



# ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022



# MESSAGE FROM THE *Executive Director*

Dear Friends,

The year covered in this report was another pivotal one for Women's Advocates. By July 2021, in the wake of a tumultuous year, we had put the first stage of the COVID-19 pandemic behind us and begun to forge a path forward. But with the emergency of the Omicron variant late that summer, we began to realize there would be no return to a pre-pandemic "normal," that the adaptability we developed as a survival strategy in the 2020-21 fiscal year would continue to be essential going forward. Gradually, as the year unfolded, this new reality took hold. We continued to settle back into our historic shelter facility, retaining a number of pandemic-responsive practices -- like universal masking for shelter residents and staff, and Zoom-based staff and Board meetings -- that may be with us for a long time. We welcomed larger families with young children back into shelter, adjusting our practices and expectations accordingly. Our awareness grew of the ways the world had shifted around us. The needs of domestic violence victim-survivors appeared even more pressing than ever, and we responded.

In partnership with the Rondo Community Library, we piloted Pop-Up Advocacy, reaching victim-survivors in our community in innovative ways. We stepped up shelter advocacy staffing on nights and weekends to better meet the needs of our residents. And we tapped newly available funding sources to expand our services to victim-survivors as they leave shelter and re-enter the community. Our former Housing and Aftercare program was renamed Housing Stability Services, attracting substantial federal ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds, along with multi-year funding from the federal Office on Violence Against Women and the Pohlad Family Foundation. Along with this new funding came an increased commitment to strengthening the post-shelter component of Women's Advocates' Continuum of Safety, Safety After Shelter.

It's always been true that safe, sustainable housing is essential to a victim-survivor's ability to build a new, safer life for themselves and their family. In the past year, with newly available funds and increased awareness among funders of the intersections between homelessness and domestic violence, it has become possible for Women's Advocates to help more victim-survivors than ever achieve their goal of finding a safe, sustainable place to live in the community. A key partner in this endeavor has been Oasis of Love, an advocacy organization serving mostly Black/African American families in North Minneapolis. We are humbled and grateful to have the opportunity to partner with Oasis to reach more, and even more diverse, victim-survivors than ever before.

This was a year to heal and recover, to take stock and take a breath, then move forward with renewed purpose and determination. Your continuing support for victim-survivors, for our cause, our mission, and our work made that possible, and we are grateful.

Kind regards,



*Estelle Brouwer, Executive Director*







# OUR MISSION

Women's Advocates walks with victim-survivors and our community to break the cycle of domestic violence.

## WELCOMING A NEW *Executive Director*



At the end of 2022, Women's Advocates was delighted to announce Holly Henning as the new Executive Director of Women's Advocates. Holly brings a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to serving marginalized communities. We are so grateful she chose to walk with us into our next chapter! With her extensive background in addressing youth homelessness and advocating for Indigenous victim-survivors, Holly's leadership promises to further strengthen Women's Advocates' mission of supporting those affected by domestic violence.

