



THE CITY OF CHICAGO-COOK COUNTY VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN TASK FORCE

BUILDING A UNIFIED COURT & JUSTICE SYSTEM: IMPROVING PATHWAYS FROM VICTIMIZATION TO SURVIVORHOOD.

JANUARY 1, 2026- JUNE 30, 2026
FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS: PHASE I

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All In Alliance
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was driven by our partnership with survivors and surviving family members of violence who trusted us with their stories, experiences, and most importantly, their voices. We are forever **grateful** for your bravery and will continue to advocate together for the victims who are entering the system today.

*To the surviving family members of loved ones lost to violence, **thank you** for joining this journey and for placing your trust in us. **Together, we honor their memories:***

***Jayden Perkins**, a talented dancer whose last act was saving his mother and unborn sister.*

***Maria Roque**, a dedicated mother and sister, whose fight for safety inspires this work.*

***Marcie Jonea Gerald**, a beautiful daughter and soul, whose mother inspires us all.*

The Cook County Violence Against Women Task Force (CCVAW) was initiated in the Fall of 2025 by resolutions introduced to the Chicago City Council by **Alderman Silvana Tabares (23rd Ward)** and to Cook County Board of Commissioners by **Commissioner Donna Miller (6th District)**. These measures passed unanimously by the Chicago City Council and the Cook County Board of Commissioners. **Thank you** to our Co-Chairs and to all of the legislators who supported these efforts.

We truly appreciate the talented and dedicated team of Alderpersons, Commissioners, and their staff members who led the efforts throughout this impactful collaboration:

*Commissioner Donna Miller (6th District, Cook County)
Alderman Silvana Tabares (23rd Ward, City of Chicago)
Commissioner Alma Anaya (7th District)
Commissioner Bridget Degnen (12th District)
Commissioner Bridget Gainer (10th District)
Aldерwoman Nicole Lee (11th Ward)
Alderman Samantha Nugent (39th Ward)
Aldерwoman Monique Scott (24th Ward)*

We also want to extend our **deepest gratitude** to the following:

To those on the front lines working with victims and vulnerable communities - including the first responders, court and legal advocates, and to the staff and volunteers providing critical services to victims and vulnerable communities.

To the hundreds of experts who have shared their insight and professional experiences with us over the course of the CCVAW and during the years prior, including government officials; advocates for domestic violence, sexual assault, mental health, gun violence & housing; healthcare and mental health practitioners; researchers; and community and faith-based leaders.

To the City of Chicago, Cook County, and State of Illinois leaders and agencies that participated in the CCVAW, including the following: Office of the Governor, Illinois State Legislature, Secretary of State's Office, Illinois State Police, Illinois Attorney General's Office, Office of the President, Office of

the Chief Judge of Cook County, State's Attorney's Office, Sheriff's Office, Public Defender, Public Guardian, Cook County Health, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Cook County Clerk, Justice Advisory Council, Cook County Department of Public Health, City Clerk's Office, Office of Emergency Management, Chicago Police Department, Chicago Fire Department, Department of Family Support Services, Chicago Department of Public Health, Department of Human Resources, Civilian Office of Police Accountability, Department of Buildings, Department of Housing, Law Department, Office of the Inspector General, Chicago Park District, Department of Finance, and more...

To our partners for their contributions to these efforts and the experts who shared presentations, research, and expertise during the CCVAW, including the following:

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To the journalists who work diligently against so many bureaucratic barriers to tell the stories of survivors and residents impacted by violence.

In loving memory of... Mary Lynn Kaplan, a beloved advocate and practitioner at the Cook County Jail, who spent her career dedicated to helping others in their most vulnerable moments.

And finally, to the extraordinary survivor and advocate, **Sarah Brown**, whose bravery and dedication to fixing the system for the next victim has motivated every step of these efforts. Together, along with **Carmen Navarro Gercone**, the most passionate advocate for victims and first responders, we present this report.

**** This report was independently created by Chicago77 Charities with findings from discussions, research, and the data shared. It does not express the opinions or direct input of any elected officials, the supporting organizations, nor members of the task force. ****

OUR APPROACH



Chicago77 Charities believes that public policy should be created by the public.

This report was produced in honor of the members of our communities that have been impacted by violence - and for the residents of the City of Chicago and Cook County.

This serves is a living document that designs the reforms needed for a unified governmental response to addressing and preventing victimization. Due to the lack of pertinent data available from the Cook County Court System at the time of the issuance of this report, and the introduction of new government leaders and partners for the next phase of the CCVAW Task Force, these recommendations may be amended by the Executive Committee.

All Executive Meetings and working group sessions were subject to the Illinois Open Meetings Act and are available on the Cook County Board of Commissioner's website.

Quarterly reports will provide updates on the progress made implementing the recommendations, and will be shared with the respective legislative committees sponsoring the these efforts.

TERMINOLOGY

ABUSER: PERSON CHOOSING TO CAUSE HARM TO VICTIM.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: RELATIONSHIP THAT INCLUDES FORMS OF ABUSE INCLUDING PHYSICAL, SEXUAL, EMOTIONAL, FINANCIAL OR THREATS OF ACTIONS.

RESPONDENT: LEGAL TERM FOR ALLEGED ABUSER NAMED IN PROTECTIVE ORDERS

VICTIM: COMMON LEGAL TERM FOR PERSON EXPERIENCING ABUSE.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: ENCOMPASSES GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, AND VICTIMIZATIONS.

SURVIVORHOOD: JOURNEY FROM VICTIMIZATION TO BECOMING A SURVIVOR

“

***How can I be a survivor when I am still
a victim of the system?***

”

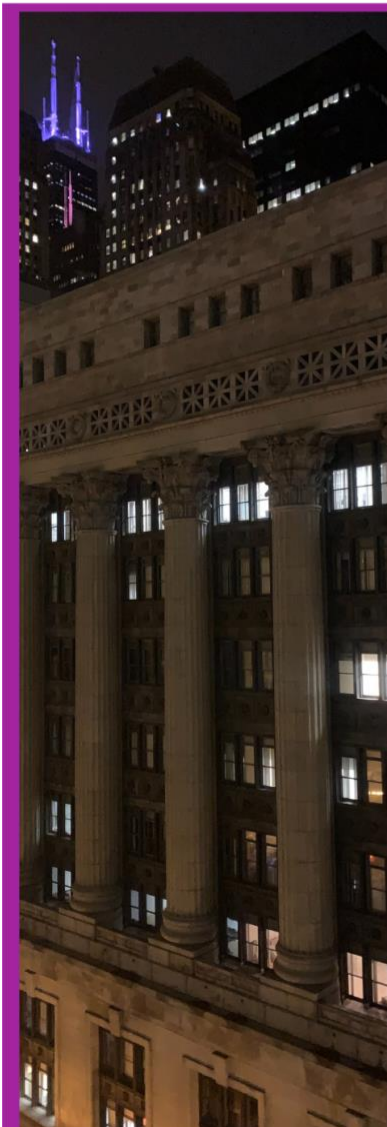
For this report, we will use “victim” when a person has an open case and “domestic violence” to describe intimate partner and family violence. This is due to direct feedback by victims and survivors.

