

ANNUAL REPORT



2020



A year in review

STRONGER TOGETHER

Dear Sojourner Supporter,

With deep gratitude, we are proud to share with you the incredible impact of your support for domestic violence survivors this past year.

Home is not always a safe place and it can be especially dangerous during a global pandemic. At the onset of COVID-19, we surveyed our clients to learn what they needed most. Respondents said they were isolated, frightened and deeply concerned about meeting basic needs, such as employment, food, shelter and clothing. Our top priority was to make it safe for survivors to seek lifesaving safety, advocacy and healing services.

The impact of the pandemic on nonprofits such as Sojourner cannot be understated. 2020 was a year many businesses and service providers struggled for their very survival.

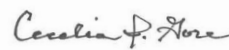
Thanks to our many supporters, Sojourner was well-positioned to navigate 2020's turbulent waters. With your help, we overcame unforeseen and unprecedented obstacles to continue innovating and evolving to meet domestic violence survivors' ever-changing needs.

With your help, we served 9,907 people impacted by domestic violence and made 61,902 contacts with people in need. We answered 15,089 calls on our 24-hour domestic violence hotline and provided 13,314 nights of emergency shelter to 625 people, including 254 children.

We helped 3,564 people file restraining orders and navigate the criminal court system. We helped 1,040 people in crisis understand their options and plan for their safety. COVID-19 canceled many community fairs and public speaking events; however, we drove education, outreach and aid through virtual means, with our #UntilSheCan campaign and new mobile-friendly website.

The pandemic created urgent, new challenges for survivors. In a year filled with uncertainty and instability, Sojourner has remained an unshakable beacon of hope in our community. Together, we are #SojournerStrong. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



Cecelia Gore
Board President



Carmen Pitre
President & CEO

Safety, advocacy & support

OUR WORK

Sojourner has been a pillar of peace for nearly 50 years. As the largest nonprofit provider of domestic violence prevention and intervention services in Wisconsin, we serve approximately 10,000 clients each year.

Established in 1975, Sojourner provides an array of support aimed at helping families affected by domestic violence to achieve safety, justice and well-being.

Our primary goals are to ensure the safety of victims of family violence and provide a pathway out of violence for victims and abusers through opportunities to make positive and lasting changes for themselves and their children.

In 2020, we affirmed our core values: respect, diversity & inclusion, leadership & accountability, courage and integrity.

We believe all people have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Our Mission

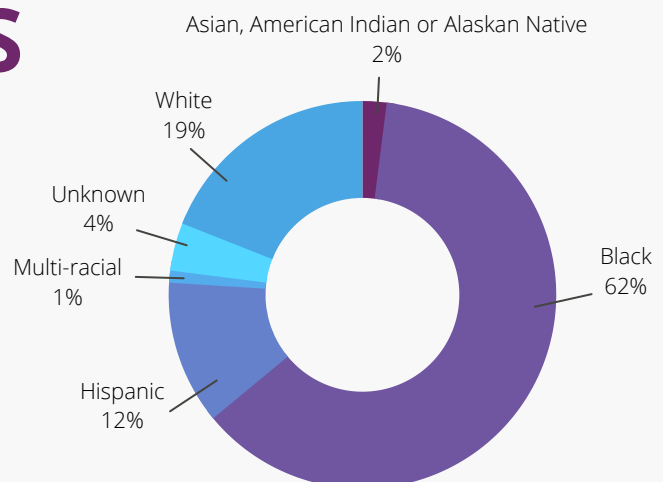
Transforming lives impacted by domestic violence



OUR CLIENTS

Last year, Sojourner made 61,902 contacts with 9,907 women, children and men in Milwaukee.

Nearly 80% of clients reported an annual household income of less than \$15,000.