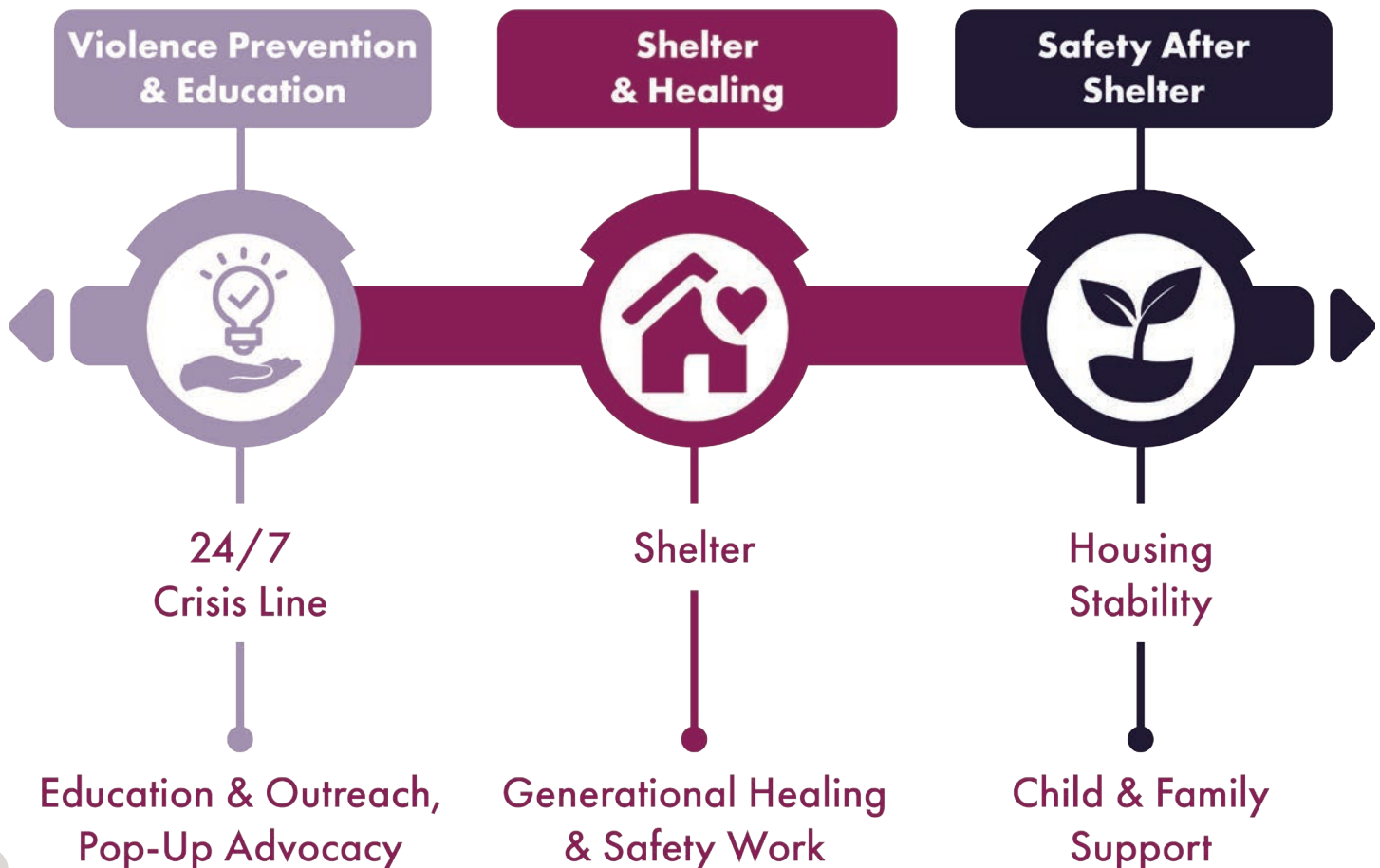
Holly has worked in youth homelessness in the Native community for over 15 years and witnessed first-hand the critical need for safe spaces and culturally specific services for Indigenous victim-survivors of sexual exploitation, human trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual assault. In her work at the Ain Dah Yung Center, Holly launched the Zhawenimaa ("They are unconditionally loved" in Ojibwe) program to offer culturally specific healing and housing services to victim-survivors of human trafficking. Holly's work has illuminated the importance of culturally specific services for survivors and the transformative power of two-generation healing. By focusing on the children of survivors, Holly aims to break the cycle of violence and create lasting change within families and communities. Her expertise and passion will guide Women's Advocates in expanding to new communities, ensuring that survivors receive the comprehensive support they deserve.

Photo Credit: Greene Photography LLC



# Continuum of Safety from Abuse

Women's Advocates' programming provides a continuum of safety that extends well beyond our shelter services. In addition to the healing space we provide in shelter, this continuum includes violence prevention work online and in the community through Pop-Up Advocacy hosted by our Outreach and Education team and intensive housing advocacy and rental supports for victim-survivors leaving shelter or living in the community through our Housing Stability program. A key goal of this continuum is to ensure that domestic violence-related homelessness is rare, brief, and nonrecurring by creating avenues to safety and stability before and after crises. Through our wraparound programs and services, we reduce the number of victim-survivors that cycle in and out of shelter. We strive to create paths to safety and housing stability for victim-survivors and affordable and sustainable avenues to violence prevention in the community and online.





# 24/7 Crisis Line



In the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year:  
*(Between July 1, 2021,  
and June 30, 2022)*

**531** people accessed our  
24/7 crisis resource services  
via phone or live chat.

Crisis Resource Advocates  
provided **977** crisis  
interventions and shelter  
referrals via our crisis line.

Women's Advocates' staff plays a crucial role in preventing domestic violence by operating a 24/7 crisis line and live chat. To enhance our ability to respond to crisis calls, we have expanded our team of Crisis Resource Advocates and management positions. These dedicated individuals provide referrals, safety planning, and emotional support to crisis line callers, ensuring continuity of care.

Since Fall 2021, we no longer ask COVID-specific questions to callers seeking shelter, ensuring that survivors know their stay is not contingent on their COVID status. Instead, we focus on shelter-specific and welcoming questions, exemplifying our dedication to radical hospitality by creating a safe and inclusive environment.



# Education & Outreach



Women's Advocates is dedicated to preventing domestic violence in our communities through both virtual and in-person Education & Outreach program initiatives. Education & Outreach aims to strengthen participants ability to recognize warning signs, understand the dynamics of abuse, and comprehend its impacts. We provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in informed conversations about abuse, supporting both victim-survivors and individuals who may be engaging in abusive behaviors. This equips participants with the confidence to share relevant community resource options available to victim-survivors.

While we have been able to resume more in-person events as pandemic restrictions ease, we have observed that many people still prefer virtual presentations. As a result, we anticipate that virtual platforms will remain a valuable tool in our educational efforts going forward. In the summer of 2021, we launched an online survivor support group that welcomes a new cohort every January, April, and October. The group provides virtual support and a safe space for survivors to connect and heal.

In October 2021, we introduced our Pop-Up Advocacy outreach initiative. This innovative approach allows us to meet victim-survivors in the community where they are, providing domestic violence advocacy at trusted sites like libraries, doctor's offices, and drop-in centers, including Rondo Library, Ramsey County WIC, and St. Paul Opportunity Center.



