Data Report

2024

Domestic Violence Co-Location Program

Acknowledgments

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Key Terms

The Domestic Violence Co-Location Program uses the following terms:

DVCLP: an abbreviation of the Domestic Violence Co-Location Program. The DVCLP is an innovative and collaborative program aimed at building the systemic capacity of the Illinois Department of Children and Families (DCFS) to effectively respond to families experiencing domestic violence and meeting the needs of families experiencing both domestic violence and the child welfare system.

DVCLA: an abbreviation of the Domestic Violence Co-Location Advocate. DVCLAs are employed by a local partner domestic violence agency and work in DCFS offices. The role of the DVCLA is to help build the systemic capacity of child welfare investigative, intact, and permanency workers from DCFS and private agencies to more effectively respond to families experiencing domestic violence, work with all members of the family experiencing domestic violence, and link the family with services and concrete supports.

DCFS: an abbreviation of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. The mission of DCFS is to protect children who are reported to be abused or neglected, and to increase their families' capacity to safely care for them.

Domestic violence: a pattern of violent and controlling strategies, including physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological abuse, used by a person to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner.

Adult survivor: the parent who has experienced domestic violence and the child welfare system (a.k.a. the non-offending parent).

Child survivor: the child who has witnessed or experienced domestic violence and the child welfare system.

Person who uses violence and coercive control (PUVCC): the person who perpetrates domestic violence.

Partner Domestic Violence Agency (PDVA): the domestic violence agency that is partnered with the local DCFS office to hire, employ, and supervise the DVCLA.

Child Welfare Contributing Agency (CWCA): the private agencies that DCFS contracts with to provide services and supports, including service plan development and oversight, and foster care. CWCAs were formerly called Purchase of Service (POS) agencies.

Key 2024 DVCLP Takeaways

The Domestic Violence Co-Location Program (DVCLP) is an innovative and collaborative program aimed at building the systemic capacity of the Illinois Department of Children and Families (DCFS) to effectively respond to families experiencing domestic violence and meeting the needs of families experiencing both domestic violence and the child welfare system.

- In 2024, the DVCLP served:
  - **499** families
  - **1,393** individuals
  - **872** children

- **78.6% of DVCLP cases involved families of color**. African American families were overrepresented among cases at each program site, continuing a trend of overrepresentation in the program and aligning with existing research that African American families are disproportionately impacted by the child welfare system in Illinois.

- **54% of cases involved direct contact** between a DVCLA and one or more family members.

- Domestic Violence Co-Located Advocates (DVCLAs) **report positive experiences working with caseworkers and families** to provide domestic violence education and connection to services. Caseworkers and families expressed anecdotally that the DVCLA's institutional advocacy directly improved outcomes for adult and child survivors of domestic violence.

- The majority of caseworkers working with DVCLAs **received information** (82%) and **demonstrated an increased understanding about domestic violence dynamics (68%).**

- **42% of adult survivor cases with known investigative outcomes were unfounded,** and 37% of PUVCC in cases with known outcomes were indicated.

- Among cases with outcomes known to the DVCLAs**, 61% of children involved in the program remained with their adult survivor parent** in 2024, a 7% increase from 2023.

- **397 adult survivors, 500 child survivors, and 59 PUVCCs received referrals, services, and concrete support** related to domestic violence.

- The number of **near-fatal, high-lethality cases identified by DVCLAs increased a striking 78%** compared to 2023, suggesting that DVCLAs are intervening in increasingly dangerous cases even as case counts declined.

01
Introduction

Note:

1. Similar details about the DVCLP model, history, and language have been included in previous annual publications. To review specific data and stories from the program in 2024, skip to Chapter 2 of this report.
2. Data for the previous 2023 report erroneously excluded the month of October. 2023 numbers in this report have been corrected and may appear different than numbers reported previously.

What is the DVCLP?

Overview

The **Domestic Violence Co-Location Program (DVCLP)** is an innovative and collaborative program aimed at building the systemic capacity of the Illinois Department of Children and Families (DCFS) to effectively respond to families experiencing domestic violence and meeting the needs of families experiencing both domestic violence and the child welfare system. Supported by local and statewide partners and stakeholders, the DVCLP places domestic violence advocates in DCFS offices to work with child welfare professionals and to support families experiencing domestic violence.

Need

Responding effectively to families experiencing domestic violence has historically been and is contemporaneously challenging for child welfare systems. Although **domestic violence is present in 30 to 60% of child welfare caseloads nationally**[1], and is one of the three most common circumstances present in the lives of families coming to the attention of DCFS, domestic violence cases are some of the most complex and difficult cases for child welfare workers to navigate. Child welfare workers often struggle to understand the dynamics of domestic violence, accurately identify the roles of the adult survivor and the parent using violence and coercive control (PUVCC), partner with the adult survivor in non-punitive ways, foster avenues of accountability with the PUVCC, exercise alternatives to removing children from their homes, and provide concrete supports and services that meet the needs of children and their families. Families also are fearful of losing their children when DCFS becomes involved in their lives, and many survivors of domestic violence do not reach out for help due to this fear.

These challenges are heightened amidst understaffed child welfare offices, and the disproportionate representation of families of color in the child welfare system. More specifically, **across the country, 53% of African American children will experience a child welfare investigation by age 18**, compared to 33% of all children.[2] In Illinois, African American children have been over-represented at every decision point in the child welfare system.[3] As of October 2020, **43% of children in foster care in Illinois are African American**, although African American children are only 15% of the state's general population, revealing an overrepresentation of 28% in foster care.[4] **In the Cook County region, where two DVCLP sites are located, the percentage of foster care children who are African American is 2.5 times more than the presence of African Americans in the general population.**[5] In the **Northern Region of DCFS**, **which includes two more of the DVCLP sites**, **African American children are overrepresented in foster care 5 times their presence in the general population,** demonstrating the highest racial disproportionality in the state.[6]

Ineffectively responding to families experiencing domestic violence - in part by unnecessarily removing children from their parents, deeming adult survivors to be neglectful, missing opportunities to connect all members of the family with needed concrete supports and services, and failing to foster avenues of accountability with the

PUVCC - perpetuates **systemic oppression**, **reduces the safety and stability** of families and communities, and **causes further trauma** for children. Collaboration between child welfare workers, domestic violence professionals, and other community partners and stakeholders has been established as an essential strategy to address these needs and avoid these harmful outcomes.

Program Model

Adapted from evidence-based programs in other states, **the DVCLP model places a Domestic Violence Co-Located Advocate (DVCLA), employed by a local partner domestic violence agency, in DCFS offices.** The role of the DVCLA is to help build the systemic capacity of child welfare investigative, intact, and permanency workers from DCFS and private agencies to more effectively respond to families experiencing domestic violence. The DVCLA also supports families during child welfare interventions, models and fosters meaningful engagement with the PUVCC in order to promote sustainable accountability, and facilitates linkages to domestic violence and community-based services.