Terminology from the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I) THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	8
II) INTRODUCTION TO THE “SYSTEM”	10
A. OVERVIEW OF THE JUSTICE AND COURT SYSTEMS OF COOK COUNTY.....	10
B. AGENCIES WITH LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES.....	11
C. LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT: OVERVIEW.....	12
III) EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS	15
A. TRANSPARENCY AND INTERAGENCY DATA-SHARING.....	15
Executive Recommendation #1: Transparency in Court Records.....	15
Executive Recommendation #2: Interagency Data Center	16
B. OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY	19
Executive Recommendation #3: Public Victimization Dashboard	19
Executive Recommendation #4: City-Cook Charter for Oversight	20
C. SURVIVORHOOD: CREATING A VICTIM-CENTERED “SYSTEM”	22
EXECUTIVE RECOMMENDATION #5: DOMESTIC RELATIONS COURT	22
Executive Recommendation #6: Creating a Victim-Centered System”	26
IV.) THE WORKING GROUPS	28
V.) NEXT STEPS	29

THE CITY OF CHICAGO-COOK COUNTY VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN TASK FORCE (CCVAW TASK FORCE)



THE RESULTS:

After years of the domestic murder rate increasing - including a staggering **increase of murders by 140% from 2022-2024** in Illinois - in just six months since the initiation of the CCVAW Task Force, domestic-related murders has ***decreased by 53% in the City of Chicago.****

City of Chicago: Violence Reduction Dashboard

¹ City of Chicago: Violence Reduction Dashboard. July 5, 2026.

CITY OF CHICAGO – COOK COUNTY VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN TASK FORCE *FINAL REPORT – PHASE I*

I) The Executive Summary

In November of 2025, *City of Chicago Alderman Silvana Tabares (23rd Ward)* and *Cook County Commissioner Donna Miller (6th District)* sponsored the joint resolution establishing the *City of Chicago-Cook County Violence Against Women Task Force (“CCVAW Task Force”)*, a survivor-led initiative to initiate an intergovernmental response to the alarming upsurge in the rate of murders and victimizations of women, children, and members of vulnerable communities.³⁴⁵

In 2025, in the City of Chicago, murders increased by 27% and fatal shootings by 56% in domestic-related cases. The CCVAW Task Force initiated an unprecedented collaborative effort that brought leaders from all levels of government together - to identify the systemic reforms needed to protect residents and remove the barriers impacting victims’ ability to become survivors.⁶

After the measure was passed unanimously by the members of the Chicago City Council and the Cook County Board of Commissioners, the first phase of the CCVAW Task Force commenced in January of 2026 and concluded in June of 2026.

Led by Alderman Silvana Tabares and Commissioner Donna Miller, a team of City of Chicago Alderpersons and Cook County Commissioners joined the efforts. Leaders included the following: *Commissioner Alma Anaya (7th District)*, *Commissioner Bridget Degnen (12th District)*, *Commissioner Bridget Gainer (10th District)*, *Alderswoman Nicole Lee (11th Ward)*, *Alderman Samantha Nugent (39th Ward)*, and *Alderswoman Monique Scott (24th Ward)*.

In addition to the respective City of Chicago and Cook County Governments, representatives from the Illinois Governor’s Office, the Secretary of State’s Office, the Attorney General’s Office, the Attorney General’s Office, the Illinois General Assembly, and suburban municipalities in Cook County also joined the CCVAW Task Force.

² ICADV Homicide Report. Illinois Coalitions Against Domestic Violence. 2025.

³ Cook County Board of Commissioners: Resolution for proposed Chicago-Cook Violence Against Women Task Force. Cook. October 23, 2025. [Resolution](#).

⁴ Office of the Chicago City Clerk. Resolution call for creation of the Chicago-Cook Task Force. September 25, 2025. [Resolution](#).

⁵ Chicago Sun Times: “Council members share family stories of domestic violence amid push for new help for victims.” November 10, 2025. [Article](#).

⁶ Chicago Tribune: “Chicago has a domestic violence crisis hiding in plain sight.” Editorial Board, Chicago Tribune. April 2, 2025. [Article](#).

The CCVAW Task Force was designed and facilitated by *Chicago77 Charities* - with assistance from the *University of Chicago Crime Lab*, *Northwestern University*, the *Public Policy Lab*, *Impact Partners*, and the *All In Alliance*. *All consultation for the task force was provided pro bono by the partners.*

The principal goals of these efforts were to reduce violent crime victimizations, improve first responder safety and wellness, and to create a unified system that protects victims, their children, and all vulnerable communities.

The CCVAW Task Force was governed by the Executive Committee, whose members include appointed and elected officials, department leaders, and their representatives. This committee gathered monthly for public meetings, which included a panel discussions and presentations from advocates, service providers, researchers, and experts from across the country.

The Executive Committee focused on identifying recommendations and developing a legislative agenda for three primary focus areas: 1) Transparency and Data-Sharing, 2) Accountability and Oversight, and the 3) Creating Pathways to *Survivorhood*.

In addition, the CCVAW formulated six (6) working groups to enhance the Executive Committee's efforts. Working groups focused on the following focus areas and points of contact with victims: 1) High Priority Court Orders; 2) Data & Research; 3) Court Systems & Programming; 4) First Responders' Safety and Health; 5) Training & Policy Development; and 6) Survivorhood.

The proposed recommendations incorporate the work of the Executive Committee, the six (6) working groups, the findings from three (3) special hearings with the City Council and the Board of Commissioners, as well as confidential discussions with hundreds of government officials, executive staff members, judges, advocates, clerks, first responders, and most importantly, survivors and surviving family members of violence.

Although the primary focus of the first phase of the CCVAW Task Force was to address the escalating violence against women, their children, and vulnerable communities, many of the recommendations presented in this report describe systemic reforms. Meaning, the recommendations and the proposed legislative agenda would advance efforts to build a trustworthy court and justice system and may improve public safety for all residents of the City of Chicago and Cook County.