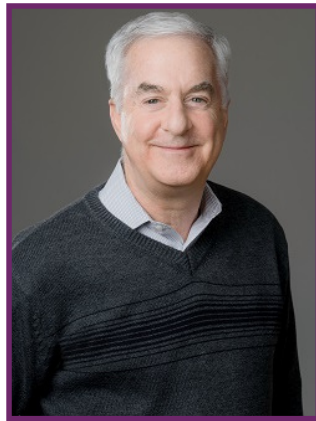


LEADERSHIP TEAM



Carmen Pitre

President and Chief Executive
Officer



Jack Leff

Vice President of Operations
and Chief Financial Officer



Natasha King

Vice President of Compliance
and Chief People & Culture
Officer



Carla Washington

Vice President of Programs and
Chief Partnership Officer



**Francesca Mayca
Wegner**

Senior Director of
Development



Liz Marquardt

Senior Director of Data
Analytics, Grants and
Compliance



Hector Hernandez

Senior Director of Advocacy

2020

AT A GLANCE

Many survivors who had plans to flee before the pandemic put them on hold at the onset of COVID-19. The barriers to safety are more challenging to overcome. Lack of support, child care and privacy, compounded with unemployment and economic stress mean many survivors can't safely call for help or leave.



"The past five years have been a rollercoaster. But I'm so glad that Sojourner has been there for me ... and continues to be."



SUPPORT

- 9,907 people received services from Sojourner staff
- 61,902 contacts were made with people in need
- 442 children impacted by family violence received care and support



CRISIS RESPONSE

- 15,089 calls from police officers, community members and survivors through our 24-hour hotline
- Provided 13,314 nights of shelter to 625 people fleeing domestic violence
- Helped 1,040 individuals in crisis understand their options and plan for their safety



ADVOCACY

- 3,564 people seeking restraining orders received support
- 619 survivors visiting the District Attorney's Office received help navigating the criminal court system (January - March 2020)
- 4,618 people seeking safety via law enforcement received follow-up support from a Sojourner Advocate



SKILLS

- 451 survivors took control of personal development through Hope & Healing programs
- 82 people participated in programs to learn healthy relationship skills as an alternative to violence
- Held support group sessions (in English and Russian) to foster positive connections for 179 people dealing with family violence



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Educated more than 3,000 community members about domestic violence and available resources
- 39,171 people visited our website to get help, help others or to join our team
- Our Facebook posts were shared 1,640 times and reached 284,758 people

2020 HIGHLIGHTS

MADE IT SAFE TO SEEK SAFETY

Safeguards to protect clients, supporters and staff from COVID-19

Our clients' health and safety are our top priority. When the pandemic hit, we ramped up our already stringent housekeeping, safety and sanitation protocols to keep clients, visitors and staff safe. We began using protective shields and masks and added signs and decals to provide visual cues on physical distancing. We began screening all visitors and escorting people exhibiting signs of risk to a private area for assistance by phone.

We also enhanced our intake process to ensure client privacy and safety. Clients used to meet in small conference rooms. We transformed our largest conference room to create private meeting spaces that offer better ventilation and adhere to the recommended 6' spacing per the CDC.

We took steps to educate emergency shelter residents about the virus and dispel myths and fear with CDC-approved information. We also reconfigured spaces to create physical distancing in resident rooms, public spaces and dining areas.

21%
increase

We served 21% more survivors and their children in our emergency shelter in 2020.



2020 HIGHLIGHTS

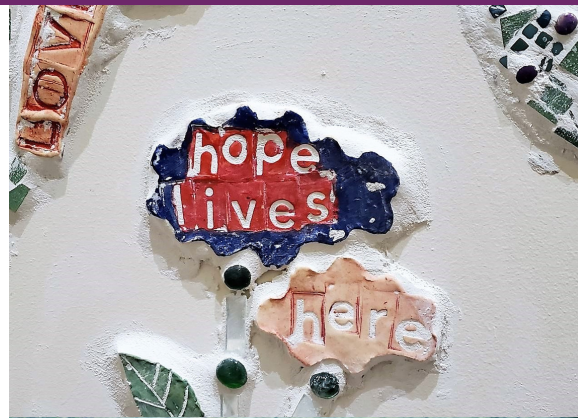
FOUND INNOVATIVE WAYS TO DELIVER SERVICES

*Virtual support groups, e-filing
restraining orders, connecting with
families by mail and online*

In March of 2020, the Milwaukee County Courthouse closed due to the pandemic. Our restraining order team quickly shifted from providing in-person advocacy services and helping file paper restraining orders to a new e-filing process and assisting clients by phone and Zoom. With help from volunteer legal experts, we launched a free hotline for legal advice for Sojourner clients to prepare for court and answer questions.

