



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**CITY OF CHICAGO ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH AIRBNB TO PROVIDE
ACCOMMODATIONS TO VICTIMS FLEEING VIOLENCE**

New partnership leverages the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline to connect victims needing to flee violent situations with a place to stay through Airbnb

CHICAGO - Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today announced a new partnership with Airbnb to support residents fleeing violence during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Airbnb has worked through its hotel partners to provide a place to stay for victims needing to flee a violent situation while also connecting them to additional resources. Coordination of this program will be facilitated through the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline which is available to residents 24/7/365 at 877-863-6338 (TTY 877-863-6339) and The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence.

"We understand that the 'Stay at Home' order has the potential to exacerbate the already traumatic circumstances for Chicagoans experiencing violence at home, which is why the City of Chicago is continuing to collaborate with our partners to ensure that those who need refuge from violence have access to a safe place to stay," said Mayor Lightfoot. "This new partnership with Airbnb creates a key link for individuals fleeing violent situations by affording them immediate safe shelter and enabling them to take the next steps in their journey of recovery and growth. I want to personally thank Airbnb for stepping up during this critical time and supporting our citywide mission to aid all our residents in need of a safe shelter, regardless of age, gender or background."

Under the State-mandated 'Stay at Home' order, access to safe, reliable shelter is more critical now than ever before, to prevent victims from being forced to remain in potentially unsafe environments. Over the past several weeks, the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline has seen a substantial increase in calls since the COVID-19 crisis took hold. During the month of March alone, calls to the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline increased 6% in the Chicago area, compared to March 2019. The hotline has also received 30 additional texts for domestic violence claims in Chicago compared to March 2019, and on March 30, 2020 the hotline received 104 calls, the highest daily volume in over a year. Additionally, the Chicago Police Department has seen an increase of approximately 12% in domestic violence related calls for service from January 1 through mid-April compared to the same time period of 2019.

"There is a growing need to support victims of domestic violence as there is increased demand for shelters during the pandemic, and we are pleased to work with the City of



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Chicago and The Network to help fill this transitional housing need,” said Kelley Gossett, head of Chicago Policy for Airbnb. “By connecting The Network with accommodations, we hope to help Chicago domestic violence survivors get to a place to stay as quickly as possible.”

In an effort to address this situation, Airbnb and HotelTonight – a member of the Airbnb family – will facilitate places to stay for survivors that call the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline to flee a violent situation. The hotline will coordinate with HotelTonight and The Network to place the hotel reservation on the behalf of the caller, and The Network will cover the cost of these stays with funding from the State. This process will ensure the security and privacy of all parties.

“The Illinois Statewide Domestic Violence Hotline and The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence are grateful for the generosity and dedicated effort of Airbnb in securing hotel rooms for domestic violence victims seeking safe shelter during this crisis,” Amanda Pyron, ED of the Network. “These accommodations will ensure victims’ safety by being dispersed widely throughout the City and State and equipped with necessary supplies. These units vary in size and type to ensure our most vulnerable City residents will have access to appropriate living spaces. We appreciate Airbnb for their tireless efforts to bring this housing online in time to meet the anticipated need.”

The Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) is the lead agency for the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline and works exclusively with The Network, a local nonprofit, to ensure residents have access to domestic violence support resources 24/7/365 – especially during this unprecedented time. The Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline is available 24/7 via call or text in over 240 languages.

“With the help of Airbnb and HotelTonight ensuring access to alternate housing, more survivors will have the support they need to break the cycle of domestic violence and move forward into a more hopeful new chapter in their lives,” said DFSS Commissioner Lisa Morrison Butler. “As we increase support services for families impacted by domestic violence citywide, we remain committed to eradicating it so that our families and our communities can thrive.”

In addition to direct victim response, the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline supports a network of service providers that address counseling and legal needs for Illinois residents affected by domestic violence. The City operates shelter beds for domestic violence survivors through DFSS, which are following the guidance of the Chicago Department of Public Health to ensure the proper social distancing and sanitary measures are observed. The Department also funds approximately 30 programs that provide direct services to Chicago survivors of domestic violence.

The State of Illinois recently announced a \$1.2 million plan to increase the capacity of the current statewide network of services for domestic violence survivors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The State’s plan expands the role of the DV Helpline by creating a one-stop access



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point for shelter needs, including providing additional assistance for victims statewide that are fleeing a violent situation in order to provide them access to safe shelter.

"I am proud of the response of the IDHS network of domestic violence programs as they serve victims at this critical time, and the partnership between IDHS, the City of Chicago and The Network expands the safety net for victims of domestic violence", said Grace B. Hou, IDHS Secretary. "These additional IDHS funds will be used to build upon their efforts to provide shelter for victims statewide, and the Domestic Violence Hotline will remain diligent in its work to place victims with the IDHS shelter programs as well as place victims in hotels through Airbnb when shelter capacity has been reached."

For more information and updates about the City's response to COVID-19, text COVID19 to 78015, email coronavirus@chicago.gov or visit Chicago.gov/coronavirus.

About Airbnb

Airbnb is one of the world's largest marketplaces for unique, authentic places to stay and things to do, offering over 7 million accommodations and 50,000 handcrafted activities, offered by millions of local hosts. An economic empowerment engine, Airbnb has helped millions of hospitality entrepreneurs monetize their spaces and their passions while keeping the financial benefits of tourism in their own communities. With more than half a billion guest arrivals to date, and accessible in 62 languages across 220+ countries and regions, Airbnb promotes people-to-people connection, community and trust around the world.