II) Introduction to the “System”

A. Overview of the Justice and Court Systems of Cook County

The experiences of victims entering the Cook County Court & Justice System involve layers of bureaucracy and many points of contact with the system’s partners. The pathways from *victimization to survivorhood* might initiate with a 911 call to local law enforcement, span across the civil and criminal court systems, include multiple cases in several courthouses, involve a multitude of judges and lawyers, and the requirement to pay excessive costs and fees.

Victims across the court systems have reported experiencing systemic barriers that impede their attempts to safeguard themselves and their children.

Many criminal justice system models utilize research-designed mapping that identifies the systemic points and the best practices to implement reforms. Disparate to criminal courts, there is limited empirical evidence or research available regarding the unique journey that victims experience seeking safety and justice in a case that spans across the civil court and criminal court systems. For this report, we created a system map with six (6) main points with victims and the government agencies, from *victimization to survivorhood*.

Addressing violence against women and vulnerable communities requires multiple agencies across three levels of government - *each with distinct statutory obligations* - to operate efficiently without independent oversight. These agencies and their policies, programming, and operations have a direct impact on the safety of victims of violence, first responders, and members of our communities.

For example, filing a protective order requires actions of personnel from the Cook County Court System, the Cook County Sheriff, the Circuit Court Clerk, and the Illinois State Police – *including the entry of the information into three separate data systems* – just for the order to be ready for service to the respondent. This antiquated process has also historically operated without publicly available data.

Although official data from court records is not yet publicly available, we know that not every victim will file a petition for a protective order or be involved with a domestic-related criminal case. A victim experiencing violence may enter a court system to file for child support or may be facing an eviction due to leaving their abuser. Meaning, we will never have the ability to provide exact data regarding the sheer number of victims that interact with law enforcement or the court system on a daily basis.

In conclusion, the planning for a court and justice system that is victim-centered and trauma-informed at every point of contact with the public should remain the primary goal of all future efforts.

B. Agencies with Legislative Responsibilities

The ***Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (AOIC)*** is the administrative arm of the Illinois Supreme Court. The office administers statewide data, maintains case management platforms, and issue policies regarding circuit courts in Illinois.⁷

The ***Office of the Chief Judge (OCJ)*** is responsible for 400 judges and the court system's ten divisions, including the domestic violence, domestic relations, and the criminal division. The office has 2,600 non-judicial employees and manages tens of thousands of juvenile and adult defendants per year ordered to pretrial release programs, multiple GPS programs, and probation.⁸

The Chicago First Responder Agencies, the ***Chicago Police Department (CPD)***, the ***Office of Emergency Management (OEMC)***, and the ***Chicago Fire Department (CFD)*** provide policing, fire response, 911 operations, and emergency services to the citizens of the City of Chicago.

The ***Office of the Cook County State's Attorney*** handles criminal cases in the Cook County Court System. The office includes specialized bureaus for victims and the ***Victim Witness Unit*** that provides legal assistance, financial guidance and safety planning at fifteen (15) courthouse locations.⁹

The ***Office of the Sheriff of Cook County*** is responsible for administering the Cook County Jail, providing policing services to Cook County residents, securing the county and court facilities, and is the primary law enforcement agency of the Cook County court system. The office is responsible for serving and enforcing court orders issued by the Cook County Judiciary - including arrest warrants and protective orders - as well as entering and updating most orders into the Law Enforcement Agency Data System (LEADS).¹⁰¹¹

The ***Illinois State Police*** is a statewide law enforcement agency that is also responsible for maintaining the LEADS, the Firearm Owner's Identification (FOID) and Conceal Carry License (CCL) approvals and revocations, and Clear and Present Danger Act enforcement.¹² The enforcement of all of these laws directly impacts victims of crime.

The ***Illinois Attorney General*** manages the program for the Illinois Crime Victims Compensation Act, granting financial assistance to residents impacted by violent crimes. The office also administers the Illinois VINE program that alerts victims

⁷ Illinois Courts. Official website. 2026

⁸ Circuit Court of Cook County, Office of the Chief Judge. 2026

⁹ Cook County State's Attorney's Office. Official website. 2026

¹⁰ Cook County Government. Office of the Sheriff.

¹¹ Illinois General Assembly: 55 ILCS 5/3-6019

¹² Office of the Governor: Illinois State Police.

when custody statuses change for their abuser or if there are updates to the abuser's criminal case.

C. Levels of Government: Overview

1. The City of Chicago

Data Snapshot

In 2025, the City of Chicago experienced a decline in overall violent crimes, yet domestic-related victimizations continued to rise. The City of Chicago's Violence Reduction Dashboard reported the following for *domestic-related cases*:

- Fatal shootings increased 56%.
- 75% of the victims were black and 17% were Latino/Hispanic.
- There were 57 domestic- related murders.
- There were 5,994 violent crime victimizations in domestic cases.
- All 50 wards had experienced domestic-related violent crimes, but fatal and non-fatal shootings disproportionately impacted the communities of the west and south sides.

The City of Chicago's Inspector General's Office reports that the Chicago Police Department responded to an average of 336 Priority Level 1 calls per day coded for domestic-related criteria. Additional reports of calls for violent crimes equate to more than 550 calls per day.¹³

Budgetary Overview

In 2025, the City of Chicago's budget appropriations totaled 17.3 billion dollars, over 4 billion dollars of which was budgeted for public safety and for family and support services. The total annual budget includes 36,062 full-time employees.¹⁴

As shared in a recent public hearing initiated by Alderman Tabares with county and city leaders, the financial cost to the Chicago Police Department to enforce court-issued arrest warrants, serve protective orders, and respond to calls regarding GPS participants who violate domestic violence exclusion zones, may require a cost and impact analysis to be conducted for budgetary considerations by the Chicago City Council.¹⁵

¹³ City of Chicago. Office of the Inspector General.

¹⁴ City of Chicago. Budget Overview. 2025

¹⁵ CBS Chicago: Chicago Alder wants to dig into how the county enforces arrest warrants after officer's shooting death. May 5, 2026.

2. Cook County Government

Data Snapshot

Data limitations regarding the Cook County Court System persisted throughout CCVAW Task Force. The official court records have recently been digitized via the records management system of the Clerk of the Circuit Court. Pertinent court data regarding county-wide victimization rates - *including rates for suburban Cook County* - are not yet available.

According to the “Pretrial Fairness Act’s Weekly Dashboard,” shared by the Office of the Chief Judge of Cook County, from September 18, 2023 - June 27, 2026, in all criminal cases in Cook County, 58% of all “persons” charges and 28% of all violent charges were domestic violence cases. The Cook County State’s Attorney filed petitions to detain in 26% of domestic violence cases, with 52% granted by the Judiciary.¹⁶ Meaning, the vast majority of defendants in domestic violence cases were released pretrial.