Maintaining strong connections and continuing support for survivors has never been more important. We began providing virtual support groups for individuals, families and children. While meeting virtually has challenges, the format also yields unexpected benefits for participants who previously lacked reliable transportation or childcare.

Many campgrounds, including where we host Camp HOPE-Wisconsin, closed due to COVID-19. The closure forced us to cancel 2 weeks of sleep-away camp and pivot to provide an enriching, engaging virtual camp experience. We retrofitted the program to engage campers from afar and to build hope and resilience among kids impacted by family violence.



*According to a
spring 2020 survey,
Sojourner clients
said unemployment,
food insecurity and
getting evicted were
their main concerns.*

*We are focused on
meeting survivors'
most critical needs.*

2020 HIGHLIGHTS

DROVE AID & AWARENESS FOR SURVIVORS

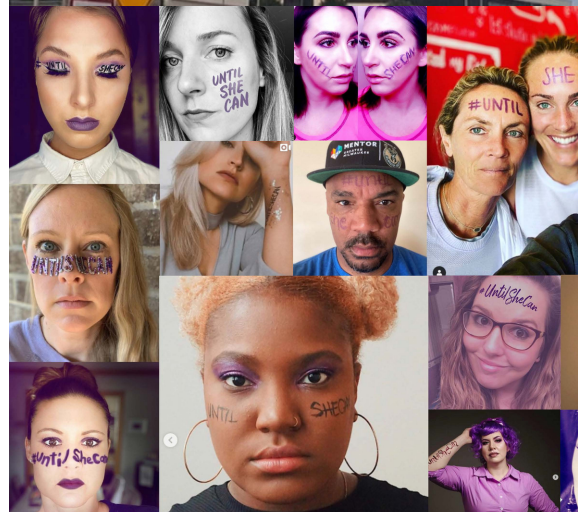
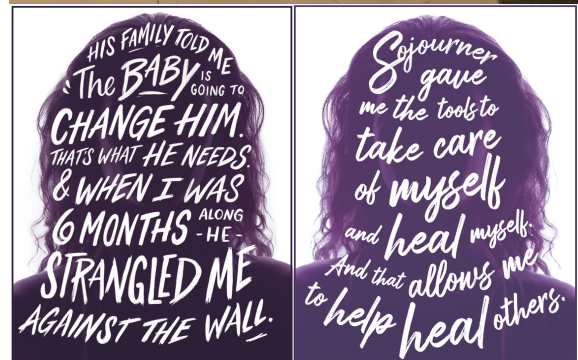
New website, public awareness campaigns and media messaging signal help is available, despite the pandemic

The pandemic has been particularly hard on survivors, creating more isolation and lethality. It also has had a significant impact on our operations and fund development capabilities, forcing us to cancel Be the Light, our biggest fundraising event of the year. To drive awareness and aid, we conducted direct mail, email and social media campaigns to garner support. We also applied to various emergency funding sources to cover the shortfall.

Additionally, we redesigned our website to better connect with survivors and people wanting to help. Our new site, **familypeacecenter.org**, is mobile-friendly, search engine optimized and has built-in analytics so we can better understand and meet visitors' needs.

restraining orders

#1 searched phrase on familypeacecenter.org of 2020



Survivor spotlight

CANDICE & MADDIE'S STORY

Candice and Maddie* had nowhere to go.

Candice and her 10 year-old daughter had fled from Chicago to Milwaukee to escape Candice's abusive ex-boyfriend. After sleeping in the bus station, they were kicked out and living on the streets.