The DVCLP is internally rooted in the Adult and Child Survivor Centered Approach ("the Approach"). The Approach was developed by the Quality Improvement Center on Domestic Violence in Child Welfare administered by Future Without Violence through the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. **The Approach is a philosophical underpinning that is family-centered, trauma-informed, strength-based, and equity-driven.** The Approach guides practitioners to address the physical as well as mental and emotional wellbeing of children who experience domestic violence and the child welfare system by **prioritizing their need to remain with the adult survivor in safety and stability**, which social science research has long established as the critical pathway toward healing from any trauma the domestic violence caused children to experience.

The Approach and practice of the DVCLP is aligned with national child welfare initiatives, such as the federal prevention-focused legislation of the Family First Services Prevention Act. The DVCLP in theory and practice is also aligned with statewide child welfare initiatives that focus on seeking, integrating, and elevating the family voice into interventions and partnering with families to build upon their strengths and buffer risks.

Goals

The DVCLP aims to improve outcomes for families and communities by:

- **Enhancing the safety, wellbeing, stability, and healing** for children and their families;
- **Preventing children exposed to domestic violence from entering foster care,** and reducing the number of children in foster care through supportive, robust, and effective front-end interventions, thereby saving money without jeopardizing safety;

- **Reducing systemic racism**, decreasing the disproportionality and disparity of Black children and families, and increasing equity;
- Cultivating **collaboration and greater coordination** among traditionally siloed systemic responses to families experiencing domestic violence; and
- **Reducing** the frequency, severity, and occurrence of **domestic violence**.

Role of DVCLA

The main responsibilities of the DVCLA are expanded upon below:

Consultation

The purpose of the "consultation" is to help **build the capacity** of child welfare professionals to adequately understand and interpret the dynamics and impact of domestic violence on the family, and to craft effective interventions that enhance the safety, wellbeing, stability, and healing of all members of the family. The DVCLAs support the child welfare workers in the DVCLA's assigned office by helping to identify the presence of domestic violence, understand the dynamics of domestic violence, and meet the families' needs.

Direct Contact

The purpose of "direct contact" is to **directly communicate with all members of the family** to assist and support the family during the child welfare intervention. In addition to working directly with the adult and child survivors, an important focus of the DVCLP is to meaningfully engage with the PUVCC to foster avenues of accountability. When engaging in direct contact with families, the DVCLA can, in part, provide:

- Information about child welfare;
- Support and education on domestic violence;
- Domestic violence safety planning;
- Crisis intervention;
- Advocacy;
- Expedited access to domestic violence services; and
- Referral to other community legal or social services.

By engaging in direct contact, the DVCLA may specifically be able to do the following:

- Participate in Home Visits, along with the child protection specialist, intact, or permanency worker;
- Participate in Child and Family Team Meetings, Administrative Case Reviews, juvenile court proceedings, and transitional visits between investigations, intact, and permanency teams;
- Communicate with the family about the nature and severity of the abuse, the connection between domestic violence and the child safety issues identified by DCFS, and information about options and resources;
- Assist in the identification of safe emergency shelter and other housing options;

- Identify the adult survivor's protective factors;
- Explore the impact of the domestic violence on the children;
- Provide advocacy and share information with the adult survivor about the child welfare system;
- Engage in domestic violence safety planning with the adult survivor and children, when appropriate;
- Connect the adult survivor and children with services either at DVCLA's partner domestic violence agency, another domestic violence agency or other social or legal services agencies;
- Provide referrals to and advocacy for services to address other needs, including emergency shelter, support groups, crisis intervention, legal representation, financial assistance, housing, and medical care; and
- Meet with the PUVCCs and connect them with batterer intervention services either at the DVCLA's Partner Domestic Violence Agency or another Illinois Department of Human Services approved Partner Abuse Intervention Program (PAIP), as well as with fatherhood programs or other community-based supports.

Training/Education

One of the main functions of the DVLCAs is to **help build the capacity of child welfare professionals to work effectively with families experiencing domestic violence**. In addition to consultations, the DVCLAs can conduct domestic violence training for child welfare professionals in collaboration with the DCFS Domestic Violence Intervention Program and the DCFS Office of Learning and Professional Development. Such training opportunities can foster collaboration and cross-systems advocacy to strengthen partnerships and enable a more coordinated community response to domestic violence. In addition to training child welfare professionals, the DVCLAs can provide internal training for staff at their respective partner domestic violence agencies. As such, the DVCLAs help build the capacity of their colleagues to understand the child welfare system, and the roles and responsibilities of child welfare workers.

Community Collaborations

The DVCLAs are encouraged to participate in existing collaborations related to domestic violence in their regions. The DVCLAs are also encouraged to **identify and foster opportunities for greater collaboration** between community and systemic stakeholders in responding to and supporting families experiencing domestic violence.

History

- **1999**: The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges publishes *Effective Interventions in Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment Cases: Guidelines for Policy and Practice* (a.k.a. The Greenbook), which continues to serve as the best practice guide on the intersection of child welfare and domestic violence. The DVCLP builds upon the tenets of The Greenbook.
- **2017, Summer:** DCFS and community partners travel to Florida to learn about the statewide domestic violence and child welfare co-location program there. The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges sponsors the site visit.
- **2017, Spring/Summer**: DCFS and its partners seek the passage of SB 646 bill to legislatively codify the DVCLP; the bill passes both houses unanimously; and the Governor signs P.A. 100-406 into law.
- **2017, Fall**: Illinois is selected as a Research and Capacity Building Project of the Quality Improvement Center on Domestic Violence in Child Welfare (QIC-DVCW) that is administered by Futures Without Violence. The QIC-DVCW is an initiative of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. The QIC-DVCW grant funds the DVCLP from October 2019 to October 2021. The federal grant tests the Adult and Child Survivor-Centered Approach.
- **2019, October**: The DVCLP launches in the Waukegan and Rockford DCFS offices, with A Safe Place and Remedies Renewing Lives as the respective partner domestic violence agencies.
- **2021, September**: The QIC-DVCW federal grants ends, and the two DVCLP sites are funded through private philanthropy.
- **2022, October:** Two new DVCLP sites are added, partnering Family Rescue with the 6201. S. Emerald, Chicago DCFS office, and Sarah's Inn with the 1911 S. Indiana, Chicago DCFS Office.
- **2023:** The DVCLP exists in four sites in Illinois and is primarily funded with state funding through the Illinois Department of Human Services.
- **2024, October:** The DVCLP is awarded a federal grant that allows the program to expand to two additional sites, partnering Sojourn Shelter and Services, Inc. with the DCFS office in Springfield, and the Violence Prevention Center of Southwestern Illinois with the DCFS office in Belleville. The grant also funds RTI International to conduct an evaluation of the DVCLP that includes all six sites.

Funding

From 2019 to 2021, a federal grant from the Quality Improvement Center on Domestic Violence in Child Welfare funded the DVCLP. From 2021 to 2022, philanthropy through ten private foundations and grantors funded the DVCLP. Throughout 2023 and 2024, state funds from the Illinois Department of Human Services primarily funded the DVCLP along with generous funding from the Schreiber Foundation (now Schreiber Philanthropy). In October 2024, the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence was awarded a federal grant to expand the DVCLP to two new sites and conduct an evaluation of the program from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services, Specialized Services for Abused Parents and Children. These two new sites began providing services in 2025.

