



Cook County Funds Help Survivors of Sexual Violence

Thanks to a grant program supported by the Cook County Commissioners, residents experienced improved services and care in 2010 from area rape crisis centers.

Here's how the support helped:

Rape Victim Advocates (RVA) exceeded its service goals thanks to this funding, giving rape victims in Cook County access to services when they needed it most:

- This funding helped RVA be there to provide 24-hour crisis counseling to survivors of sexual assault **in the emergency room at Stroger Hospital and at 10 other hospitals** throughout the County. RVA also maintained their presence as the only rape crisis service in Chicago's **Austin neighborhood**.
- "In March, **I was badly beaten and sexually assaulted. RVA's advocate helped me** understand the criminal justice system, came with me to court and answered all my questions. If an advocate had not been with me, I would have just given up. **Instead, the person that did this to me was apprehended and arrested,**" Brian, sexual assault survivor and RVA client

Pillars used the funds to help women trapped in prostitution through their Post Arrest Court Diversion Program:

- **At the Maywood Courthouse**, Pillars gave women services including criminal justice advocacy, case management, resources and empowerment **so they could seek alternative sentencing options and stay out of jail.**
- The YWCA and Pillars also offer a **12-week support group for women in their system.**

The YWCA was able to keep several community centers open that had been in danger of closing:

- Survivors of sexual assault in **Chicago's Uptown, Lawndale and Logan Square neighborhoods** were able to receive counseling and advocacy services.
- County grants provided child victims of sexual assault with bus passes so their families could bring them to the **West Side's RISE Children's Center** for care. RISE was able to buy art and therapeutic supplies for the center.

"Without the Cook County funding this year, rape crisis centers would have been forced to make devastating cuts to services to victims."

-Polly Poskin, executive director, Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault



The playroom at RISE children's center.

"You have helped women in prostitution rebuild their lives and avoid time in the Cook County jail, which in turn has saved the county money. We are so appreciative for this support."

- Patty Murphy, Pillars

Mujeres Latinas en Acción used funds from the grant to offer workshops in Spanish and more effectively reach out to the Pilsen community.

- Many survivors who attended these sessions were **able to speak for the first time in a safe environment** about their experiences with rape.
- **Angelina, a survivor of sexual violence**, explained that her involvement with Mujeres helped her with post-partum depression and allowed her to have a healthier relationship with her children.
- **Anna had been assaulted by a family member**, and this prevented her from understanding that she was a victim of rape. Mujeres helped her come to terms with her power as a survivor.

Northwest Center Against Sexual Assault used the funds to reach more bilingual clients and to expand their programs to accommodate the growing bilingual community in the Northwest Chicago suburbs.

- Here are the stories of two survivors helped by county grants:
- **Jade is 8 years old and was sexually assaulted by an adult who was close to her family.** She had been so traumatized that she had regressed in behavior and had a fear of being alone in the bathroom. Through counseling she learned to communicate her feelings and thoughts openly, and she achieved a sense of security and happiness she did not have before.
- **Carmen, 14, was depressed and wore black all the time in hope that her abuser would not notice her.** Her last effort before losing hope was to work with a Northwest CASA counselor to receive therapy. Eventually, Carmen gained the courage to go to court and testify against her abuser. She said that she now feels a sense of safety, self-confidence, and hopes to continue living a normal life.



“With a growth of the Latino population, there is a need for services in Spanish. Through community outreach, we have worked to heal an under-served community with specific needs.”

-Neusa Gaytan, program director with Mujeres Latinas en Acción

“The satisfaction that comes with being a part of their long journey toward healing is unexplainable and incomparable – to know that there are people who are willing to continue supporting such work moves me beyond words.”

- Miriam L. Lopez, bilingual therapist with Northwest Center Against Sexual Assault

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