**In the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year:**  
(Between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022)

**129** domestic violence and related trainings were hosted by Women's Advocates' Education & Outreach team.

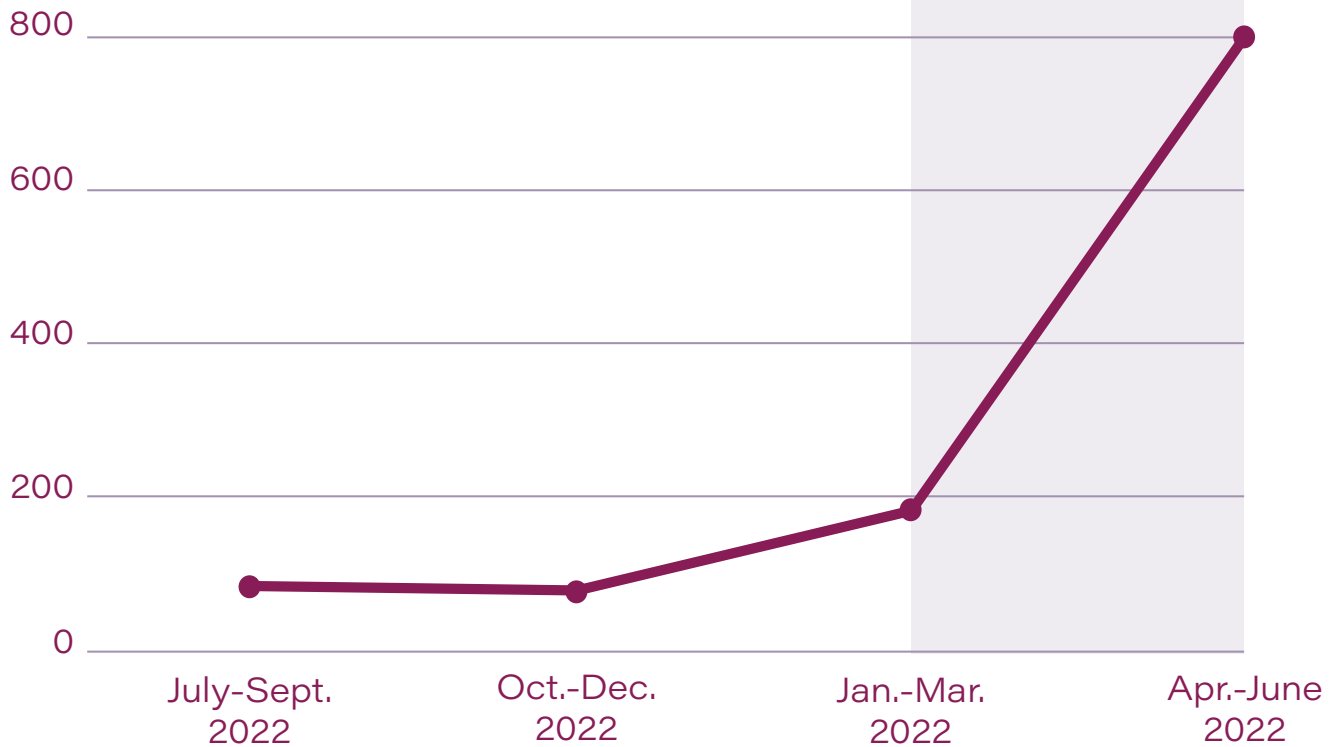
**4,941** professionals and community members attended domestic violence and related trainings.

Outreach expenses for the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year were **\$160,153**, comprising **5%** of organizational expenses.

## Number of People at Pop-Up Advocacy Quarterly

### Pop-Up Advocacy Opens at St. Paul Opportunity Center

By beginning to provide domestic violence outreach to the mainstream homeless community, Women's Advocates has seen our numbers quadruple.





# Shelter, Food, & Facilities

For the past 47 years, Women's Advocates has been dedicated to providing safe shelter to victim-survivors of domestic violence. Our shelter space is designed to offer comfort and security, comprising 15 bedrooms, 7 resident bathrooms, and a commercial kitchen where three daily meals are prepared for our residents seeking refuge from abusive situations. To further support our residents, we provide access to laundry facilities, a living room, a dining room, a secure children's playground, and their own Chromebook during their time in our shelter. Our committed staff works 24/7 at the front desk to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone in our facility. Our shelter serves as a safe and secure home where residents can begin their healing journey.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Women's Advocates remains steadfast in our commitment to providing a secure and supportive environment for victim-survivors of domestic violence. We implemented many COVID safety measures to keep our residents and staff safe, and as a result of these measures, we have seen several positive and lasting changes. Flexible meals and snacks to-go have given greater freedom to residents and their families. Single shared rooms were discontinued since the pandemic, creating a better living environment for our residents because they no longer have to handle the stressors of living with a roommate and can have their own space in shelter. By giving everyone their own space, we have had fewer conflicts between residents.