Program Partner Descriptions

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

The mission of DCFS is to protect children who are reported to be abused or neglected and to increase their families' capacity to safely care for them; provide for the well-being of children in its care; provide appropriate, permanent families as quickly as possible for those children who cannot safely return home; support early intervention and child abuse prevention activities; and work in partnerships with communities to fulfill this mission. DCFS answers more than 234,500 calls to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline and provides services to 60,000 families annually through a staff of 3,800.

The Management Entity

Three organizations support the implementation of the DVCLP by serving as liaisons with DCFS, providing technical assistance and onboarding to the DVCLAs, drafting policies and procedures, planning and facilitating meetings, and collecting and analyzing data.

Ascend Justice: Ascend Justice is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Chicago, Illinois. Ascend Justice's mission is to empower individuals and families impacted by gender-based violence or the child welfare system to achieve safety and stability through holistic legal advocacy and system reform. Formerly known as the Domestic Violence Legal Clinic, Ascend Justice was founded in 1982 and has served survivors of gender-based violence with free legal services for more than forty years. Since 2005, Ascend Justice attorneys and volunteers have worked from offices inside the Cook County Domestic Violence Courthouse, providing onsite legal assistance to tens of thousands of survivors seeking Orders of Protection. Ascend Justice also offers the holistic legal advocacy necessary for survivors of gender-based violence to become safer and more independent, ranging from representation in child custody and support cases, immigration, housing, employment and consumer matters, and family defense issues. In recognition of the criminalization of survivors of gender-based violence, as well as the high proportion of incarcerated women who are survivors of gender-based violence, Ascend Justice launched a project to serve incarcerated survivors in 2021. To correct inequities and injustices that Ascend Justice clients experience, Ascend Justice's advocacy team leads initiatives and works in partnership with other advocacy organizations and social and legal services agencies across the state to strengthen programs and supports, craft new laws, and reform systems to work for survivors and families.

Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV): ICADV is a statewide membership organization working to eliminate domestic violence in Illinois and to create a more just, accepting, and safe society for everyone.

ICADV serves over 50 statewide agencies who provide direct service to survivors and their dependent children. Together with its member organizations, ICADV aims to increase access to ever-improving services for survivors of all backgrounds by advocating for strong policies that keep survivors safer and foster accountability with those who use violence and coercive control. ICADV educates the public on the root causes of domestic violence and focuses on preventing the cycle of violence from continuing.

The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence (The Network): The Network is a group of 40+ member organizations dedicated to improving the lives of those impacted by gender-based violence through education, public policy advocacy, and connecting community members with direct service providers. The Network leads collaborative work to imagine and realize radical ways to respond to and end gender-based violence, focusing on the intersections between systemic violence and gender-based violence. The Network also operates the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline.

Partner Domestic Violence Agencies

Four partner domestic violence agencies are part of the DVCLP that hire, employ, and supervise the DVCLAs.

A Safe Place: A Safe Place is the sole community-based provider of services exclusively addressing domestic violence in Lake County, Illinois. Through multi-faceted programs, A Safe Place assists victims in transforming their lives after domestic violence, prevents future abuse by addressing its root cause through abuser intervention programs, and educates the community about domestic violence. A Safe Place provides the following services: 24/7 hour hotline; 33-bed emergency shelter; evaluation and group education for perpetrators of abuse; supportive permanent and transitional housing for victims with on-site counseling, advocacy, and life skills education; counseling services for individuals and groups in English and Spanish throughout Lake County, including Gurnee, Lake Forest, and Lake Zurich; a Family Visitation Center that provides court-ordered supervised visitations and monitored custody exchanges in a safe environment for families of domestic violence; court house advocacy located in the 19th Circuit Courthouse in Waukegan to assist victims in filing orders of protection; community education programs; and prevention education. All of the domestic violence survivor services are free, confidential, and voluntary.

Family Rescue: Family Rescue is dedicated to eliminating domestic violence in the Chicago community by providing comprehensive support services and shelter to victims of domestic violence, particularly to abused women and their children. Family Rescue also engages in advocacy to promote future system change and encourages prevention through community education. The agency provides the following services: crisis intervention; safe shelter with short-term support; individual and group counseling; 24-hour bi-lingual crisis line; comprehensive legal advocacy; parenting and life management skills; economic empowerment and career connections; educational support; enhanced children/youth services; after school care; substance abuse recovery support; community education; and affordable housing. All of the domestic violence survivor services are free, confidential, and voluntary.

Remedies Renewing Lives (Remedies): Remedies, located in Winnebago County, Illinois, provides critical and lifesaving services to adults struggling with substance abuse and to victims of domestic violence and their children, and works to end the cycle of abuse and addiction through education and community involvement. Remedies provides a variety of domestic violence services in Winnebago and Boone Counties, including the only domestic violence shelter and 24-hour domestic violence hotline in that area. Each year, Remedies serves over 1,500 victims of domestic violence of which roughly 20% are children. Remedies provides a safe, supportive environment and critical, client-centered services designed to promote the healing of individuals and families. Remedies offers advocacy, education, counseling, case management, order of protection assistance, and emergency shelter for survivors of domestic violence. Remedies' shelter is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and all of the domestic violence survivor services are free, confidential, and voluntary.

Sarah's Inn: Located in Forest Park, Illinois, Sarah's Inn is a comprehensive domestic violence agency serving Chicago and 22 surrounding West Cook County suburban communities. The agency has seven off-site locations through partner agencies and area courthouses throughout Chicago and West Cook County. Sarah's Inn provides holistic intervention services to adults and children impacted by domestic violence, providing them necessary support and resources, and a safe environment to process and heal from the trauma they have experienced. The agency works in partnership with local stakeholders to run education and training programs to promote an appropriate community response to violence. The agency provides legal support services to help ensure that survivors of domestic violence receive equal rights and protection under the law. Sarah's Inn's Partner Abuse Intervention Program (PAIP) works with individuals who are ready to change their violent and controlling behavior choices in a community of honesty and accountability. Sarah's Inn's Together Strong Project works in partnership with parents, educators, and adolescents through school-based violence prevention education programming, providing critical information for adults and students on how to prevent relationship violence, how to protect themselves against potential harassment, and how to seek help if they are a victim of violence or abuse. Sarah's Inn has a 24-hour crisis line, which is a free and confidential resource for safety planning. The agency is certified through the Illinois Certified Domestic Violence Professionals (ICDVP) Board as an official training site for Illinois Certified Domestic Violence Professionals and Illinois Certified Partner Abuse Intervention Professionals. All of the domestic violence survivor services are free, confidential, and voluntary.

In October of 2024, two additional domestic violence agencies joined the DVCLP. Starting in 2025, these agencies also will provide data for the program.

