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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Domestic Violence Leaders Issue Statement for Domestic Violence Awareness Month

CFW-convened Domestic Violence Leaders Collaborative Calls for Expanded Commitment to End Gender-based Violence

LAKE COUNTY, IL – Chicago Foundation for Women (CFW), with the support of Alphawood Foundation, has been convening the Domestic Violence Leaders Collaborative since 2015 to bring together sector leaders to dig into deep-rooted challenges in addressing domestic violence. Together, the Collaborative has examined the effectiveness of policies and practices in the domestic violence sector in engaging diverse communities and meeting the needs of all those impacted by domestic violence, as well as the policies and practices of outside systems that impact survivors.

In recognition of October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month, 26 members of the Domestic Violence Leaders Collaborative have come together to issue the following statement, solidifying their commitment to expand the movement to end domestic violence to engage and support other movements for social justice:

The Domestic Violence Leaders Collaborative, representing nonprofit organizations working to end gender-based violence, envisions an equitable society that values all humanity, celebrating the richness of our diverse identities and strengths of communities.

This group was borne out of a vision for collaborative action and inclusivity -- in how we work, who we serve, how we advocate and who we engage. At the root of domestic violence is the misuse of power not only in the hands of an intimate partner, but also fueled by and intertwined with cultural, economic, political and social structures.

In recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we, the members of the Domestic Violence Leaders Collaborative (The Collaborative), are sharing our commitments to each other and the wider community.

- We commit to identify and address our own organizational barriers for enacting racial, gender and economic justice;
- to uplift the intersections of identity for survivors and their families, supporting solutions borne out of communities;
- to engage a wider community of allies, including men and people across gender identities;
- to be in solidarity with social justice and community-based movements; and
- to open our doors, working with other organizations where survivors, people who have done harm, and their families find peace, healing and justice amidst multiple layers of inequities.

Our commitments are our calls to action, first and foremost, to ourselves and each other. At a time of great social change, we are unified in embracing and evolving our practices that move us toward addressing domestic violence not as an isolated issue, but as central to larger participation in movements to build an equitable society. We will continue to provide and lift up our direct services and systems advocacy that are strong, while expanding our strategies and broadening our focus. For too long we have directed our advocacy at systems which provide support at the individual level of survivors and their families - police and the courts, child welfare, public assistance, and housing, to name a few – yet for some survivors and their communities, these systems further the inequities they experience, leading to punishment rather than a path to healing and resilience.

As a Collaborative, coming to terms with the history of the domestic violence movement was an imperative step, for hindsight gave us a clearer perspective of both gains and flaws, as well as how some survivors were not well-served or were left behind. We have gone through a journey together, often uncomfortable, for it challenges our beliefs, norms and practices. We know we are not yet done with this exploration and continue to learn from each other.

We share our call to action with you to encourage the wider community to join us in our work to end gender-based violence. We call on funders, community-based organizations, movement builders, and community members to work towards this vision, engaging with us as we enact our commitments.

Join us as we strive for social, cultural, economic and political justice in ending gender-based violence, as we join your work for transformative change.

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The Domestic Violence Leaders Collaborative*

A Safe Place; American Indian Center; Apna Ghar, Inc.; Arab American Family Services; Between Friends; Center for Advancing Domestic Peace; Chicago Coalition for the Homeless; Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women's Network; Chicago Workers' Collaborative; Connections for Abused Women and their Children; Domestic Violence Legal Clinic; Family Defense Center; Family Rescue; Family Shelter Service; Hana Center; Haven House; Healing to Action; Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence; KAN-WIN; Latinos Progresando; Mujeres Latinas en Accion; Mutual Ground; Sarah's Inn; South Suburban Family Shelter; WINGS; YWCA Evanston/North Shore.

* Alphawood Foundation and Chicago Foundation for Women provide funding support for the convening of the Domestic Violence Leaders Collaborative, which is made up of grantees from both foundations.

About the Domestic Violence Leaders Collaborative

By coming together as leaders in the field to be in dialogue with one another, we set out to find common ground, challenge ourselves to think about our long-held practices and beliefs, and acknowledge both milestones and failures of the history of domestic violence work in order to redefine our path forward. We looked at our own policies and practices to chart our progress and to identify the communities and groups we haven't engaged well. We also discussed the policies and practices of outside systems (housing, child welfare, criminal justice, healthcare, etc.) that have an impact on survivors of gender-based violence, recognizing the accomplishments and deficits here as well.

We know that though the domestic violence sector serves thousands of individuals every year, survivors of abuse don't always come to domestic violence and sexual assault agencies. Some might not seek our services because they aren't aware these services exist; they think that they do not qualify for our services; they do not feel welcome; they have had a negative experience or heard negative comments from others. And we know that domestic violence cannot be solved by only domestic violence agencies.

In dialogue with one another, we have gained new and renewed perspectives of our work, continuously grounding ourselves in a worldview of domestic violence not as a single issue but systemic in the larger fabric of community, deeply intertwined with racial, economic, and gender inequity. As we look to the social and political movements that are rising up to work for justice, we know it is time for us to change. Those who came before us were brave enough to step forward and blaze a path to get us to where are today. It is up to us to take that work and shift the paradigm so that we can link to movements if we are to end all forms of violence. Our work will create transformative paths so future generations will be that much closer to realizing a world free from violence.

About A Safe Place

Founded in 1978, A Safe Place is the leading advocate for eliminating domestic violence in northern Illinois, and is Lake County, Illinois' only provider of services exclusively for victims of domestic violence. A Safe Place provides emergency shelter, permanent housing, a 24-hour crisis line (847-249-4450), court and non-legal advocacy, individual, group, and children's counseling, art therapy, family visitation services, batterer intervention services; and community outreach, prevention education, and professional training. Our service area includes Lake, McHenry, and northern Cook counties in Illinois; however, our clients come to us from across the state, region, and country. For more information about A Safe Place, visit www.asafeplaceforhelp.org, [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#).

About Chicago Foundation for Women

Chicago Foundation for Women invests in women and girls as catalysts, building strong communities for all. CFW funds organizations working to solve the biggest problems facing women and girls: economic insecurity, violence, and access to health care and information. In addition to grantmaking, CFW invests in developing women leaders and advocates, and brings together diverse coalitions to collaborate, share resources and develop solutions. To learn more, visit www.cfw.org