The pandemic has also deepened the connections between our Programs Team and Administration and Development Teams. Our shelter and programs staff are actively involved in all organizational decision-making process, including what grants to apply for and how to represent programming in fundraising and communications materials. The pandemic has brought our administrative and program teams together, solidifying us as one cohesive unit.

**In the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year:**  
(Between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022)

**143** victim-survivors and children received emergency shelter through Women's Advocates.

**97** days was the average length of stay for residents.

Residents received **13,891** nights of shelter.

Facility expenses for the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year were **\$485,705**, comprising **14%** of organizational expenses.

Food expenses for the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year were **\$251,730**, comprising **8%** of organizational expenses.







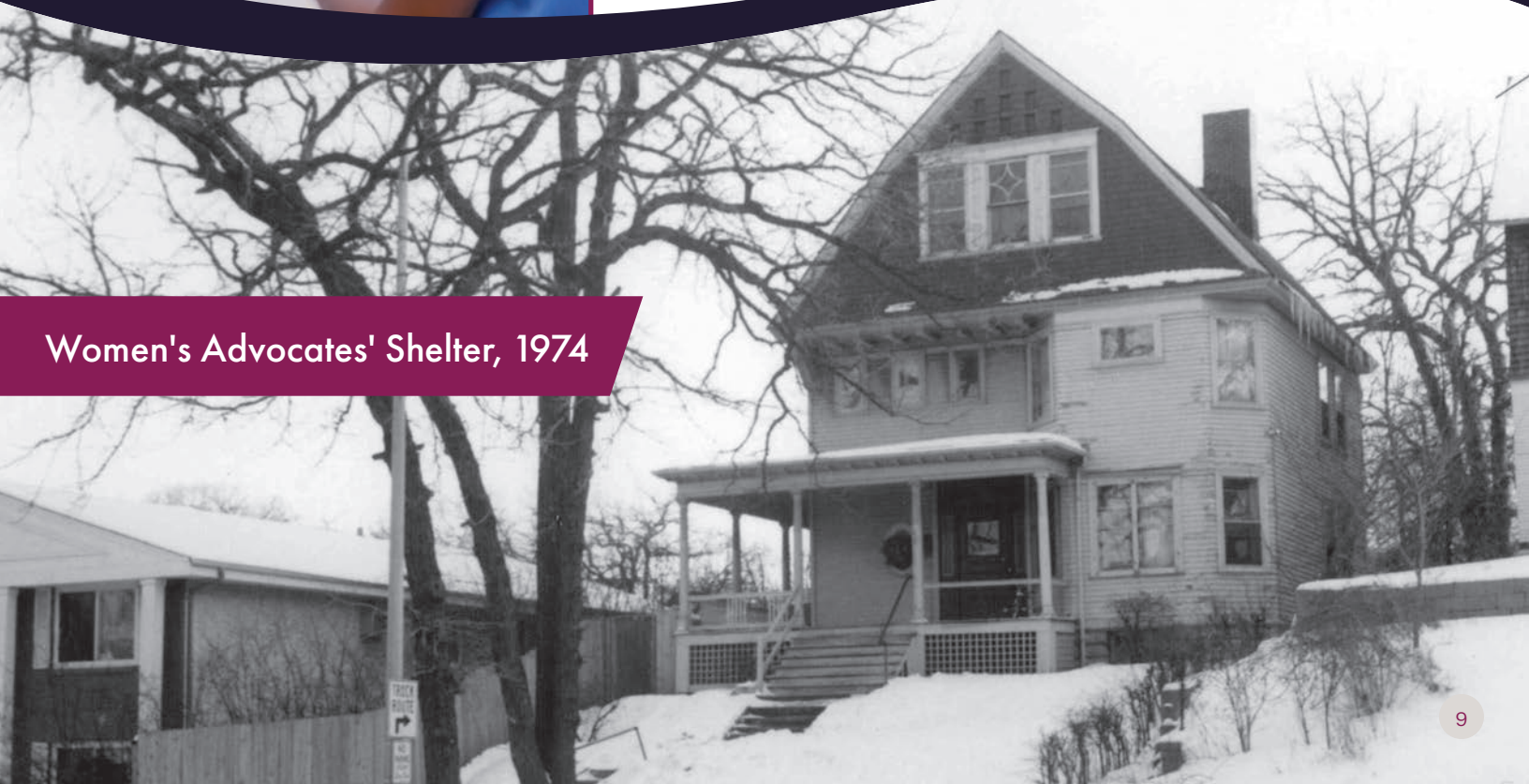
# Survivor Advisory Council



Women's Advocates established the Survivor Advisory Council in February 2021 to ensure survivor voices shape our decision making at every level of the organization. This council serves as a platform for past residents and program participants to actively contribute to the development and improvement of our services. Through the Survivor Advisory Council, individuals who have experienced domestic violence work with administration to create policy and programmatic work plans that ensure our programs and initiatives are rooted in the realities of the victim-survivors we serve.

The council has developed several impactful initiatives that directly respond to the needs identified by survivors. The council is working with staff to allocate resources towards recovery and addiction, financial mentorship after leaving the shelter, and the improvement of welcome baskets for incoming residents.