A kind stranger suggested calling Sojourner's 24-hour hotline. Candice made the call and, after talking with an Advocate, she and Maddie were admitted to Sojourner's emergency shelter.

Candice had experienced trauma her whole life and even though she was safe, she had a hard time adjusting to living in shelter and focusing on her future. The Sojourner team worked with her to make sure she understood her options.

Candice wanted an apartment of her own. Sojourner staff helped her obtain her state ID and birth certificate, which she needed to begin receiving public benefits, and get on the Coordinated Entry housing priority list. Eventually, Candice was able to obtain housing.

Despite all the hardships she had endured, Candice's perseverance, combined with the support she received from Sojourner and partner agencies, paid off. Candice made her goal a reality when she and Maddie moved out of Sojourner's emergency shelter and into their new home.

**Names changed for privacy and safety.*

Safety

*No longer homeless;
finding a home of their
own*



"You recently helped me leave an unhealthy and violent relationship. You helped me secure a security deposit and get into a new place. I felt so desperate to get away. Thank you for your help. Without it, I would not be the person I am today."

- Candice

Survivor spotlight

CHARITY'S STORY

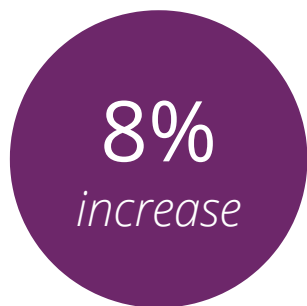
Charity* first connected with Sojourner after law enforcement and the District Attorney's Office encouraged her to reach out. After dealing with physical, emotional and financial abuse, Charity decided to leave her husband and file for a restraining order. She felt afraid and alone.

Charity called our hotline and started working with an Advocate who listened to her concerns, connected her with a divorce lawyer and provided security deposit assistance so that she could move into her own apartment.

She also joined Sojourner's survivor support group. Through her healing process, Sojourner provided Charity with resources she needed but also a larger sense of belonging and community.

Charity says Sojourner's help and the connections she's made with other survivors have made a huge difference in her healing.

*Name changed for safety and confidentiality.



in the number of survivors served by Advocates co-located at police districts throughout Milwaukee in 2020

Advocacy

Ensuring support every step of the way



"I needed someone to talk to and a community to belong to. I needed someone to understand. When it comes to domestic violence, most people don't understand what you're going through. Today, I walk into Sojourner, grab a cup of coffee, and I feel secure. I feel like this is where I belong."

- Charity

Survivor spotlight

DEJA'S STORY

Sojourner's Hope & Healing team supports survivors as they work toward a variety of goals. Many survivors dream of returning to school to pursue college degrees.

In 2020, Sojourner Advocates helped four clients secure \$11,250 in additional funds for the upcoming semester.

The Women's Independence Scholarship Program (WISP) is available specifically for survivors of domestic violence. One client, Deja,* is a recipient of multiple WISP scholarships and clearly demonstrates the impact these scholarships can have on our clients' lives.

Deja reached out to Sojourner in 2014 for help for herself and her child. After her safety and other basic needs were addressed, she worked with our Hope & Healing team to pursue several goals, including her education.

With an Advocate's help, Deja applied for and was awarded almost \$10,000 in WISP scholarships as she completed her last three semesters of college and earned her undergraduate degree.

Deja told her Sojourner Advocate how proud she felt walking across the stage at graduation.

"I wanted to thank you for all your support both with my family and my education. My son and I are in a much better place. My life changed the day I called Sojourner. Thank you for believing in me."

Healing

*Giving survivors the tools
to live happy, healthy
and peaceful lives*



Building on that momentum, Deja then went on to pursue graduate school. She's continued working with our Hope & Healing team throughout her master's program and will graduate Spring 2021.

In total, Sojourner's Hope & Healing team has helped Deja secure over \$26,000 in scholarship awards.

**Name changed for safety and confidentiality.*

FINANCIALS

Funding sources

Public funding from federal, state and local public grants covers 42% of agency expenses.