As of June 27, 2026, there were 824 defendants ordered to the Office of the Chief Judge’s Domestic Violence Exclusion Zone Program, the GPS program. The data for defendants charged with domestic-related cases on the other GPS programs were not available.

The data dashboard and reports available are issued from many of the agencies using internal data systems. The need for a comprehensive plan utilizing the official court record data is evident, and this report proposes to improve data-sharing and transparency to the residents and stakeholders of Cook County.

Budgetary Overview

Cook County is budgeted to spend 5.24 billion dollars on public health and 1.82 billion dollars on public safety in 2026, with over 23,829 full time employees.¹⁷ The Public Guardian’s Office has estimated \$2.4 million in revenue fees from their services provided to Cook County residents. In 2026, Cook County allocated a reported 4.5 million dollars for service delivery associated with domestic violence.¹⁸

¹⁶ “Pretrial Fairness Act Weekly Dashboard,” Office of the Chief Judge.

¹⁷ Cook County Government. Annual Appropriations Bill. Volume 1 – [Executive Summary](#).

¹⁸ Domestic Violence Intervention & Support Services, Office of the Justice Advisory Council. April, 2026.

3. The State of Illinois

Data Snapshot

As reported by the Chicago Tribune, the National Violent Death Reporting System of the Center for Disease Control last reported that death by a spouse of an intimate partner in Illinois was more per capita than the states of California and New York combined in 2022.¹⁹ This trend continued in 2023, which is the latest data available.

Budgetary Overview

The State of Illinois has appropriated 55.9 billion dollars for 2027. State agencies also act as grant makers for federal funding and state funds for a host of victims' services.

4. The United States of America

Data Snapshot

Almost 1 in two women (47.3% or 59 million) and more than four in 10 men (44.2%) in the United States reported sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime.²⁰ An average of 24 people per minute are victims of rape, physical violence or stalking.²¹ Nearly six (6) million women reported having a gun used on them by an intimate partner, and nearly half of the mass shootings between 2015- 2022 were due to domestic-related violence.²²

Budgetary Overview

Federal funding for violence against women is distributed by the Department of Justice, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development and Homeland Security. Funding cuts and delays in distributions have impacted providers across the nation. Food assistance, healthcare, and childcare programming have also been diminished or eliminated entirely, negatively impacting access to vital resources for victims.²³

¹⁹ "Proposed task force will have an urgent charge - confronting the scourge of domestic violence in Chicago." Editorial Board, Chicago Tribune. October 15, 2025. [Article](#).

²⁰ Leemis R.W., Friar N., Khatiwada S., Chen M.S., Kresnow M., Smith S.G., Caslin, S., & Basile, K.C. (2022). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 Report on Intimate Partner Violence. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/nisvs/documentation/NISVSReportonIPV_2022.pdf

²¹ Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R. (2011). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

²² America's Uniquely Lethal Intimate Partner Violence. Everytown Research & Policy. Updated: 3/18/2026.

²³ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. 2025" Proposal would Harm Women. 2025.

III) Executive Committee Recommendations

A. Transparency and Interagency Data-Sharing

Executive Recommendation #1: Transparency in Court Records

Pursue legislative action to incorporate the Cook County Court System and its programs into compliance with the FOIA.

Throughout the CCVAW Task Force, we have confidently concluded that the lack of transparency and access to court records in the Cook County Court System has resulted in an inherent lack of trust from victims and survivors. Transparency is considered the sincerest reform measure in public policy, and a key deliverable for governmental systems to be accountable to its taxpayers.

The City of Chicago operates the *Violence Reduction Dashboard*, which is updated daily with crime statistics from the UChicago Crime Lab. The Office of the Inspector General has a separate dashboard for 911 call data, and the Chicago Police Department issues detailed data reports. The City of Chicago's government is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and per the current consent decree mandating reforms with the Chicago Police Department, enhanced efforts to provide additional information to the public are progressing.

However, there are data gaps that impede the ability to truly understand the scope of victimization in Chicago. For example, the Chicago Fire Department (CFD) does collect data on domestic-related calls for service to produce aggregate data. Domestic-related calls likely would be a high volume of 911 calls directed to CFD, and an additional point of contact with victims. This is an example of the need for a whole- system approach to capturing victimization data by local, City of Chicago, Cook County, and State of Illinois agencies.

"Cook County has the least transparent court system in the country. We work with 48 other states, but all researchers know to avoid Cook County – and the court systems in Illinois for that matter."
National Expert/Researcher

The lack of transparency in the Cook County Court System is a major impediment to data-driven reforms. The OCJ and the extensive programs that are administered by the office are excluded from the FOIA, which is the primary transparency law for government entities in the State of Illinois.

Meaning, the entire Cook County Court System, including its non-judicial functions, is governed by legislation and policies that impede data-sharing to partner agencies, victims, law enforcement, journalists, and to the public.

The Civic Federation found that Illinois is an outlier compared to other states in its exemption to public records laws. In 27 other states, the court systems were subject

to freedom of information laws, and out of the states that were not, 15 of those states had data obtainable through their Supreme Court rules or other statutes.²⁴

Data requests for the Cook County Court System must be approved by the Chief Judge and then produced by the Clerk of the Circuit Court. The Clerk of the Circuit Court's Record Management System, *Odyssey*, recently cost taxpayers upwards of 50 million dollars, yet access to its data remains extremely limited.²⁵

Leaders of the CCVAW Task Force and members of City Council's Public Safety Committee had previously submitted data requests regarding the court system and its programs that were approved by the Chief Judge. Those requests remain outstanding.

The creation of a comprehensive strategy to remove the legislative barriers to court transparency is imperative to future reform efforts.

Executive Recommendation #2: Interagency Data Center

Establish a City of Chicago-Cook County-State of Illinois Interagency Data Center

Collaboration and data-sharing amongst the stakeholders from the city, county, and state governments is critical to preventing the violent crimes against women and vulnerable communities. In cases involving high-priority orders, which the CCVAW Task Force defined to include protective orders, arrest warrants, and firearm retrievals, the lack of coordination amongst the government offices with statutory responsibilities has led to lethal violence against the victim and first responders.

"If I had to whittle down the changing world of domestic violence to just one idea that made all the difference, it would be communication. Across bureaucracies, certainly, but also across political ideologies and programs, people and systems, and disciplines."

Rachel Louise Snyder, author of No Visible Bruises

Protective Orders

The service rate of orders of protection to respondents (alleged abusers) – which allows the order to be enforceable by law enforcement – was reported to be as low as 25% in recent years.²⁶ Data shared by the Cook County Sheriff during the CCVAW Task Force showed improvements to a rate of 55% for service.²⁷

Per Illinois law, there are five (5) types of protective orders that offer safeguards to victims and businesses. In previous court data, there was an average of 125

²⁴ The Civic Federation. Breaking Down the Issue of Public Access to Judicial Branch Data in Illinois. 2022.