Sojourn Shelter and Services, INC.: located in Springfield, Illinois, has a mission to provide survivors with safe shelter and services to help them grow and build an independent life free of violence. The agency services a 5-county area that consist of Sangamon, Christian, Montgomery, Menard, and Logan County. Individuals fleeing from other counties or states are welcome to Sojourn's services. The agency offers a 24-hour hotline where survivors have access to emergency shelter services, court services, or to receive emotional support and guidance with their situation.

For in-depth services, Sojourn also offers emergency shelter services through a 32-bed shelter that includes comprehensive wrap-around services such as individual sessions, group sessions, referrals, and advocacy for adult and child survivors of domestic violence.

In addition, Sojourn offers non-residential individual and group services in-person or virtually for any adult or child survivor who needs on-going support and education on domestic violence. Sojourn also offers court advocacy, assistance with emergency orders of protections, plenary orders of protections, and support through criminal court hearings in Sangamon, Christian, Montgomery, Menard, and Logan County. Sojourn has a long-standing relationship with law enforcement where police report all domestic violence incidents to Sojourn, allowing the agency to follow up with the survivor and offer services. Lastly, Sojourn has an onsite attorney to help navigate the financial and emotional struggles of the court as a result of domestic violence. All of Sojourn's services are voluntary, confidential, non-judgmental, all-inclusive and free of charge.

Violence Prevention Center of Southwestern Illinois (VPC): Located in Belleville, Illinois, VPC provides free comprehensive services to over 1,400 survivors of domestic violence and their children in St. Clair, Monroe, and Randolph counties in Illinois. The agency believes that all people have the right to be free from harm, to be respected, and to determine and pursue their own goals. Operating with these values allows the agency to meet clients where they are and empowers people to create their best life. VPC accomplishes this through five core programs:

- 24-Hour Crisis Hotline - allows survivors to reach VPC when they need VPC. A specially trained operator is able to guide a caller through immediate safety planning, offer a compassionate ear, answer questions, and provide referrals.
- Emergency Shelter – offers survivors an alternative to homelessness or staying with their abuser. The shelter provides a clean, safe, and "home-like" environment along with case management and life skills training
- Legal Advocacy – extends relief from the overwhelming judicial processes. Legal Advocates can provide safety planning, assistance in filing court orders, and emotional support through the entire legal process. Advocates also build strong relationships with local law enforcement to help ensure that victims are treated with the dignity they deserve
- Counseling- provides survivors and their children with comprehensive, focused counseling services. Including individual and group counseling and support groups, the counseling program works in partnership to empower clients to reclaim their choices and their future.
- Prevention and Education – brings awareness and change to the local communities we serve. Signs of domestic violence are frequently hidden and normalized. The Prevention and Education Program allows us to bring awareness to schools, civic and religious groups, and local professional who can help them identify problems in their community, break barriers, and create lasting change in the way the public views domestic violence.

VPC is proud to continue to be a respected resource in the communities it serves. The agency is an important collaborator in several multidisciplinary teams. These teams allow VPC to help create policies and best practices surrounding the way survivors of domestic violence are treated.

Pairings

The following pairings exist between the partner domestic violence agencies and DCFS offices:

- A Safe Place – 2133 Belvidere Road, Waukegan
- Remedies Renewing Lives – 175 Executive Pkwy, Rockford
- Family Rescue – 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago
- Sarah's Inn –2020 W. Roosevelt Road/1026 Damen, Chicago; 4415 Harrison Street, Hillside
- Sojourn Shelter and Services, Inc. - 1124 N. Walnut Street, Springfield (funded in 2024; launched in 2025)
- Violence Prevention Center of Southwestern Illinois – 7650 Magna Drive, Belleville (funded in 2024; launched in 2025)

DCFS Teams and Processes

DCFS itself carries out some of its responsibilities while sub-contracting with private agencies to carry out other responsibilities. This means that families may be involved with DCFS and/or a Child Welfare Contributing Agency (CWCA) agency during the various stages of child welfare interventions. There are three stages of child welfare interventions: investigations, intact families services, and permanency. Across the state, DCFS conducts all investigations. For intact family and permanency services, DCFS sometimes contracts with private agencies and at other times and in certain locations provides these services itself.

The following describes each of the DCFS stages of intervention:

Investigations

DCFS Department of Child Protection investigators receive referrals about children who have experienced alleged abuse or neglect from the Illinois Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline. Investigators are tasked with concluding if parents or caregivers have abused or neglected a child(ren) while also determining if a child(ren) is safe. DCFS investigators have the power to take protective custody of children, thereby removing them from their families. At the end of the investigation, investigative conclusions about whether abuse or neglect occurred will be made.

Intact Family Services

Following investigations and sometimes during investigations, intact family services may be offered to families. Intact family services aim to provide services and support to families while children remain with their families. Intact family services include caseworker oversight, service plans, service referrals, and family engagement in services. Intact family services are voluntary for families, unless ordered by a judge as part of a juvenile court case.

Permanency Services

Permanency services occur when families are involved in juvenile court. If children have been removed from their parents, a juvenile court case follows. (Less commonly, a juvenile court case may occur when the children are still with their parents.) Permanency services include overseeing out-of-home placements such as foster care, facilitating visitation between parents and children, obtaining an integrated assessment, developing a service plan, making referrals for services, evaluating participation and progress in services, and providing the court with recommendations regarding the permanency goal for the family.

02

DVCLP in 2024

Introduction

DVCLAs track data about their consultations with child welfare caseworkers and direct contact with families. These service activities are reported to the DVCLP Management Entity on a monthly basis and records are de-identified. The following data analysis is based on these records from January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024.

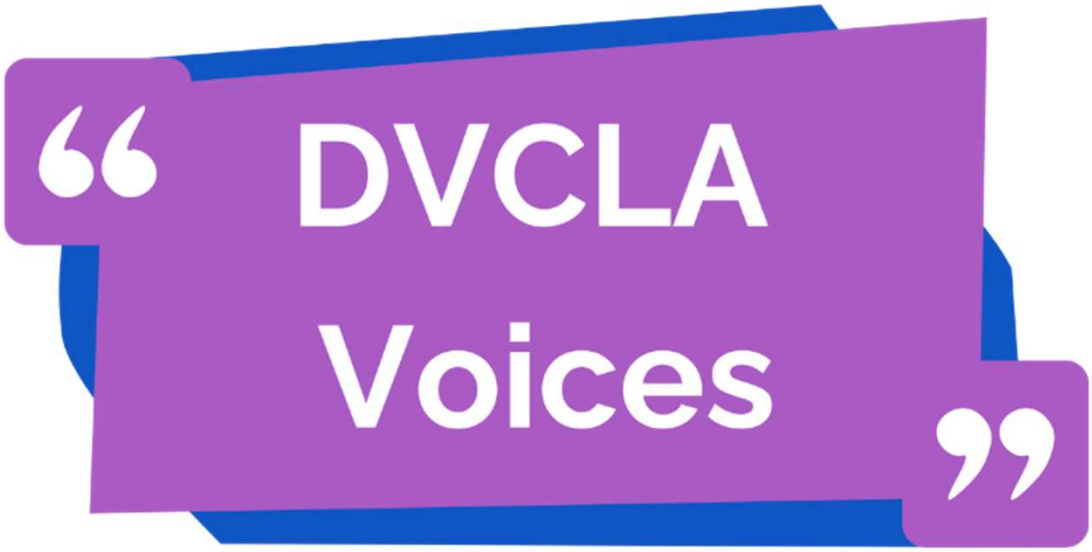
Data Limitations

The nature of the DVCLP places limitations on the data available for the program to review. Limitations of the data in this report include the following:

