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CITY OF CHICAGO LAUNCHES CASH ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

CHICAGO — The Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) today announced the official launch of the Emergency Financial Assistance (EFA) for Gender-based Violence and Human Trafficking (GBV/HT) Survivors, a new \$5M fund to provide cash assistance to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking, with an additional \$1M in funding from the 2023 budget. The program will provide one-time, \$1000 payments in support of the economic stability of survivors. The application will be open until June 30. Approved applications in this period will receive assistance in the order in which they applied, following the successful processing of the application itself.

The Emergency Financial Assistance Program is intended to reach over 5,000 survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and/or human trafficking who live in Chicago and have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of the program is to support survivors' economic stability by providing emergency financial assistance to cover expenses such as, but not limited to, childcare, transportation, medical expenses, education, or housing costs. Unrestricted funds allow survivors to spend money where they need to, as survivors know best what they need to stay safe. The program is being administered by The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence.

"We must do what we can as a city to break down barriers that prevent survivors from accessing the resources they need to personally rebuild and revive," said Mayor Brandon Johnson. "The Emergency Financial Assistance program is a vital step forward in this recovery because by supporting survivors and putting them on a better path to economic stability, we can help them heal from pain and trauma, and uplift and empower them to carry on living healthy lives."

"DFSS's Division on Gender-Based Violence leads an expanding strategy to support GBV survivors, and our experience teaches us that cash is a vital lifeline for individuals in crisis," said DFSS Commissioner Brandie Knazze. "The resources from



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this fund will provide the flexibility that survivors need to determine how to seek safety, access transportation, or obtain healthcare and housing.”

To meet eligibility requirements, an individual must be at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), for example \$74,580 per year for a family of three, as dictated by the Treasury Department. Survivors who live in or are fleeing violence from communities hard-hit by COVID-19 will be prioritized.

In its commitment to trauma-informed practices, survivors will not be asked for evidence of survivorship, but will be asked to self-attest, or instead provide a connection to an advocate or service provider.

“The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence is proud to partner with the City of Chicago to strengthen the safety net for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and/or stalking in Chicago,” said The Network’s Executive Director, Amanda Pyron. “We thank Mayor Johnson for continuing this essential program and dedicating the critical funding to ensure survivors of gender-based violence can afford safety.”

After the initial pilot phase in which over 1,000 applications were accepted, the first payments were made to 733 survivors at the beginning of May. Of the survivors who were funded in the first phase, 35% identified as Latinx/Hispanic, and 47% identified as Black/African-American. More than 42% of the survivors receiving funds were from communities identified as High Vulnerability under the Chicago COVID-19 Community Vulnerability Index. For more demographic information on the first phase applicants, visit <https://chirecoveryplan.com/programs/gender-based-violence-reduction/>.

The application will be opened in phases throughout the rest of 2023 until 5,520 survivor payments are completed.

Survivors interested in applying can visit www.the-network.org/survivor-fund/.

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