Women's Advocates' Shelter, 1974



# Shelter-Based Advocacy Services

At Women's Advocates, we are dedicated to supporting victim-survivors and creating a supportive environment in our shelter that fosters healing, safety, and justice. Through our comprehensive mental health and wellness programming, we support residents to embark on their healing journeys by teaching self-care and mindfulness techniques that nurture the mind, body, and spirit. Our Mental Health & Wellness Counselor bridges the gap between mental health and housing stability, keeping in close contact with residents once they leave the shelter. Residents have access to regular support groups, which serve as a safe space for residents to heal from past trauma.

Our Family & Legal Advocates work closely with victim-survivors, providing personalized goal planning and guidance on the legal system. We have increased management capacity and fostered a team approach to better serve our residents. Each team member has taken on special projects with community partners that help create a safety net of services for victim-survivors. For example, one advocate participates in the Family Violence Coordinating Council and another works weekly at Bridges to Safety, a government service that helps Ramsey County residents apply for Orders For Protection. This collaborative approach enhances our ability to provide comprehensive and effective legal support.

## Reflective Consultation

We know this work is hard, and we know that it often affects our staff after the work day has ended. To help our staff process this vicarious trauma, we partner with psychotherapist Dr. Sheila Sweeney to provide Reflective Consultations twice a month. Staff engage in open guided conversation to explore and process the emotional aspects of work. "Rather than focusing on tasks or procedures, this dedicated time allows us to nurture trust, enhance communication among team members, and delve into various topics related to our organization, such as addressing challenging interactions with residents or participants," said Joan Countryman, Director of Shelter Advocacy Services.



Dr. Sheila Sweeney



**In the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year:**  
(Between July 1, 2021,  
and June 30, 2022)

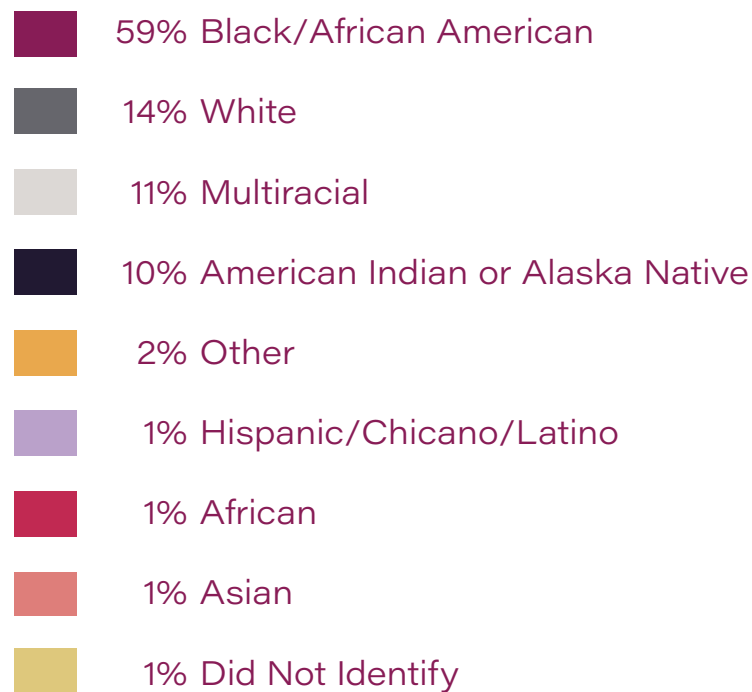
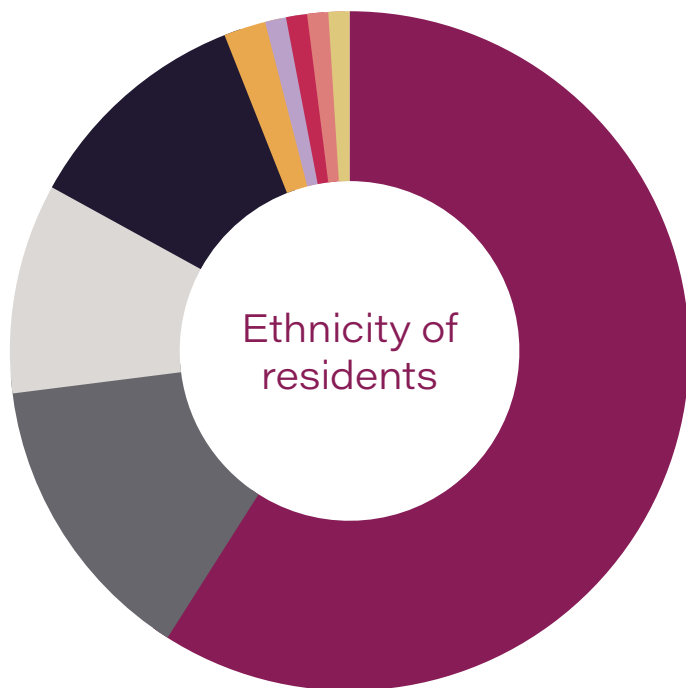
**249** crisis interventions took place for victim-survivors staying at our shelter.

Family advocates dedicated **1,114** hours of support to residents.