1. DVCLAs do not always have knowledge about all the data points for a family. DVCLAs work for their independent domestic violence agencies and not DCFS. Therefore, they do not have access to DCFS's internal records system, the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). DVCLAs learn details about and outcomes of cases without uniformity and only when they are involved in a consultation or direct contact. Because DVCLAs may consult with a child welfare worker or work with a family during only one point in the child welfare intervention, they may not have knowledge of all data points. Also, they collect demographic data from families on a voluntary basis. Due to these factors, reporting rates vary by data point.
2. The DVCLP data collection that informs this report is not a scientific research study conducted by an expert evaluator. There is no control group to compare against the families served by DVCLAs. Administrative data from DCFS is significantly limited. This means that no causal conclusions can be drawn from this report; however, there are important correlations that the report establishes.
3. Caseworkers have discretion on when to consult with the DVCLAs on cases. As a result, the cases that a DVCLA consults on, and the data they record, might not be representative of the type and outcome of cases that occur at the DCFS site. DVCLAs might only be able to report on the cases that occur in certain DCFS stages due to case worker discretion or DCFS leadership instruction.
4. All DVCLP services are confidential, which means that data collected and reported by DVCLAs is de-identified. This anonymity means that there is a limited perspective on some case elements. For example, there is no data on the length of cases carried over month to month.
5. Data in the "Caseworker Outcomes" section of this report is based on DVCLA observations and assessments. Each DVCLA brings their own perspective to this data, and approaches to recording these outcome data changes when DVCLAs turnover.
6. Due to the voluntary design of this data collection process, not every case is accompanied by case notes and each DVCLA chooses to emphasize different items in their notes. For instance, the analysis of high-lethality cases is generated from key interactions highlighted in DVCLA case notes but the case notes might not contain every case involving lethality indicators.
7. In 2024 the DVCLP program faced extensive turnover and co-location challenges such that some DVCLAs were working outside of the DCFS offices. Consequently, DVCLAs were unable to record encounters at the rate of previous years. Numbers in this report may reflect these programmatic administrative challenges.

Importance of Collaboration

Collaboration for the purpose of building systemic capacity and meeting the needs of families experiencing domestic violence is at the heart of the DVCLP. Caseworkers who ask questions and are receptive to new information, leadership that facilitates conversations between DVCLA and caseworkers, as well as DVCLAs who work alongside DCFS workers to help survivors are all examples of collaboration that can be attributed to positive program and family outcomes.



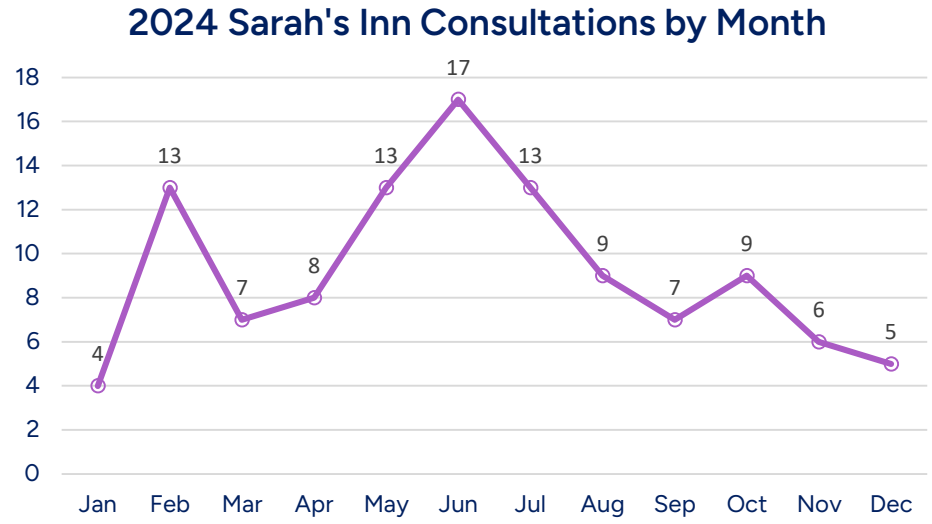
"There was a survivor that is a minor and was pregnant with her boyfriend's baby. The boyfriend was older. She would run away from home and she and the boyfriend were living in an empty garage in winter. The [DCFS] supervisor clued me in to find housing for her because they couldn't do it in the agency since she was underaged. During that time, while we were looking for housing the investigator and I would meet with her. We sat her down and got her Medicaid and Link. We safety planned with her because according to her she did want to leave, and she did. She dropped out of her school and we registered her back into school. They were letting her live with her baby in a foster home until the baby was one year. She did get employment and when she does turns eighteen she can go and get an apartment with her baby. So I think there was a positive impact because she's back in school, no longer with him, and the foster home is two hours away. Everything is going good with her."

Program Challenges

In 2024 the DVCLP faced vacancies and co-location issues that routinely impacted program efficacy. Establishing a co-location program takes time to integrate the DVCLA into a shared office space, build relationships with caseworkers, and create a reputation as a reliable resource. As a result, and to be expected, program partners with vacancies and co-location challenges had lower caseloads than their more established counterparts in the program.

The Waukegan DVCLP site had a co-located DVCLA throughout 2024, which is reflected in its comparatively high caseloads. The Waukegan site had the highest number of consultations and direct contacts by a wide margin, with more than 2 times the amount of consultations than the next largest site and almost 6 times the direct contacts.

At S. Indiana Chicago, the location with the second most case counts, there was a co-located DVCLA through June of 2024, when co-location ended at the site due to construction. The site also experienced turnover around the same time, with a supervisor filling the role of DVCLA from July of 2024 to December. The impact of these challenges on case counts is clear, with the number of cases counts per month reaching a peak in June, before tapering off at the end of the year.