²⁵ Chicago Tribune. The \$265 million tech bill. Jackson, Quig, and Axtman. April 6, 2025

²⁶ CBS Chicago: With protective orders going unserved, domestic violence victims are left in danger. Dec. 2024. [Link](#).

²⁷ Presentation to the Cook County Board of Commissioners. Criminal Justice Committee. June 2026

protective orders filed per day in Cook County. Protective orders can be filed independently or have an accompanying case, including a criminal case or a civil domestic relations case.

The county sheriff is assigned the responsibility to serve protective orders to the respondent. Illinois law also allows local police agencies (including CPD) to serve a “short form notification,” which is an abbreviated order given to the respondent during a police encounter. Similarly to criminal arrest warrants, most protective orders are entered into LEADS by the Sheriff’s Office, which then provides local law enforcement the ability to serve the “short forms” if they encounter an individual with an unserved order during a LEADS check.

“We should not have to wait for another high-profile case showing system failure at every point. It’s time for experts to be at the table.” Law enforcement professional

However, not all types of protective orders are entered into LEADS, per Illinois statute. Compounding this issue, is when a victim’s petition is missing or has an incorrect birthdate for the respondent, then the order is not entered into LEADS. The Secretary of State offers access to its system to verify birth dates, but the internal training for county personnel to conduct these checks has not been consistent.

Victims may pay a private process server to serve their order, which is especially common in cases assigned to the domestic relations division. Private process servers do not have legal access to update LEADS upon service, so the protective order will not be enforceable to members of local police checking LEADS.

For example, if CPD responds to a 911 call from a victim reporting a violation of an order of protection and the respondent is found at the home violating the provisions of the order - the service cannot be verified as “served and enforceable” in their system for the arrest.

CPD only trains their supervisors to serve short form notifications, which limits the number of orders served by the department.

The Attorney General of Illinois does not provide CPD with short-form notification booklets, and they have struggled to print their own. The short form notification can be printed from the Attorney General’s website.²⁸ However, paper-based records are an impediment to improving government operations.

The AOIC promulgates rules regarding remote access to court records by different entities, limiting the information available. This includes restricting partners from accessing “non-public documents” in Cook County, including protective orders.

²⁸ Office of the Attorney General. Protective Orders: Short Form Notification Form.

Unserved orders will remain in LEADS if the victim pursues the continuation of the case, but once a case is dropped due to a victim not appearing in court, the protective order is removed from LEADS.

The business community is also impacted by the issues with the current system. Under the Workplace Violence Act, business owners can request orders of protections against those who may pose harm to their workplace and employees. This type of order is rarely filed. With legislative action, this order can become a useful tool for businesses to protect their staff members.

Many victims reported that they stopped coming to court after attending multiple court dates waiting for service to be rendered. Our supposition is that the lack of transparency and collaboration directly impacts victimization rates.

Warrants

The Clerk of the Circuit Court's Office shared that there were 72,000 outstanding arrest warrants for defendants in court cases in Cook County. Upwards of 20% of which were regarding cases in which domestic-related offenses was the "lead charge" of the defendant, meaning their most serious charge by classification statutes in the system. Court warrants are transferred by the Clerk of the Circuit Court's Office to the Sheriff's Office for entry into LEADS and to initiate the arrest.²⁹ Dissimilar to the statutes regarding protective orders, law enforcement personnel who encounter an individual with an active arrest warrant during a LEADS check, *must* enforce the order and process the arrest. Court-issued arrest warrants are the lead cause of arrests by the Chicago Police Department, with 7,551 reported arrests in 2024.

These encounters can be extremely dangerous for first responders, who are not aware of the active warrant when they are responding to a call for service or initiating a traffic stop. In just one year's time, the City of Chicago lost four first responders in the line of due to the actions of defendants with active warrants.³⁰

The establishment of a colocation model is recommended for personnel from multiple agencies across city, county, and state departments - with unlimited access to their respective data systems - to triage cases involving high-priority orders (protective orders, warrants, and firearm retrievals).

This model would improve the capabilities for data-sharing, training, and the potential to incorporate evidence-based assessments and programming at the points of contact with victims in the court and justice systems.

²⁹ Illinois General Assembly: 740 ILCS 5/107

³⁰ Chicago Tribune. "Ald. Silvan Tabares: City Leaders and Residents deserve transparency from the Cook County Courts." May 4, 2026.

B. Oversight and Accountability

Executive Recommendation#3: Public Victimization Dashboard

Public Victimization Dashboard with Independent Partner

There are at least four (4) separate dashboards or daily/weekly reports issued by the stakeholders of the Cook County Court System – none of which share information regarding high-priority orders (protective orders, arrest warrants, and firearm retrievals). Currently, most of the agencies and departments collect internal data that is recorded into separate, internal data systems. These processes make the data unverifiable and siloed by agency, impeding the ability to conduct an independent systemic analysis.

There are missing personal identifiers in the data collection points across the court system. These data are critical to developing public policy and future budgetary recommendations. For example, petitions for orders of protection do not collect the race or ethnicity data of the victim. The results of which may lead to a lack of cultural competency in the trainings for system partners and in the government-funded services for residents impacted by victimization. There are inactive fields in the *Odyssey* system that need to be activated, so that important data fields will be available for analysis. This includes coding for whether children are involved in cases, remedies listed in protective orders, or whether a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) is assigned to a victim with a Domestic Relations case. Addressing the inability to conduct comprehensive data analysis that captures important personal identifiers and case details is critical to utilizing a data-driven approach to reducing victimization rates in Cook County.

Regardless of the digitization of the court record management system, most data inputs are still entered manually, therefore, data accuracy is a necessary concern. Future efforts should focus on how to improve the accuracy and improve efficiencies of these data inputs.

The Illinois State Police administer LEADS, which serves as a repository for data regarding protective orders, arrest warrants, Firearm Owner's Identification (FOID), and criminal history record information (CHRI). Although this data is also protected by FOIA, aggregate reports are also not available to the public.

Meaning, the numbers of protective orders and arrest warrants being filed and enforced are not currently shared to the public by the Cook County Courts, nor by LEADS reporting.

Policies impeding data-sharing and records access from the Civil Court System with local police agencies - including CPD - limit their ability to enforce warrants and protective orders, execute a comprehensive approach to the confiscating illegal

firearms, and issue timely LEADS updates.³¹ These policies prevent first responders from providing protections to victims and their children in times of crisis. They also obstruct investigations for violent crimes and missing persons, and may negatively impact the safety of first responders.³²

The lack of public data and statistics hinders the ability of local organizations to acquire competitive grant funding, further reducing the availability of crisis services and resources for victims in Chicago and throughout Cook County.