Mental health, wellness, & legal advocacy expenses for the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year were **\$1,169,128**, comprising **35%** of organizational expenses.



## Over 80% of our residents identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.



# Housing Stability Program

Finding affordable housing in the Twin Cities poses significant challenges, particularly for victim-survivors who face additional barriers such as eviction history, low-wage employment, and criminal records. These obstacles disproportionately affect BIPOC individuals who have historically been marginalized in housing. To address these issues, our housing advocates play a pivotal role in facilitating the housing search process, landlord negotiations, eviction prevention, and rental supports within our Housing Stability program.

This year, we made changes to the name of the program, shifting from "Housing & Aftercare" to "Housing Stability." We changed the name because we no longer only take participants from our shelter program. We now take many community referrals. We also wanted to emphasize our focus on long term stability, rather than simply on getting participants housed. Long term stability requires access to health care, improved employment, good schools, and accessible transportation.

Our efforts have been further supported by significant partnerships, including Oasis of Love Crisis Intervention Center, as well as funding diversification from sources like Pohlad, Office of Violence Against Women (OVW), Huntington Bank, and The Office of Justice Programs (OJP). Additionally, we secured EHV vouchers from St. Paul Public Housing. The Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program allowed Women's Advocates to partner with St. Paul Public Housing to distribute vouchers to assist individuals and families who are homeless, at-risk of homelessness, fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking. This project was the first time our Housing Stability program provided services to victim-survivors from the community. We had previously only worked with survivors staying in our Emergency Shelter.

With the program's expansion, we have increased the number of advocates from two to three and created a new a director position for FY2023. We have extended the length of the program to up to 24 months to help participants stabilize. These developments mark a period of significant growth for the program, and we will continue to secure additional funding and forge partnerships to serve a broader range of survivors.



### In the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year: (Between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022)

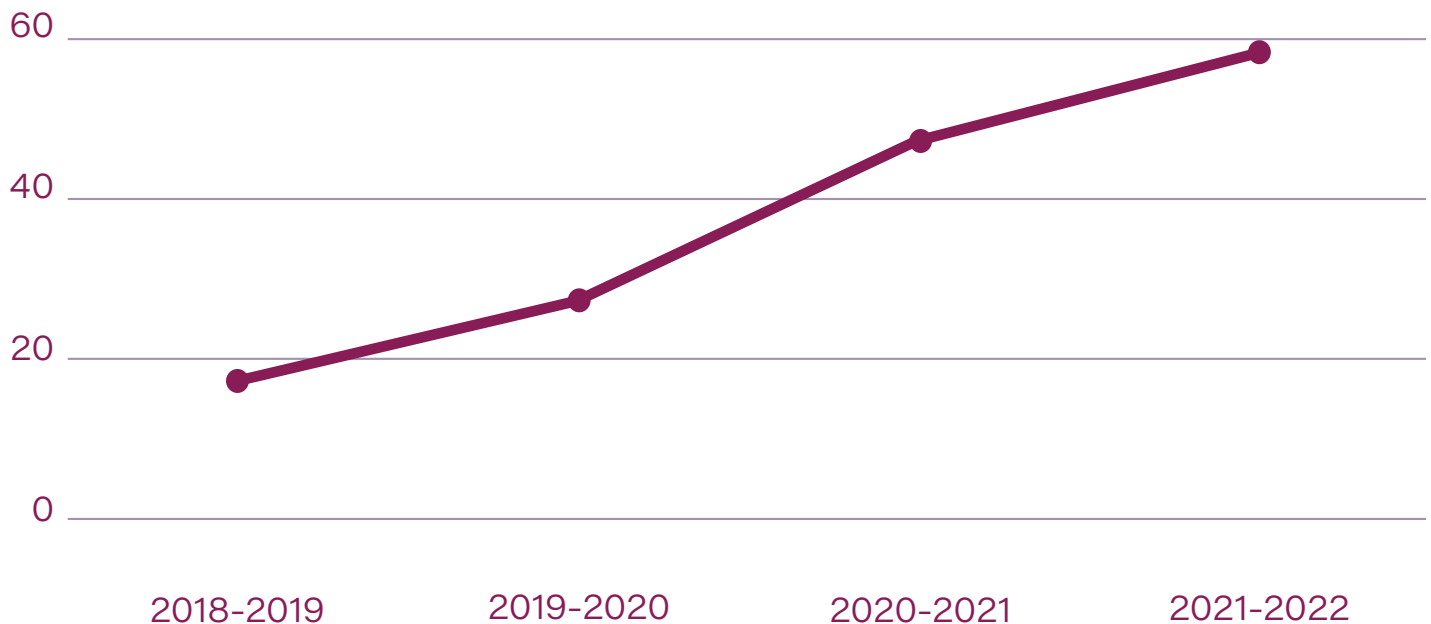
**124** victim-survivors and their children participated in the Housing Stability Program, across **58** households.

**84%** participating households maintained stable housing for **12** or more months.

Housing Stability Program expenses for the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year were **\$370,306**, comprising **11%** of organizational expenses.