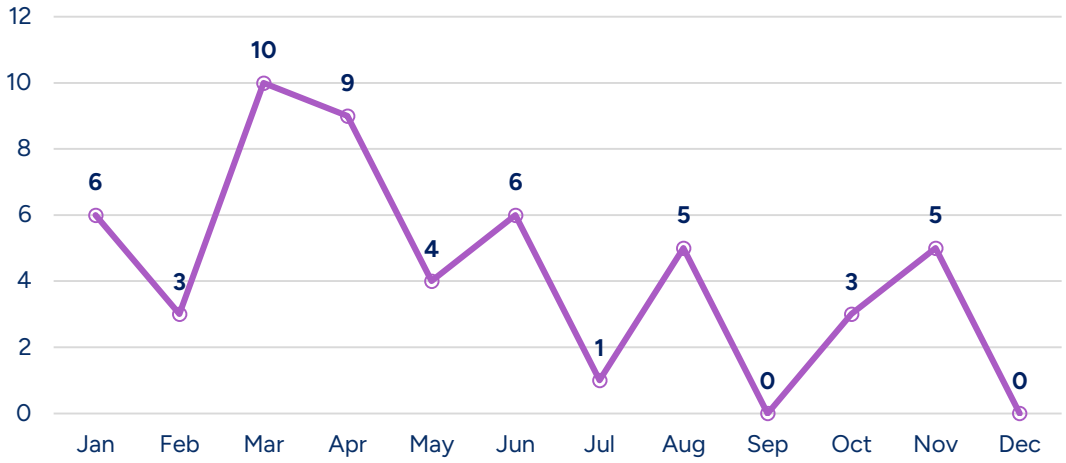


The Rockford (Remedies) and S. Emerald Chicago (Family Rescue) sites faced significant challenges. For all of 2024, the Rockford DVCLA was not able to co-locate at the assigned DCFS site, making relationship building difficult and limiting potential opportunities to consult with case workers.

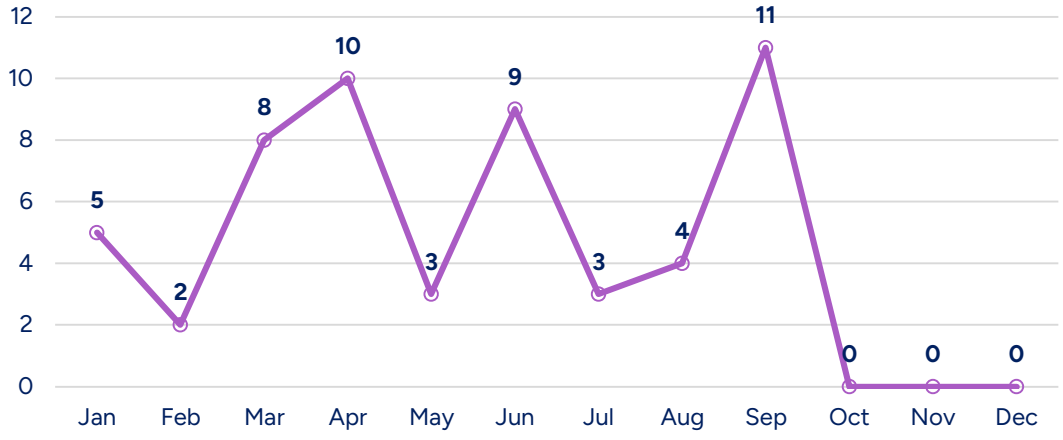
When co-located, DVCLAs can host meet and greets, introduce themselves to case workers, build relationships that encourage DCFS staff to reach out, remain visible as a resource, and respond to real-time needs. DCLAs can then help caseworkers understand the nature of their role and the dynamics of domestic violence. DVCLAs who were co-located expressed positive interactions at meet and greets and during one-on-ones that allowed them to explain their role, address caseworker bias, and build a rapport that translated to a higher number of consultations. As such, once the DVLCAs are able to establish rapport based upon face-to-face interactions and connection, referrals to the DVCLA increase.

In addition to being unable to co-locate, the Rockford site, along with S. Emerald Chicago site, experienced turnovers in September 2024, with a new DVCLA onboard in October at both sites. New DVCLAs must begin their own process of building relationships and rapport with DCFS case workers, which takes time and consistent in-person contact. The effects of these turnovers can be seen in the sites' consultation counts. Most notably at Family Rescue, the turnover of the DVCLA in September flat-lined cases for the remainder of 2024.

2024 Rockford Consultatons by Month



2024 Family Rescue Consultations by Month



DVCLA Voices

Why Co-Location Matters

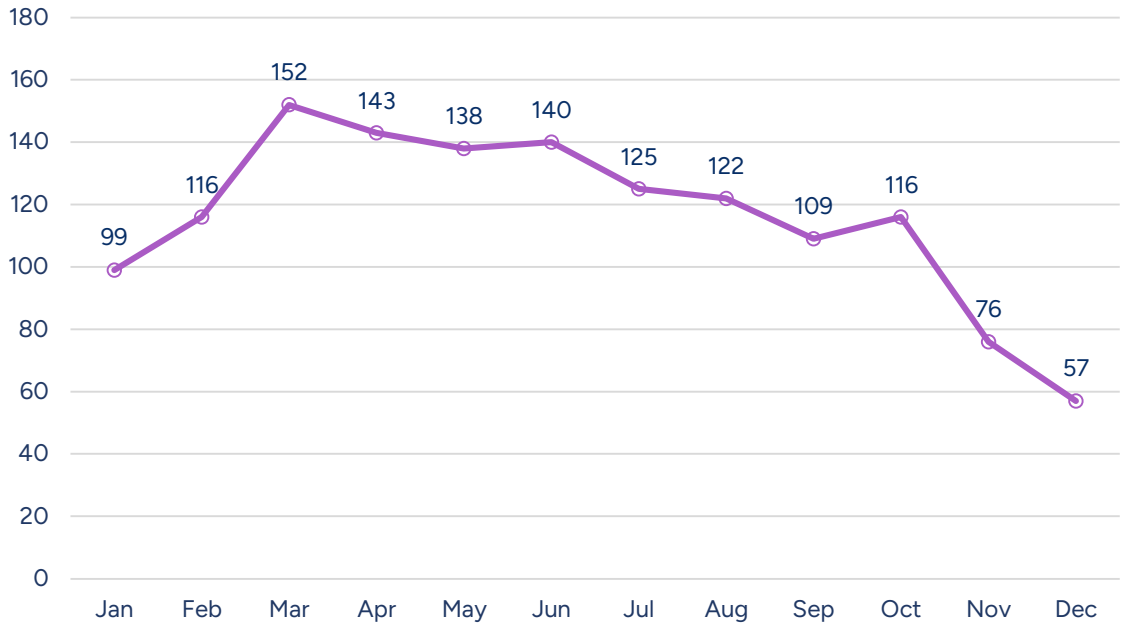
"At the Meet and Greet we had, one of the caseworkers come up to me really frustrated with the outcome of the conversations he was having with a client. He burst out, "I just don't understand why she stayed, or why they all stay." I was able to ask him, you know, "where's your question coming from? Is it from a level of frustration? Is it concern? What is it that you're wanting to accomplish?" He said to me, "I just really don't understand why they stay." So I explained to him there's many reasons why a survivor can stay. There's a lot of barriers that a victim encounters, and they can leave and very well at times have to come back for other reasons. So I started explaining to him the reasons why your survivor may stay in a relationship, why a survivor may leave and then come back. Why a survivor fears obtaining this order of protection or taking that step. Once we finished the conversation, he was so grateful. He said to me, "You don't understand how much I appreciate you taking the time to explain that to me."

