrison Butler, DFSS Commissioner. “By increasing our capacity to provide a supportive environment for residents affected by domestic violence, we as a city will further our goal of preventing women and families from experiencing tragedy at the hands of an abusive individual.”

Mayor Emanuel recently joined the family of Brenda Sexton and WINGS Metro leadership in October to dedicate the Brenda Sexton Garden on site at the WINGS Metro Center in observation of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The garden honors the memory of Brenda Sexton, a Chicago Police Officer who served the 8<sup>th</sup> Police District, and was tragically murdered at the hands of an abusive boyfriend.

Since taking office, Mayor Emanuel has led a number of domestic violence initiatives and has convened several law enforcement agencies, local government offices, prosecutors, and community service groups to align forces to break the cycle of domestic violence. To date, thousands of police officers across the city have completed an advanced training led by a citywide domestic violence prevention task force, including the Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women’s Network, to both improve supports to victims in response to reports of domestic violence and to increase prosecution rates for these crimes.

In addition, the City has piloted an inter-agency response protocol in two police districts: the 3rd District and the 14th District. To prevent abuse, the pilot requires officers responding to domestic violence calls to complete an evidence-based risk assessment that determines further risk of domestic violence injury or murder, and to give referrals and connection with violence advocates when appropriate. This month alone, an additional 370 police officers were trained in the risk assessment protocol in anticipation of soon adding an additional district to the pilot program.

Throughout his career, Mayor Emanuel has long advocated for support of domestic violence victims and their families. Mayor Emanuel and Vice President Biden worked together to craft the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994. The landmark federal legislation developed a comprehensive approach to improve the criminal justice response to violence against women. The VAWA provides access to services victims and their families need.

The Mayor encourages every Chicagoan to play a role in actively seeking to end domestic abuse of all types across the city. To report domestic abuse, Chicagoans should call 9-1-1. For more information and support, anyone can call the domestic violence hotline at 877.863.6338.

###

**About WINGS:**

*Established in 1985, WINGS now owns and operates WINGS Metro, as well as a long-established emergency domestic violence safe house in the northwest suburbs, and 30 homes and apartments where families who have experienced domestic violence can live for as long as two years. In addition, WINGS programs and services help women and their children become emotionally and financially independent.*