Executive Recommendation #4: City-Cook Charter for Oversight

City-Cook CCVAW Charter: Independent Oversight Committee (IOC)

The establishment of a ***City-Cook CCVAW Charter*** will provide a transparent supervision mechanism and enhanced coordination of all independent agencies across the court and justice system. Currently, the system lacks a primary authority, or an entity “in charge.” Creating the City-Cook Charter would focus on enhancing efforts to build a victim-centered system.

The IOC would focus on developing plans for process improvement strategies, training and development, cases coordination, and improving transparency.

The charter would provide a governance structure and identify further legislative action to meet the following recommendations:

1. Composing a *Code of Ethics* for all system partners.
2. Ensure that all policies, procedures, and access to resources are systemic, and not pursuant to specific courthouse locations.
3. Mandate court recordings and free transcripts in every courtroom that hears cases involving victims and children.
4. Provide assistance at every courthouse (via government personnel and contracts with advocates) to help victims complete *all types of protective orders and Karina’s Law warrants*.
5. Cross – train staff members to help victims navigate the courthouse.
6. Provide an official information sheet for every protective order that ensures the victim was offered information on how to pursue a criminal case with the State’s Attorney’s Office, the difference between a civil order of protection and criminal charges, and how to request an arrest warrant if the order is violated.
7. Reconfigure all forms using human-centered designs and survivor input. Allow for addendums for Firearm Restraining Orders to minimize duplicative forms for victims.

³¹ Illinois Attorney General: [Short Form Notifications](#), 2025

³² Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts: [Illinois Supreme Court Remote Access Policy](#), 2022.

8. Improve coordination and communication between the court system and local police departments regarding GPS monitoring programs and geo-fencing protocols.
9. Case files should include quarterly reports on the costs assigned to litigants by the Judiciary throughout the duration of their cases.
10. Conduct a *needs and equity analysis* to identify current services available and where gaps exist, including equitable service delivery.
 - a. Recommend additional budgetary needs for advocacy and legal services. Enhance contract compliance measures with all partners.
 - b. Ensure vetting and space allocation of external providers at courthouse facilities
11. Improve access to technology and privacy for victims to complete petitions and meet with court/legal advocates.
12. Conduct court-watching exercises to examine the processes and procedures of the stakeholders.
13. Conduct “client” surveys of victims and survivors to identify concerns and the need for improvements.
14. Create a comprehensive virtual court system that is victim centered. The virtual court needs to be convenient and allow victims, law enforcement, and witnesses to attend court appearances virtually.
15. Provide support to partners who need a responsive point of contact for partnership opportunities (letters of support, data-sharing agreements), including advocates, researchers, and service providers.
16. Pursue private and government grants to enhance intragovernmental efforts and increase grantmaking to community partners in response to the *needs and equity analysis*.
17. Domestic Relations Court:
 - a. IOC would create ethical guidelines, professional standards, and a transparent selection process for all personnel involved with DRC cases. The process to file a complaint, disciplinary proceedings, and the permanent removal of external entities from involvement in Cook County DRC proceedings must be established.
 - b. Comply with the IDVA and establish a process for criminal referrals when a protective order is violated. Allow victim to decide if protective order should be reassigned to DRC case or remain under DVC.
 - c. Establish a unit under the Public Guardian’s office to provide free legal assistance and support to litigants to the in the Domestic Relations Courts. Staff the PG’s office with positions for social workers to assist with resource referrals.
 - d. End practice of assigning attorneys as GAL’s in DRC to victims. Mental health clinicians should be considered.
 - e. Expand mediation, parenting classes, and services to suburban courthouses. Establish a victim-centered mediation process

that does not force victims to be in the same place as their abuser.

- f. Provide expeditious case resolution to victims.
- g. Partner with Cook County Health to provide free mental health support and psychological testing/care when ordered by a Judge or on a voluntary basis and to provide clinicians to serve as GAL's.
- h. Abolish the threats of incarceration, loss of custody, and body attachment orders for failure to pay court costs.
- i. Child support payments must be prioritized over other outstanding fees.
- j. Expand "Safe Exchange Programs," for victims sharing custody with their abuser, supervised visitation sites, and remote court access locations utilizing government partnerships with libraries, public parks, and community partners.

C. Survivorhood: Creating a victim-centered "system"

Executive Recommendation #5: Domestic Relations Court

The ***Domestic Relations Court (DRC)*** is a division of the Civil Court System of Cook County that hears cases related to the dissolution of a marriage or civil union, legal separation, child support, allocation of parental responsibilities, child visitation, and determination of parentage cases.³³

DRC also has jurisdiction for petitions of orders of protection when the victim has a pending domestic relations matter, meaning if victims file a petition for an order of protection and may need child support or to establish a custody agreement, their case is transferred from the Domestic Violence Courts (DVC). There are a reported 44 Judges in DRC. In 2026, the Clerk of the Circuit Court's dashboard describes 17,339 cases initiated in the division, compared to 5,014 criminal cases initiated in DVC.

The Clerk of the Circuit Court shared data recently that describes 85,956 petitions filed by victims that were recorded as DRC cases from 2018-2025. This equates to an average of 10,744 per year, or 29 protective orders filed per day. DVC's criminal cases average 30 per day per the Clerk's Data Dashboard. The presumption using these data sources is that DRD has close to equal the number of cases involving victims as criminal cases for domestic violence.³⁴

Lack of Court Recordings and Transcripts

³³ Office of the Chief Judge. Domestic Relations Proceedings. 2026

³⁴ Clerk of the Circuit Court, Data Dashboard, Case Initiations. 2025.

In Domestic Relations Court, unless a litigant pays for a court reporter there will not be transcripts available of the court proceedings. This impacts the ability to prosecute when protective orders are served in open court and not properly filed in the system and then subsequently violated.

If court reporters are not available to produce transcripts in a timely fashion, then access to justice can be delayed. Court recordings would offer an unofficial transcript of the proceedings that court recorders could use to produce an official document, if necessary.

Lack of Resources

There is an extremely limited availability of external or government resources available to victims in DRC. Many of the organization cited the case processing times and the lack of government funding as impediments to providing services. The DRD has also been broadly misinterpreted due to the division commonly being referred to as “Divorce Court,” which does not adequately describe the scope of its jurisdiction, nor the direct impact the division has on safeguarding the lives of victims and their children.