Program Services Data

Numbers Served

In 2024 **the DVCLP served 499 families** – a unit comprising of survivors, their children, and the person causing harm - through consultation with DCFS caseworkers and direct contact with family members. This was a 21% decrease in families served from 2023. This decrease in families served is steady from 2023, a year in which the program also faced significant turnover and co-location issues, indicating that these program challenges continue to limit the fidelity and scope of DVCLA work. **The program served 1393 individuals across all four program sites**, which includes adult survivors, child survivors, and PUVCCs. **The program specifically served 872 children**. Since 2023, the number of children served decreased 13% and the number of individuals served decreased 16%.

Individuals Served Program Wide in 2024



The number of families, individuals, and children served by the DVCLP varies significantly by location. A Safe Place served the highest number of individuals over the course of the year, continuing trends observed in 2023. In 2024, A Safe Place served 866 individuals, 62% of all individuals served in the program. Sarah's Inn served 272 individuals (20%), Remedies served 159 individuals (11%), and Family Rescue served 96 individuals (7%).[7] DVCLAs do not always learn the number of children in each family whose case they consult on, so these figures are likely an undercount of the full reach of the program.

Program Wide Service Totals in 2024

Location	Families Served	Children Served	Individuals Served
Rockford - Remedies Renewing Lives	53	114	159
Waukegan - A Safe Place	278	565	866
S. Emerald Chicago - Family Rescue	56	33	96
S. Indiana Chicago - Sarah's Inn	112	160	272
Program Wide Total	*499*	*872*	*1393*

Demographic Data

Demographic data for families served by DVCLP is limited by what is voluntarily reported to the DVCLAs. The program only collects family race demographic data for analysis. Family race is indicated based on the race of the child at the center of the DCFS case.[8]

Families of Color Served by DVCLP in 2024

78.6% of families served in 2024 whose race was reported had children of color.

Across the four program locations, race data exists for 83% of families. Even as the caseload reduced in 2024, DVCLAs recorded a larger proportion of family races compared to 2023, when DVCLAs knew the race of only 76% of families. In 2024, the proportion of **families of color in the program remained relatively the same at 78.6% of cases,** decreasing .1% since 2023. Latinx families are the largest plurality (42%) followed by families identifying as African American (34%), White (21%), and "Other" racial identifies (2%).

The racial makeup of families served varies significantly by location. The difference between the known race of families and the percentage of that race in the location's general population that is a positive number reflects overrepresentation, often characterized as racial disproportionality, whereas a difference that is a negative number represents underrepresentation.

Program Wide Family Race Data in 2024

Location	African American	Latinx	White	Other	Total Families with Known Race
Rockford - Remedies Renewing Lives	17	7	24	1	49
Waukegan - A Safe Place	73	128	59	3	263
S. Emerald Chicago - Family Rescue	32	14	4	0	50
S. Indiana Chicago - Sarah's Inn	18	25	1	6	50
Program Wide Total	*140*	*174*	*88*	*10*	*412*

In Rockford, 92% of families served had a known race. White families made up the plurality (49%) of cases. This aligns closely with the demographics of Rockford's population, which is 50% White. African American families made up the next highest plurality (35%) and are overrepresented compared to African Americans in the general Rockford population (21.8%). Latinx families made up 14% of families with known race, and Other racial identities accounted for 2%.

Rockford Population Data in 2024[9]

Racial Category	% of DVCLP Families with Known Race	% of Rockford Population	Difference
African American	35%	22%	13%
Latinx	14%	21%	-6%
White	49%	50%	-1%

In Waukegan, 95% of families had known race. Latinx families made up the plurality (47%), followed by African American (26%), White (23%), and Other (4%) families. At both locations, Black families were overrepresented in the DVCLP compared to the municipality's population, while families with White and Latinx identities were underrepresented.

Waukegan Population Data in 2024[10]

Racial Category	% of DVCLP Families with Known Race	% of Waukegan Population	Difference
African American	26%	18%	8%
Latinx	47%	53%	-6%
White	23%	35%	-12%

Two programs operated in Chicago. At the S. Emerald location in Chicago, staffed by Family Rescue, 89% of families had known race data. African American families made up the vast majority of cases (64%), while the remaining families identified as Latinx (28%), and White (8%). No family indicated their race as Other.

Family Rescue Population Data in 2024[11]

Racial Category	% of DVCLP Families with Known Race	% of Chicago Population	Difference
African American	64%	28%	36%
Latinx	28%	30%	-2%
White	8%	32%	-24%

At the S. Indiana location, staffed by Sarah's Inn, only 45% of families have known race data. Of those, Latinx families made up exactly half (50%) of families served, followed by African Americans (36%), other racial identities (12%) and White families (2%). Though the numbers of families served at Sarah's Inn dropped by 11%, a much higher proportion of families had race data in 2024 (45%) compared to 2023 (15%). This makes Sarah's Inn 2024 demographic data more reliable compared to 2023, and accounts for the high variability in demographic data between 2023 and 2024.

Sarah's Inn Population Data in 2024[12]

Racial Category	% of DVCLP Families with Known Race	% of Chicago Population	Difference
African American	36%	28%	8%
Latinx	50%	30%	20%
White	2%	32%	-30%

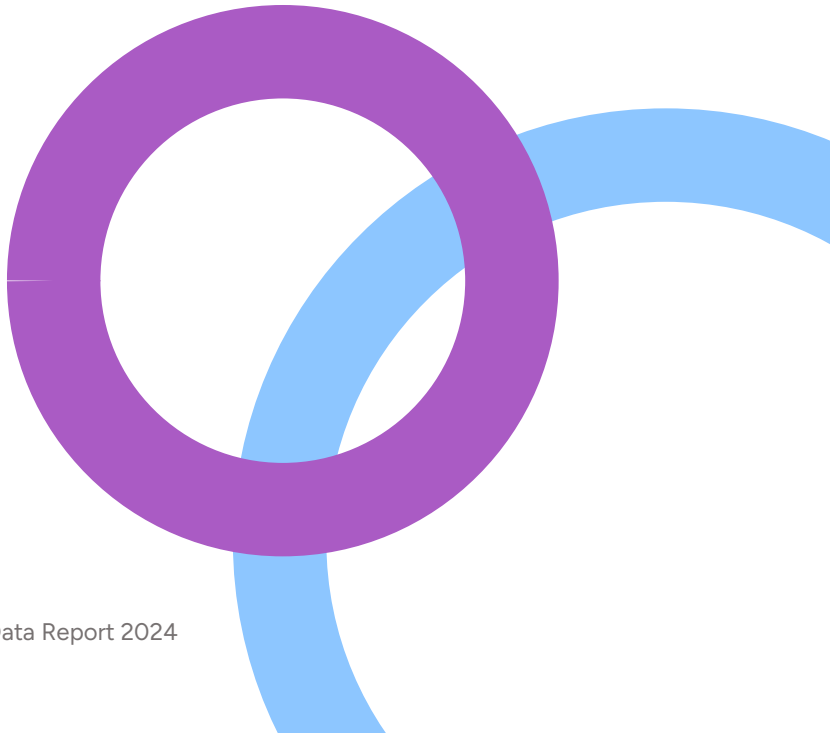
Across the DVCLP operating in Chicago, African American (50%) and Latinx (39%) families were overrepresented in the program population compared to the city's population of 28.4% and 29.6 % respectively. **This aligns with existing research that demonstrates families of color are disproportionately impacted by child welfare interventions.**[13] [14]

It is important to note that both Chicago locations are situated in neighborhoods with different demographic distributions than the city of Chicago at large. Family Rescue is located in the Calumet Heights neighborhood, which is 94.3% African American.[15] This difference in neighborhood demographics could account for Family Rescue's overrepresentation of African Americans compared to other sites.