Support from the United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County covers 4% of agency expenses, and 9% of expenses are covered from lease revenue provided by the agencies and organizations that are co-located at the Family Peace Center.

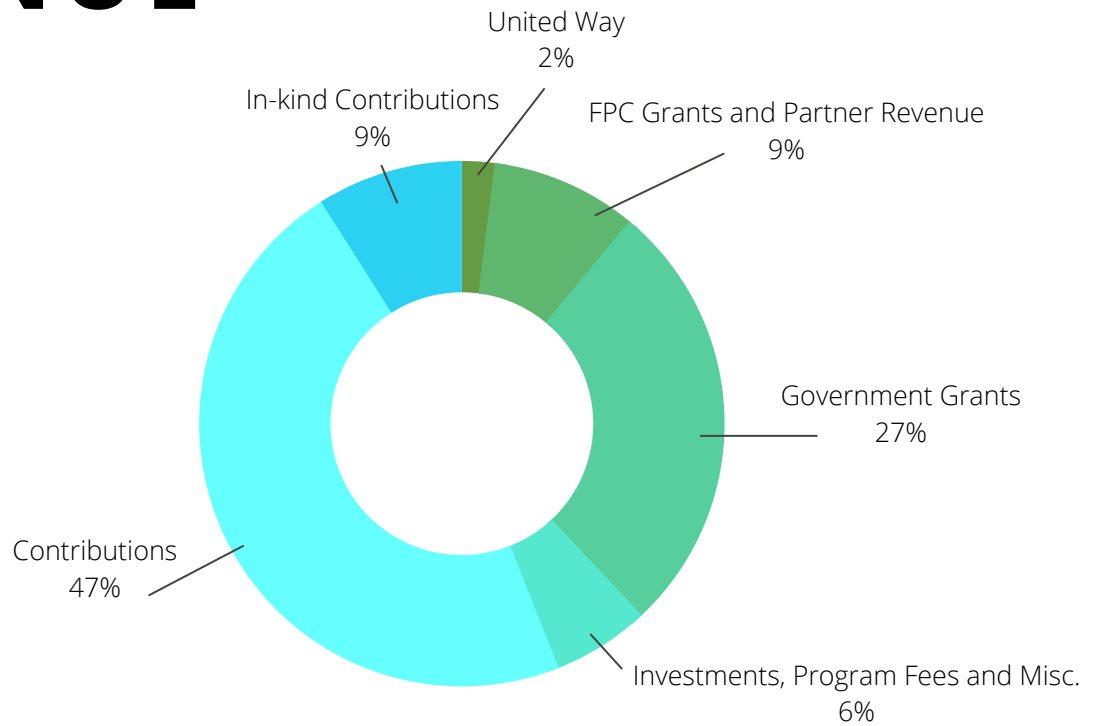
Each year we raise the remaining funds from private foundations, corporations, individual donors and faith-based organizations.