### Total New Victim-Survivors Enrolled in the Housing Stability Program



### OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH *Oasis of Love*



In June 2022, Women's Advocates announced our partnership with Oasis of Love Intervention Center, a culturally-specific domestic violence service provider located in North Minneapolis. Together, we are committed to providing comprehensive housing navigation and eviction prevention services to households in crisis throughout the Twin Cities and surrounding communities. At both organizations, there are dedicated advocates on staff who are walking alongside victim-survivors and providing guidance throughout the entire housing process. Advocates work diligently with survivors to address and remove obstacles to housing, ensuring that families have the support needed to secure a safe and stable living situation. If victim-survivors are facing the threat of eviction or experiencing difficulties in negotiating with their landlord, advocates are on hand to reach out to landlords to renegotiate leases or solve disputes.

# Sheila Wellstone Children's Program



The Sheila Wellstone Children's Program is currently undergoing a transition to better meet the needs of youth who arrive at our shelter with their parent. Our dedicated staff work closely with each child and their caregiver to provide nurturing support and aid in their development. We offer safety planning, school support, special activities, and drop-in childcare services tailored to the unique needs of survivors and their children.

In 2020-2021, we expanded our services in the Children's Program to provide ongoing support for parents and children for one year beyond their stay at the shelter. During 2021-2022, the Children's Program extended its reach beyond the shelter, recognizing the importance of meeting families where they are. The program began conducting home visits in the community, forging connections, and gaining a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by each family. Whether it was providing emotional support, offering guidance on parenting strategies, or addressing any concerns or barriers faced by families, our team worked to ensure that no one felt alone in their journey towards healing and stability. In addition to home visits, advocates created a monthly newsletter for sharing parenting strategies, low-cost activities that promote bonding and growth, and a curated compilation of community resources available to families.



**In the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year:**  
(Between July 1, 2021,  
and June 30, 2022)

**55** children ages 0 to 17 stayed  
at Women's Advocates'  
emergency shelter.

**65** children enrolled in Women's  
Advocates Housing Stability  
program, marking the first time  
child-specific advocacy was  
available to children after they  
leave shelter.

Children's Program expenses for  
the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year were  
**\$149,357**, comprising **4%** of  
organizational expenses.



# A PROGRAM IN TRANSITION



— Since 1974 —→ 2016 —→ 2019 —→ 2020-2021



Women's Advocates has provided flexible childcare to survivors staying in shelter since our opening.



Children's Program begins offering therapeutic interventions and safety planning for children in shelter.



Wilder Research focus groups with survivors identify the need for parental support for survivors in Housing Stability.



Children's Program expands to begin offering child-specific advocacy services to children after leaving shelter.

## OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE:

Each year, over 50 young people enroll in the Sheila Wellstone Children's Program at Women's Advocates. They need support from mentors and a community that rises up in the face of domestic violence to say, "Lean on me!," while walking with them towards brighter and safer futures. In 2023, Women's Advocates needs to raise \$250,000 to provide a welcoming space for youth ages 4 to 17 to heal from the trauma of domestic violence.

Donations towards Lean On Me! will provide:

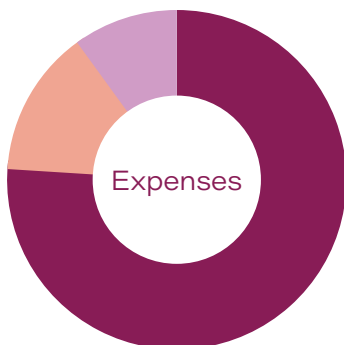
- Full-time children & youth advocacy services for over 50 youth each year
- Groups on healthy relationships, boundaries, and coping with trauma for kids ages 4 to 17
- Black male role models for BIPOC youth in crisis
- Connections to support through school, mentorship, and other community resources



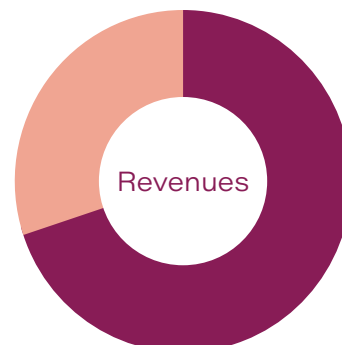
# FINANCIAL REPORT

## 2021-2022

Audited Financial Statements		2021-2022	2020-2021
Assets	Total Current Assets	\$2,796,119	\$3,341,315
	Net Property & Equipment	\$894,805	\$960,972
	<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$3,690,924</b>	<b>\$4,302,287</b>
Liabilities	Total Current Liabilities	\$201,187	\$163,842
	Long Term Debt	\$24,757	\$50,135
Net Assets	Net Assets: Undesignated	\$1,023,303	\$1,554,054
	Net Assets: Designated	\$2,356,184	\$2,356,184
	Net Assets: Temporarily Restricted	\$85,493	\$178,072
	<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$3,690,924</b>	<b>\$4,302,287</b>
Revenue	Program Service Revenue	\$1,943,767	\$2,404,681
	Contributions	\$846,900	\$788,889
	Debt Forgiveness	\$25,584	\$382,384
	Interest & Miscellaneous	\$(106,245)	\$303,191
	<b>Total Support &amp; Revenue</b>	<b>\$2,710,006</b>	<b>\$3,879,145</b>
Expenses	Programs & Services	\$2,541,492	\$2,553,480
	Management & General	\$462,149	\$390,952
	Fundraising	\$329,695	\$139,083
	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$3,333,336</b>	<b>\$3,083,515</b>
Change in Net Assets		\$(623,330)	\$795,630
Net Assets - Beginning of Year		\$4,088,310	\$3,292,680
Net Assets - End of Year		\$3,464,980	\$4,088,310



