

# Pandemic Provokes Increased Needs in Vital Services



## COVID-19 UPDATE: Our Work is Even More Essential

We didn't know what to expect when the global pandemic began to impact our community. **We knew from experience that need for our services rises in times of great stress, however, we could not anticipate this level of need.** Experts on intimate partner violence estimate the proportion of physical abuse has risen 80% over the previous three years. A large hospital in Boston reported that as stay at home orders lifted, victims arrived with broken bones and bruised or punctured organs, injuries that indicated the victims delayed seeking care for fear of infection at a hospital, clinic or shelter - the devil you know (abuse) is better than the devil you don't know (COVID-19).

Thanks to our community partners and donors, we were able to implement policies and procedures to protect our clients and staff from COVID-19 while maintaining vital services throughout this crisis. As a trusted community partner, current and new clients turned to us at a time when some victims across the country and world chose to stay silent and stay home, fearing the virus more than the abuse.

With the help of numerous organizations and individuals like you, we have provided life-saving, vital support to many in our community seeking safety and assistance to have a roof over their heads,

food for their families, and meeting basic needs. We continue to provide valuable services AND flatten the curve.

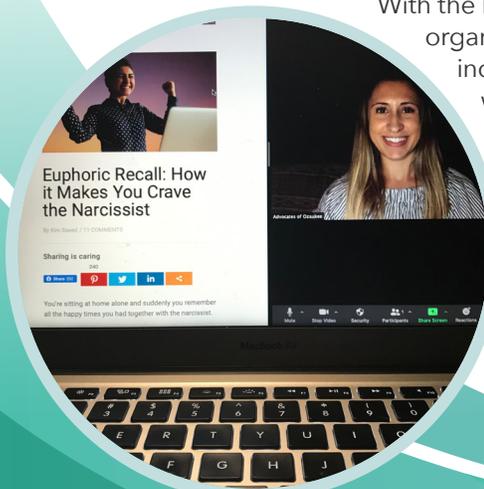
The statistics on this page illustrate the increasing need for our services now, as the pandemic continues to wreak havoc in Wisconsin and the nation and world. The story of Vivian, on the next page, puts a face on the many, many individuals who turn to us in this time of global, national, and local crisis.

We hope that as you read Vivian's story, and see the quality and compassionate care that Advocates provides to our clients and the community, you will join us in this mission. Please make a donation that is meaningful to you to support all the individuals - women, children, and men - who need us today, tomorrow, throughout the pandemic and beyond. Your contribution ensures that people are safe and secure now, and start the journey toward healing for generations to come. Please join us in giving.

Thank you for your support,  
Lucia Francis, Board President  
Barb Fischer, Executive Director



**Natasha Keiser, Child Advocate,** prepares to mail support packets for children's group members



**Alyssa Ellis, facilitates virtual support group for survivors of domestic violence**

## The Pandemic's Impact Upon a Survivor:

Vivian, a former shelter client, has been struggling significantly during the COVID-19 crisis. We first connected with Vivian in December of 2018. Due to domestic violence, she had been chronically homeless for years in Indiana and Wisconsin. Vivian explained that there were many times when she was on the street and at one particularly low point resorted to eating dirt due to hunger. In March of 2019, we were able to assist with a move into low income housing, where she still resides today.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, she has not been given any hours at her restaurant job, has had zero income, had not received any unemployment, did not receive her stimulus check, did not receive her tax refund and her social security disability is still pending. She also suffered a severe case of shingles during the lock down. Despite all of this, Vivian has been learning to become a great advocate for herself and is determined to persevere.

Vivian called recently to report that she received a response from letters she recently wrote to her state representatives pleading for help in getting the funds to which she is entitled. She received a quick response: her stimulus check was deposited into her bank account; she secured the unemployment to which she has been entitled, back dated to April; and her tax refund. She continues to follow up regularly on her disability status.

Vivian expressed gratitude to Advocates and said that out of all of the shelters and programs she has turned to, Advocates has been by far the most supportive. We were able to offer her a \$100 gift card from United Way of Greater Milwaukee each month throughout the pandemic, assisted her in rent and utility bills until she was able to adjust her rent payment to \$0 due to having no income now, assisted her in obtaining her much needed medications, regularly dropped off donated meals, and provided several taxi vouchers to allow her to get to the food pantry. Without our help, Vivian said she doesn't believe she would have been able to make it through the past several months and believes she would have ended up back on the street.

The conversation brought tears to my eyes so I thought I would share it with you. It's a perfect example of why we're here and do what we do. Imagine what would happen to a woman like Vivian during this pandemic if we were not here? With your help, we will not have to imagine that possibility.

—Charlotte Coenen, Community and Housing Advocate

**Our work is essential and so is community support!  
Please consider donating to our efforts to provide domestic  
and sexual violence awareness, advocacy, safety and justice.**

**WE RELY ON CONTRIBUTIONS FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS  
LIKE YOU. PLEASE HELP US AS WE WORK TO RESTORE SAFETY,  
HOPE, HEALTH, AND RESPECT TO THE LIVES OF OTHERS.**

**THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL  
ABUSE SERVICES WE PROVIDE ARE  
MORE VITAL THAN EVER. PANDEMIC  
CIRCUMSTANCES HIGHLIGHT THE  
NEED IS EVEN GREATER NOW.**

I want to thank you all for the food and gift cards brought to me by Alyssa. This has been very hard times since COVID-19 became a part of my new norm. I so appreciate everyone of the staff for being so kind. I like the Zoom meetings and a chance to tap into the support of Alyssa and Pam whether it is a kind word to uplift or finding gratitude for others in a dark time. Seeing other women has also helped.

It is so good to know that you are there at meetings or a support phone call. I haven't left my apartment very often because of my fear of catching the virus. My age and compromised immune system keep me close to home. Your help and kindness has meant the world to me. Hugs to all and love. Thank you.



*Shaina Buckner, Community Sexual Assault Advocate conducts virtual Sexual Assault support group*

**Follow us on Facebook, Instagram & Twitter to get up-to-date information on programs & events.**