82%

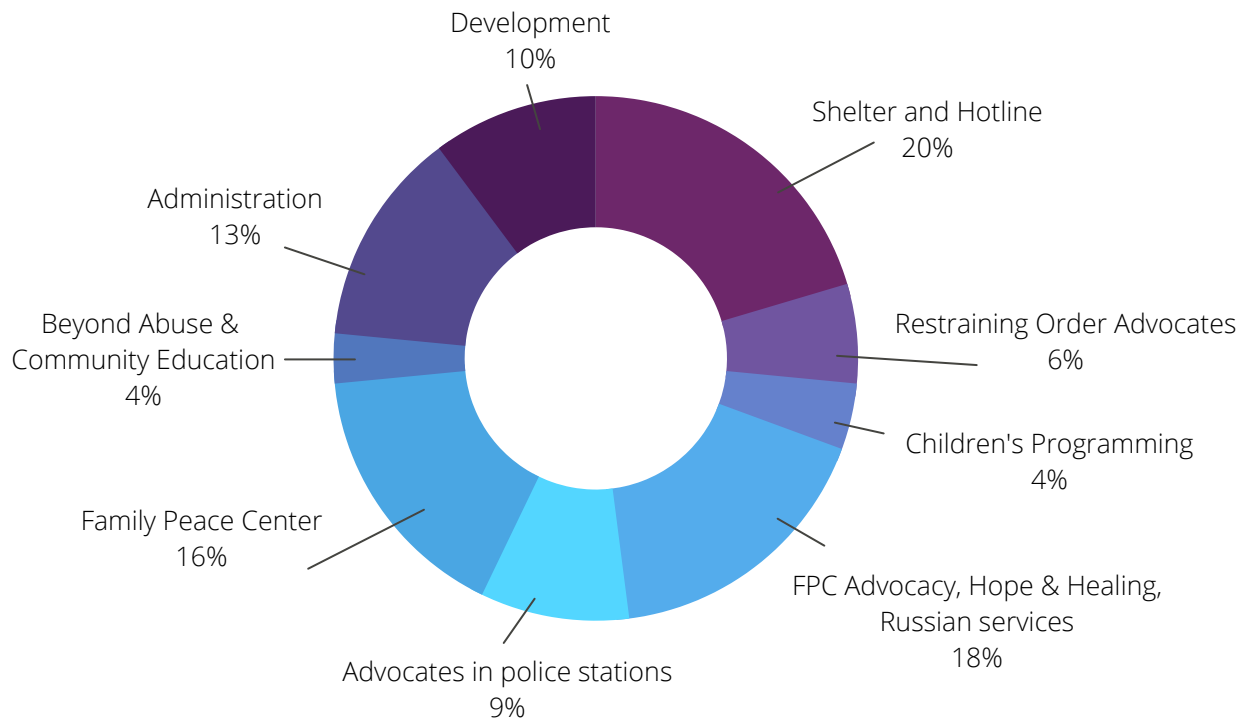
of agency funding is allocated to direct client service



REVENUE



EXPENSES



EMILY FONTS

When pandemic-imposed restrictions closed the Courthouse, Emily found a way to provide free legal aid to survivors seeking restraining orders

When Governor Evers enacted the Safer At Home Order, the Milwaukee County Courthouse closed temporarily and required that all restraining orders be filed electronically. Until that point, domestic violence survivors seeking restraining orders could meet with a Sojourner Advocate and receive free legal advice from volunteer attorneys in-person at the Courthouse.

With the Courthouse closed indefinitely, we had to find a way to answer survivors' questions, help them prepare for their hearings and assist with the e-filing process.

That's where Emily Fons comes in.

"I have represented survivors in domestic abuse hearings over the last 6 years and found it some of the most rewarding work that I do as an attorney. I am looking forward to getting back into the court room and working with our survivors again."

- Emily Fons

Volunteers

Providing free legal help to survivors during the pandemic

Emily is a Sojourner Board Member and attorney with Godfrey & Kahn SC who provides pro bono legal help to survivors. She knew it was absolutely critical to continue helping survivors, despite pandemic-related obstacles.

Emily, along with attorney Joe Poehlmann of Quarles & Brady, developed a legal hotline for domestic abuse survivors to get help during despite Courthouse closures. The phone line, staffed by volunteer attorneys from Godfrey & Kahn, launched in June 2020 and immediately became a critical, lifesaving resource for survivors.

In recognition for her work helping survivors, Emily was named 2020 Legal Innovator of the Year by the State Bar of Wisconsin. We are grateful to Emily for her creativity, innovation and unwavering commitment to serving survivors.



KELLY GRYGLAS

Volunteering in our emergency shelter and on our 24-hour crisis hotline during a pandemic

Kelly Gryglas doesn't mince words. When asked about coming in and volunteering in our emergency shelter while many people sheltered in place to safeguard against COVID-19, she simply said: "I had a job to do."

Kelly has volunteered at Sojourner for two years, answering hotline calls and assisting emergency shelter residents. She provides callers with lifesaving information and helps with safety planning. Her goal is to help domestic violence survivors by freeing up Sojourner staff to focus on critical work.

