



**Apna Ghar Talking Points for CHER November Newsletter**  
**UIC Center for Health Equity Research (CHER) Town Hall, October 13, 2020**  
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**1. How has COVID 19 impacted your community?**

1. *Across the world, **gender-based violence rates have risen in the face of the pandemic.** This is common when a pandemic, natural disaster, or political upheaval occurs. Research and our experience show that **pandemics and other large-scale crises exacerbate existing inequalities which are the roots of gender-based violence.***
2. *Economic: Lost wages due to layoffs, lack of customers, or having to quit job to be with children who are no longer in school. Often the survivors we serve are single mothers as a result of the abuse and the primary (and often sole) caregivers for their children*
  1. *Food insecurity. Often the pantries do not distribute food that's from one's ethnic cuisine or that helps one to maintain a traditional or healthy diet*
  2. *Fear of eviction/losing housing; lack of financial resources.*
  3. *Many of the survivors we serve are immigrants and ineligible for public benefits and government support and did not receive stimulus checks*
3. *Sheltering with person(s) harming you results in prolonged and more severe abuse/injuries. We have seen a documented increase in the frequency and severity of abuse. Also, women survivors are good at shielding children, however, they are now unable to do that while being stuck in the home with the abuser – so there is a documented increase in abuse to other members of the family.*
4. *Lack of private space for telehealth counseling sessions when sharing close quarters with others*
5. *Counseling via phone or WebEx/telehealth platforms. Some clients are more forthcoming when it's not a face to face appointment and others feel limited by not having in person contact with a counselor or advocate*
6. *For refugees and immigrants, language access and fear of deportation are looming issues that prevent many from seeking/receiving services including urgent care in hospitals or public benefits like unemployment*

**2. How has your organization responded to the community need?**

1. *Apna Ghar is continuing to see clients via Telehealth appointments and we never shut down our 24-hour hotline*
2. *For some time, the State of Illinois provided emergency funds to pay for survivors to receive temporary shelter in hotel suites or AirBnBs equipped with kitchens if they had to flee from abuse.*
3. *We closed the Shelter facility for a few months We reopened the Shelter in the summer at one third of our usual capacity.*
4. *All trainings and presentations are online*
5. *We have solicited donations of some ethnic-specific cuisine and created a partnership with \_ farm with the support of the Chicago Region Food Fund to provide healthy options*
6. *We have provided Lenovo Chromebooks and back to school supplies for our e-learners*
7. *We are working on health fair and financial support for survivors on the south side in partnership with the United African Organization through support from West Side United*



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**3. What have we learned through this pandemic? Are there any lessons learned/advice that you can share?**

- 1. Network beyond your silo to learn of resources and partnerships and funding opportunities that most of your colleagues don't know about That's how we learned about the Chicago Region Food System funding that we have received.*
- 2. We can continue to provide services and conduct training and advocacy while working remotely*
- 3. We can provide emergency, crisis and rapid response*
- 4. We can organize and uplift communities during crises*

**4. Can you mention a powerful and inspiring example that demonstrates community resilience?**

- 1. The hotel/AirBnB housing option created through advocacy with the state and city – it provided additional housing for survivors at the height of shelter in place when courts and other services were unavailable, and likely saved lives. Domestic violence survivors who could not be placed in shelters due to limited domestic violence shelter space were placed in hotels or AirBnBs if they had to flee an abusive home.*
- 2. Zoom forum organized by Executive Directors of South Asian domestic violence shelter across the country in the early days of the pandemic (spring 2020).*
- 3. Mutual Aid Networks*
- 4. Violence Prevention Committee report to Mayor*
- 5. Nonprofits across the country developed and disseminated online resource guides including services available for undocumented individuals and families.*