Qualitative Survey of DRC plaintiffs (July of 2025)

In a survey conducted by Chicago77 Group of 72 litigants with active cases in the DRC, 90% reported recent acts of violence or threats of violence by their abuser, and 82% had sought protective orders. None of the individuals surveyed reported to have had received any assistance or referrals to resources.

“Survivors are the clients- and they may be in danger. The culture of the courthouse seems to forget that entirely.”
Survivor/Advocate

Fines, Fees, and Costs

All victims surveyed were representing themselves pro-se due to the overwhelming costs - even if they initially had a private attorney when their case was filed. Throughout the duration of case in DRC, members of the Judiciary may assign court resources and set the fees that victims (and their abusers) must pay. These professional include the following:

1. Guardian ad Litem (GAL): attorney appointed to investigate the best interest of the children and make recommendation to the court.
2. Child Representative (CR)L is an attorney that advocates for the best interest of the child. Receives the same investigation powers as a GAL.
3. Attorney for Child: Independent legal counsel for the child.

If parties cannot afford to pay for these court assignments, a Judge can appoint a representative from the Cook County Public Guardian's Office.³⁵ In a special hearing with the Cook County Board of Commissioners in June of 2026, the Public Guardian shared that their retention rate is \$1,000 and their hourly rate is \$110, which was shared to be much cheaper than other GAL's charging an average of \$300-\$400 an hour after being assigned to a case.³⁶ Their office currently does not offer a sliding scale, nor do they collect any race or ethnicity data from clients. They serve 800 children in DRC as GAL's and recently expanded to provide service for child representatives.

The victim must pay the retention rate and attorney's fees, but the attorney submits their invoices to the Judge. The GAL's caseload and hourly rate are solely reliant on the Judge's discretion, not their clients' ability to pay.

This process lacks any semblance of transparency, nor does it ostensibly adhere to 750 ILCS 5/506, which stipulates the consideration required to obtain information from other methods, including social service organization and the resources available for payment.³⁷ In addition, mental health examinations of a child can be ordered and cost upwards of \$20,000. Professionals must be selected from a pre-approved list provided by the Office of the Chief Judge.

The court proceedings of DRC -which deliberate the welfare of victims and children - are currently not being recorded similarly to DVC. Court reporters prioritize criminal cases or clients who can pay, which impacts the ability to acquire transcripts for the vast majority of victims/plaintiffs in DRC.

Victims who could not pay for these court-ordered "resources" were reportedly threatened with jail or had body attachment (civil warrants) filed against them. Two instances of reported incarceration were verified using public court records. Many of the victims were women who were on public aid yet ordered to pay an average of \$350 an hour to GAL's - even if they have fee waivers from the court, meaning they had proven that they cannot afford to pay fees.

Selection Process

All of these professionals must be approved by a selection committee composed of personnel from the Office of the Chief Judge (OCJ), but further details on how this list is composed or the qualifications required remains ambiguous. Victims report that information requested has not been shared regarding the selection process for GAL's - who will be interviewing their children and making decisions about their best interests.

³⁵ Office of the Chief Judge. Domestic Relations Division.

³⁶ Cook County Board of Commissioners. Special Hearing on Domestic Relations Court. June 10, 2026.

³⁷ Illinois General assembly: 750 ILCS 5/506.

Complaints about these professionals are not accepted by the selection committee, but rather, redirected to the Attorney Registration and Discipline Committee (ARDC) of the Supreme Court of Illinois. The ARDC is tasked with admission and discipline of Illinois attorneys. The ARDC reports that there are 85,068 registered lawyers in Illinois in active status. Out of the reported 5,586 grievances in 2025, there were 63 sanctions entered by the Illinois Court, including 11 disbarments.³⁸

Professional credentials

GAL's are lawyers - not mental health professionals - and they conduct reports that include interviewing children. Their requirements are that they must be held in good standing with the ARDC and have completed 10 hours in education.³⁹ GAL's cannot be sued, as they are covered by quasi-judicial immunity. (Slide from CLE training).⁴⁰



Complaints filed against Judges were prevalently reported by the victims surveyed – without any resolution. The Judicial Inquiry Board of the State of Illinois handles these complaints.⁴¹ An investigation by Injustice Watch shared that the Judicial Inquiry Board received hundreds of complaints each year that are dismissed before an investigation occurs.⁴²

The Impact on Victims

The lack of transparency, court reporters, and overall competency to serve victims of violence have led to a deep distrust and a culture that victims describe as traumatizing.

³⁸ ARDC of the Supreme Court of Illinois: 2025 Annual Report.

³⁹ Illinois Supreme Court, Rule 906.

⁴⁰ Source: First Judicial Circuit: *The Role of the Guardian ad Litem: What a Judge Wants*. 2024.

⁴¹ State of Illinois. Judicial Inquiry Board.

⁴² Injustice Watch.: “Bad Judgement: Data Project.”

While cases linger for years and deliver psychological and financial distress to victims, many also face the dangerous choice of returning to their abuser or becoming unhoused or financially bankrupt. Victims have also been ordered by Judges to cohabitate with their abuser, mainly so both parties could pay for their attorneys.

This practice is an obvious example of prioritizing court fees over the welfare of all involved. The victim and children are at an unnecessary risk for revictimization or experiencing further trauma. In addition to the lack of services and the absence of transparency - the lack of domestic violence competency has exacerbated the mistrust in the system.

Finally, victims reported to have been threatened by court personnel that failure to pay court-assigned lawyers would result in the loss of custody of their children to their abuser. Simply put, if GAL's are appointed to be in the best interest of the child, bankrupting or jailing the victim seems antithetical to that mission.

The Domestic Relations Division must be reformed. Creating a victim-centered court process is critical to preventing tragic outcomes and to safeguard the lives of victims and their children in Cook County. The proposed IOC could manage the implementation of the following recommendations specific to DRC (included in Recommendation #4).