Sojourner's staff say Kelly is dependable, hugely helpful and well-suited for the challenging work.

"Kelly is an incredible volunteer," says Sojourner Shelter Administrative Assistant Rheanne Tibbits. "Her ability to stay calm under pressure is absolutely essential when working with people in crisis."

Kelly says that working with shelter clients is tremendously rewarding, yet has unique challenges. The majority of residents have suffered emotional and physical abuse and

Volunteers

Providing safety and support on the hotline and in shelter

sometimes lash out.

"You can't take it personally," she says. "Some people we serve have never been treated with kindness or empathy. Sometimes clients test boundaries and act out just to see how you'll respond."

Kelly says that despite the challenges that come with working in the shelter, she is continually impressed by the joy, resiliency and optimism exhibited by some residents. She recalls a young woman who was homeless and delivered her baby while staying at Sojourner. She had no family or friends in the area and was all alone.

"Despite a situation some might call hopeless, she was so happy and grateful," said Kelly. "She was an inspiration."

"I'm truly blessed in my life and I need to pay it forward, backwards and sideways."

- Kelly Gryglas



HOW TO HELP SURVIVORS

2020 was a record year for domestic violence-related deaths. Murders committed by family members and intimate partners skyrocketed.

Domestic violence thrives in isolation. You can help spread the word to check in on friends and family during these challenging times. If you or someone you know are living in an abusive situation, help is available.

Please call Sojourner.

Abuse rarely begins with physical violence. Verbal, sexual, financial and/or emotional abuse is significant and damaging.

If someone threatens your life, believe them. Often, a homicide is the first, only and last act of physical abuse.

Be hope

Support and celebrate survivors every day

1/3

of domestic violence-related homicides have no reported history of physical abuse

5 WAYS TO HELP

It is hard when someone you care about is being hurt. Here are 5 helpful tips to keep in mind:

- 1) **Believe them.**
- 2) **Assure them the abuse is not their fault.**
- 3) **Respect the decisions they make.**
- 4) **Don't assume they will end the relationship.**
- 5) **Encourage them to talk with an expert.**

Visit familypeacecenter.org > **get help** for tips on helping others. Call our 24-hour hotline, (414) 933-2722, to speak with an Advocate.



SUPPORT OUR WORK

We couldn't do this work with out the thousands of supporters, donors and advocates committed to helping survivors and their families find safety, advocacy and support.

VOLUNTEER

You can use your time and talent to transform lives impacted by family violence. Volunteers and interns strengthen our agency as a whole and significantly expand our reach to the clients we serve.

We offer many volunteer opportunities for individuals and groups with varying time commitments. Whether you have a few hours to spare or would like to help on an ongoing basis, we will match your interest and availability to meet our needs. Visit our website for more information, familypeacecenter.org/get-involved.

DONATE

One-time donation

Your donation ensures thousands of domestic violence survivors have a safe place to sleep, an Advocate to support them and an entire community offering encouragement. We could not do this important work without you. Donate by mail (checks payable to Sojourner Foundation) to the address below or online, familypeacecenter.org/donate.

Sojourner
PO Box 88987
Milwaukee, WI 53288-8987

Giving

*Invest in our community
and future generations*

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Follow SojournerMKE on social media for inspiring stories, agency news and ways you can get involved.



Give monthly

Join the Hope Circle to ensure our legacy of building hope for survivors and their families will continue for decades to come. Your recurring gift is deducted from your credit/debit card monthly. Monthly giving is the easiest way to make the largest impact.

Future gifts

Planned giving is an investment in Sojourner's future, our mission and the life-saving services we provide. Our legal name for estate plans is Sojourner Foundation, Inc., Tax ID: 46-5489434.



Sojourner
619 W. Walnut St.
Milwaukee, WI 53212
familypeacecenter.org

(414) 276-1911
main office
(414) 933-2722
24-hour domestic violence hotline