



2015 Economic Empowerment Symposium

In January, 2015, ICADV held an Economic Empowerment Symposium. The full-day Symposium, "Economic Justice for Survivors" brought together 52 advocates from across Illinois to learn new strategies and share ideas of how to assist survivors of domestic violence. Advocates from both ICADV member programs and non-member programs were in attendance.

The opening keynote of the Symposium, entitled "Economic Justice: What's the Big Deal" and was presented by Kim Pentico, Director of Economic Justice Programs for the National Network to End Domestic Violence in Washington, DC. The session gave an overview of the history of the economic justice movement and also how this work impacts survivors of domestic violence.

The day offered attendees a variety of breakout sessions to choose from. Jeremy Hayes from Housing Authority of the City of Bloomington gave an overview of public housing programs. Claudia Alcantara from Mujeres Latinas en Accion and Pedro Diaz from the Resurrection Project, both in Chicago, co-presented in a session on how to increase financial opportunities and financial capability in immigrant communities. Kim Pentico offered a second presentation in the afternoon featuring a more in depth look at credit repair. Cynthia Cor-

nelius and Beth Johnson from Cabrini Green Legal Aid presented about how to assist clients who have a criminal record and help them get a second chance.

One additional breakout session featured a train the trainer session of the Moving Ahead Through Financial Management Curriculum, a financial literacy curriculum for survivors created by the Allstate Foundation and the National Network to End Domestic Violence. The day ended with a closing keynote by Kalyn Risker, Executive Director of Sisters Acquiring Financial Education (SAFE) in Detroit, MI.

Attendees found the symposium informative and enjoyed the opportunity to learn about new topics and interact and network with other professionals in Illinois. Said one attendee, "The training overall was very helpful and provided a large amount of valuable information to further assist clients." Another said, "This training exceeded my expectations."



Above, Top to Bottom: Jeremy Hayes, Claudia Alcantara and Kelly Goodall leading breakout sessions. Left: Attendees at the Economic Empowerment Symposium

Does Your College Have the Right Accreditation?

Many survivors of domestic violence plan to continue their education as a way to gain more power and control over their own lives. Often, a degree or certification can mean higher wages, access to better employment and a more stable future. It seems that there are more colleges than ever before, with the addition of on-line education and many new for-profit schools. However, before investing both time and money into any of these programs, attendees should research the program's accreditation.

Accreditation can impact financial aid eligibility, whether or not credits can be transferred to another institution, and future employment prospects. Essentially, accreditation is an evaluation and verification by an outside, legitimate authority stating that the institution provides education that meets certain standards.

Most public and private universities have regional accreditation; this is considered the most desirable type. Some schools, especially some for-profit schools have national accreditation, which is not generally recognized by the federal government or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Federal student aid is only available to students who attend a school whose accreditation is recognized by the federal government. Most colleges will not accept transfer credits from a nationally accredited institution.

In 2012, Illinois Attorney General, Lisa Madigan, sued Westwood College for deceptive marketing to students. Their lawsuit alleged that students were convinced they could pursue a law enforcement career with the Chicago Police Department, Illinois State Police and other suburban police departments with a degree from Westwood. The college lacked regional accreditation and none of those employers recognized the degree. In addition, the coursework could not be transferred to other programs and students were left with tens of thousands of dollars worth of debt and were no closer to their planned career.

Prior to enrolling in any degree or certification program, clients should research what type of accredita-

tion the school has. Prospective students should also contact employers in their chosen career to find out what kinds of accreditation would be accepted.

The Allstate Foundation Supports Career Club

ICADV is excited announce that for the fourth year in a row, the Allstate Foundation has generously supported the Career Club through its Moving Ahead Financial Empowerment Grant Program. This annual grant program is available to State Coalitions, with the majority of funds administered to local programs as sub-grantees. ICADV was first awarded these funds in 2011 to begin Career Club. This innovative program provides employment support groups to survivors of domestic violence. Since that time, the program has expanded from three to eight sub-grantees.

Eight agencies in Illinois are hosting Career Club Support groups with this year's grant program. The groups couple both career empowerment and financial education through a lens of domestic violence. Finding safe and stable employment is key for victims of domestic violence who are seeking a life free from abuse. Survivors often have gaps in employment, have had to change jobs many times, or do not have the needed confidence to begin the job search process. From the inception of the program, the most important aspect of the support group structure is that it not only provided some needed tools, but also gives clients a safe space to share about their history. This, coupled with basic financial education, has provided a wonderful framework to assist these clients on the next part of their journey.

This year, in addition to the support offered to these eight programs, ICADV also used grant funds for the Economic Empowerment Symposium to provide training to advocates throughout Illinois. Later this year, ICADV will provide a short training guide with ideas on how others can incorporate this into their work. ICADV is excited to have an additional year of generous funding and support from the Allstate Foundation and hopes to bring this program to other ICADV Program Members in the future.

ICADV Awards 7 Grants to Victims of Domestic Violence

This spring, ICADV awarded seven victims of domestic violence small self-sufficiency grants through the Emergency Assistance for Victims Fund. Several times per year, if funds are available, ICADV opens up this program to survivors currently working with a Program Council Member Program. This February, 27 victims from throughout Illinois applied for one of the seven available grants.

These requests continue to paint a picture of the needs of domestic violence victims here in Illinois. Applicants can request funds to cover any variety of costs, as long as they can demonstrate how this will help them achieve self-sufficiency. ICADV recognizes that needs are varied and even small things can present an obstacle when someone is trying to seek safety and a without violence.

The majority of requests were for assistance with transportation or housing costs. These two areas continue to be a large need and a huge obstacle for many victims. Other requests included assistance with utility costs, paying down debt, moving costs, and medical expenses. Applications were evaluated on many factors to help decide which requests would be funded. Applicants can apply for up to \$200.

The seven grant awards went to pay for a variety of costs. Two victims requested help to pay for car repairs. In one case, the client is in school and was having to share a ride with family and friends to get herself to class and get her son to daycare, which was becoming difficult.

Another applicant was granted money to help pay for a security deposit on a new apartment. Two women were given grants to pay for a drivers education course. One of these women noted that, "learning how to drive will definitely help me make positive changes to my life. I will be able to be more self-sufficient, take better care of my daughter, and support myself. These funds have given me an opportunity for a successful life."

Another of the grant awards assisted a client with car insurance. By coincidence, she lost her job at the same time she left her abuser and was unable to pay both her car insurance and her car payment. The Emergency Assistance for Victims Grant allowed her to pay for three months of car insurance. She has since found new employment.

The seventh grant went to a victim to help her pay for an arrearage on her landline phone. While the victim had enough money to pay the monthly phone bill, she did not have the funds to cover the additional payments of the arrearage. The phone could have been shut off. The bill is now current and she is no longer in danger of losing the vital communication and feels safer in her home.



If you are interested in donating to the EAVF, please visit our website at: www.ilcadv.org/get_involved/donate.asp

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