- 76% Programs & Services
- 14% Management & General
- 10% Fundraising



- 72% Government Revenues
- 31% Community Support
- 3% Debt Forgiveness, Miscellaneous



# Thank you, 2021-2022 contributors!

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Donors who give more than \$1000 each year make an unbelievable impact on our ability to break the cycle of domestic violence. You inspire us.

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*Key staff members are on Women's Advocates' Support Team. Members in the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year:*

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- Alison Canty, Manager of Shelter Operations
- Roxy Walker, Manager of Shelter Advocacy
- Yulanda Williams, Director of Finance (From June 2022)
- Nikki Beasley, Director of Housing Stability (From June 2022)



# Our History

1971



A small group of women set out to meet the needs of women in crisis with a divorce rights booklet and a legal assistance line.

1973



Volunteers began sheltering women and children in their own homes.

1975



The neighboring property is purchased and Women's Advocates helps form the Consortium for Battered Women.

1987



National Domestic Violence Awareness Month is observed for the first time.

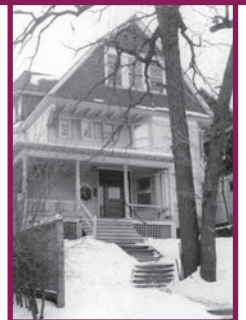
1972

Women's Advocates is incorporated as a nonprofit.



1974

On October 11, 1974, Women's Advocates opens as the first shelter in the nation for victim-survivors of domestic abuse.



1978

Minnesota passed first-of-its-kind legislation that gave state funds to battered women's shelters.



1991

The third property is purchased. The three adjoining homes now shelter up to 50 victim-survivors and children.



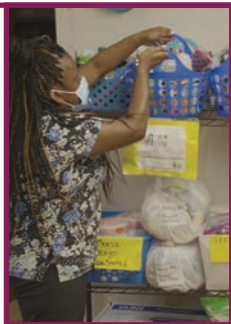


## 1994



Congress passes the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in response to increasing domestic violence.

## 2003



The Junior League of Saint Paul introduces a model for volunteerism. By 2004, a record 472 volunteers helped at the shelter.

## 2009



Women's Advocates initiates housing assistance for families leaving the shelter through the Rapid Re-Housing national effort.

## 2020



Women's Advocates stays strong through COVID-19 pandemic by temporarily moving shelter services into a hotel setting.

## 1997

A group of Minnesota women launch the Silent Witness Initiative in memory of individuals who died as a result of domestic violence.



## 2007

The R.O.S.E. Aftercare Program was launched, and began advocacy services for families once they leave the shelter.



## 2016

Women's Advocates expands its children's programming to support therapeutic interventions and safety planning.



## 2021

Pop-Up Advocacy begins in the Saint Paul community.



# 2021-2022



In-Kind Donation  
Event 2021



Tabling at Oasis of Love



Summer Cook-Out  
at Our Shelter

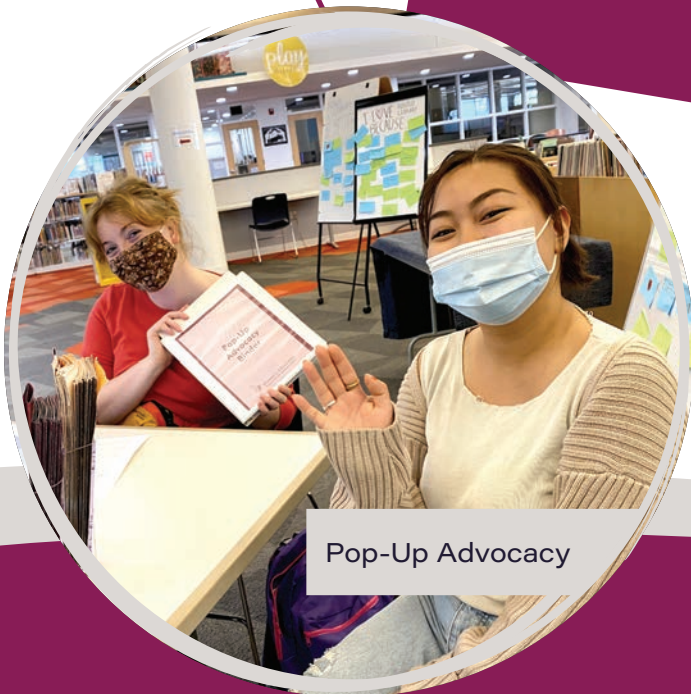




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Pop-Up Advocacy





[www.wadvocates.org](http://www.wadvocates.org)