Executive Recommendation #6: Creating a Victim-Centered System"

Reimagining the Court Process: Creating a Victim – Centered System

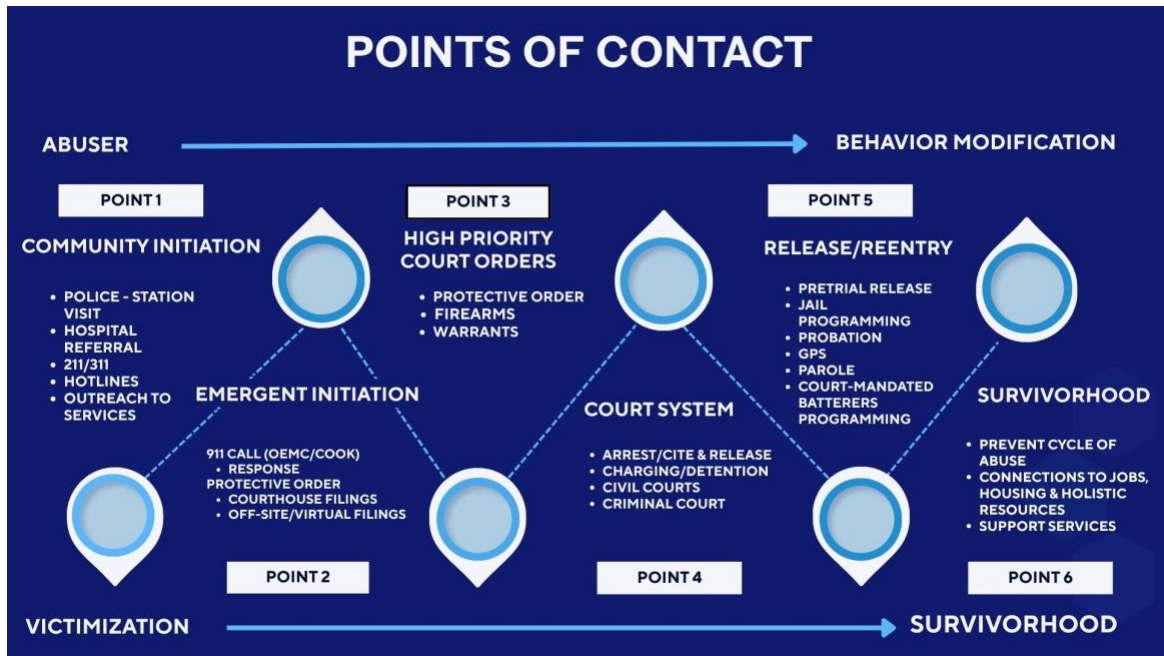
The Six Points of the "System"

In addition to the recommendations presented, there are policies and procedures that need to be automated, modernized and updated across the system.

To serve and protect victims, coordination and communication needs to be improved at every point in the system.

For example, all system partners should be involved the improvement of the service of warrants and protective orders, which are critical to improving the service and enforcement rates. Court clerks should be conducting cross-system checks before court appearances and law enforcement should be checking LEADS. The programs under the OCJ (Probation, pretrial, and GPS) should all be assisting when a protective order is filed for a participant, and data systems should be leveraged to assist victims when they need help with missing information on their petitions.

With the lack of current data available, it is hard to implement data-driven reforms and track systemic impacts, however, the need for a victim-centered system is urgently required to protect victims, their children, and vulnerable communities.



Survivor Journey Mapping and Storytelling

The Public Policy Lab and Impact Partners conducted journey mapping and a survivor-informed analysis for the CCVAW Task Force. The summary of their findings is included below. More information will be presented at the final hearings.

“Across personal interviews, local reports, and general studies - the theme of education remains consistent. Many of the barriers that were identified by survivors to better outcomes were related to their lack of understanding and support within the court-system and a lack of understanding within the system itself. Through improved focus on providing clear instruction and information to litigants, and increased education within the courts, a smoother, empathetic, and effective process can be created.”

PPL and Impact Partners

1. Provide simplified information and resources to demystify the court process and address the emotional journey.

2. Create a user-friendly and informative filing process that emphasizes both the education of rights and access to resources.
3. Implement a larger screening process that would recognize the needs of different people going through the system.
4. Conduct a design review that takes learnings and strategies from individual courthouses to develop survivor-centered tools, materials, and protocols that can be scaled across the Cook County court system.
5. Develop peer, survivor-led support initiatives to help with court system navigation.
6. Provide internal clarity about who owns protocols and ensure consistency across courthouses and the overall court system.
7. Develop a care-centered communication strategy that shapes the tone of materials, provides compassionate-communication training for court staff, and informs courthouse design recommendations to reduce the emotional labor of accessing the courts.
8. Create “what to expect” guides and examples of completed paperwork for common DV case pairings (for example, an Order of Protection paired with parentage).
9. Improve case communication so hearing dates are shared ahead of time, with the ability to alter the timing.
10. Revisit housing and other options for survivors seeking safe shelter from their abusers, particularly for the 48 hours around the serving of the EOP.
11. Develop a high school education program about healthy relationships and how to avoid the cycle of abuse.
12. Develop a cohesive, uniform, and empathetic court-side education program so that survivors are provided with fair and equitable treatment.
13. Evaluate resource gaps (official and practical) across courthouses and work with advocate providers to ensure consistent, holistic resources and services for survivors.
14. Create an opportunity for those who are self-directed during the civil court process to (re)connect with advocates and other survivor services as they exit the court system.
15. Provide more information and funding towards PAIP Programs to address the issues of recidivism and future prevention of abuse.

“Women are making the impossible choice – do I seek help? Even if they do, they feel forgotten about once their case is over.”
Mental Health Provider

IV) The Working Groups

1. **High Priority Orders: Executive Recommendations (2-4)**
2. **Research and Data Analysis: Executive Recommendations (1-6)**
3. **Court Systems and Programming: Executive Recommendations (1-6)**
4. **First Responder and Justice Partner Wellness:**

1. Legislation to allow for wellness visits without a diagnosis.
2. Budget for mental health check-ins for private providers and plan to outsource Employee Assistance Program visits when booked more than 5 days out.
3. Adherence to the concussion protocol for on-duty injuries.
4. Decentralize mental health: – Enhance outreach to roll calls, training, and embed into districts.
5. Mandatory debriefs following domestic-related murder/extreme harm cases. Notification should be made to peer support.
6. Specialize mental health curricula for patrol and detective units who may experience vicarious trauma from domestic calls.

5. Training and Policies

7. Training for law enforcement regarding the collection of evidence at domestic calls. National models include treating every call like a future homicide investigation. Evidence collected may help future criminal investigations.
8. Training for all local law enforcement to serve short form notifications, including all members of the Chicago Police Department.
9. Victims’ Economic Security Act (VESSA): All Human Resources departments should be ensuring compliance and training for employees regarding VESSA.
10. All employees of the Court and Justice System should be trained in trauma-informed practices with an emphasis on victimization.
11. Training of law enforcement and domestic relations personnel to refer children to Chicago CAC and Suburban CAC’s for a forensic interview when there are allegations of abuse, harm, or neglect and Chicago CAN Hope for domestic violence cases.

6. Pathway to Survivorhood: Executive Recommendations (1-6)

V) Next Steps

The *CCVAW Task Force* will resume in the Fall of 2026. After further deliberations and input, the members will begin initiating the recommendations and will provide quarterly updates to the respective City Council and Cook County Board of Commissioners’ Committees on their progress.

For questions or further information, please contact Katie.Dunne@Chicago77.org. Thank you.