Sarah's Inn is located in Forest Park, where African American and Latinx people make up 24.8% and 11.1% of the Forest Park population respectively, but make up 50% and 39% of families participating in the DVCLP at Sarah's Inn, an incredibly high over representation rate.[16]

Chicago Population Data in 2024[17]

Racial Category	% of DVCLP Families with Known Race	% of Rockford Population	Difference
African American	50%	28%	21%
Latinx	39%	30%	9%
White	5%	32%	-27%



Referrals

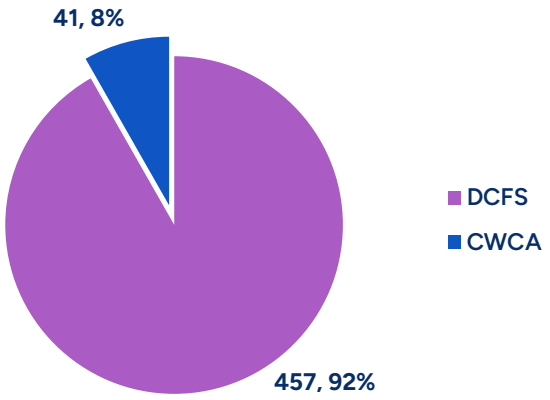
DVCLAs receive referrals from all three DCFS divisions, including investigations, intact services, and permanency, as well as CWCAs. Analyzing where referrals come from gives insight into what teams within DCFS and its contracted agencies are most utilizing the program.

Program Wide Case Referrals in 2024

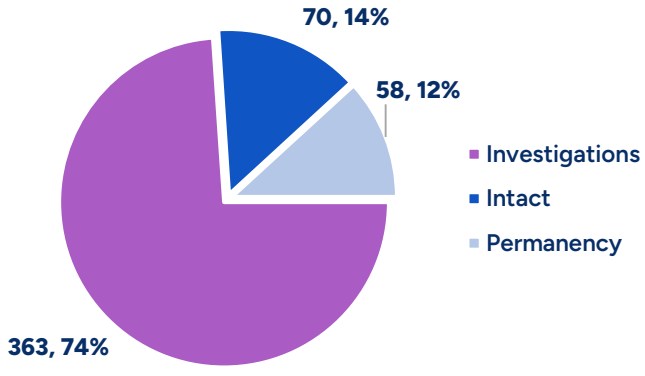
Location	DCFS	CWCA	Investigations	Intact	Placement
Rockford - Remedies Renewing Lives	49	4	33	17	1
Waukegan - A Safe Place	240	37	228	41	4
S. Emerald Chicago - Family Rescue	56	0	6	3	47
S. Indiana Chicago - Sarah's Inn	112	0	96	9	6
Program Wide Total	*457*	*41*	*363*	*70*	*58*

As seen in previous years of the program, the vast majority of referrals in 2024 came from within DCFS (92%). In 2024, a higher proportion of referrals came from CWCAs (8%) compared to 2023 (5%). Of the DCFS divisions, investigations made the majority of referrals (73%), followed by intact (14%), and permanency (12%). While investigations remain the most common referral source, intact referrals made up a higher proportion of referrals compared to 2023.

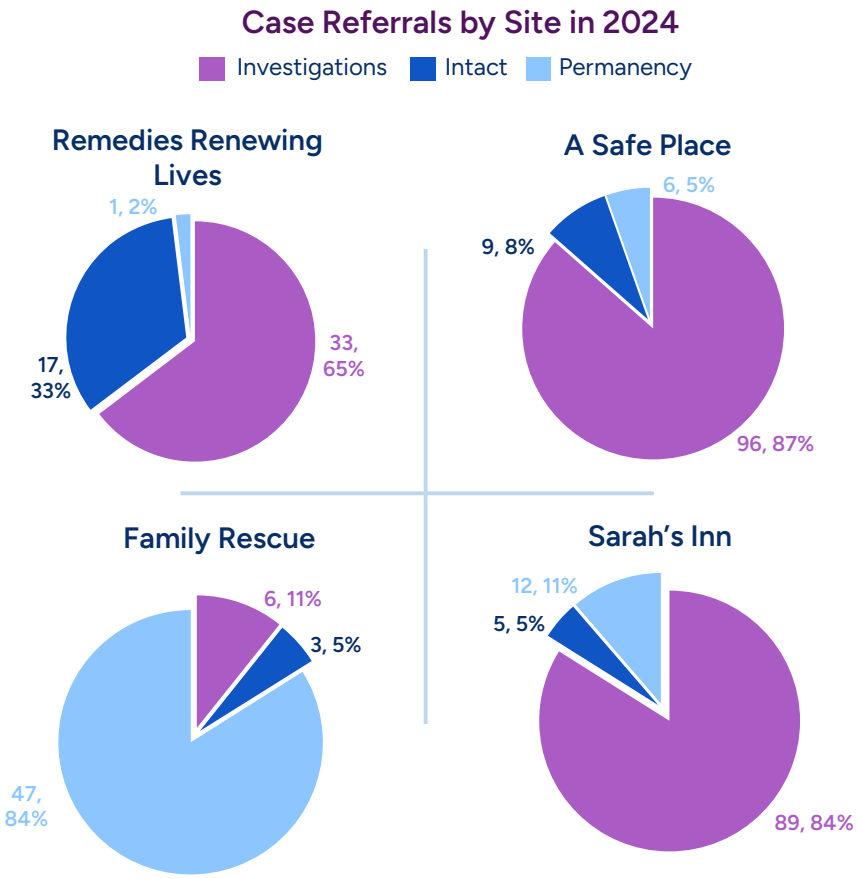
Program Wide Case Referrals
from DCFS and CWCA in 2024



Program Wide Referrals
from DCFS Divisions in 2024



Referral source varies significantly by location, which is likely caused by the preferences, practices, and guidance of leadership at each office. The standout difference in referrals continues to be the Family Rescue DVCLA, who received the vast majority cases from the permanency division, continuing trends seen in 2023 and 2022.



Type of DVCLA Involvement

When a case is referred to a DVCLA, the DVCLA follows up directly with the DCFS caseworker who made the referral. On rare occasions, the DVCLA cannot get ahold of the caseworker during the same month a referral is made, the caseworker does not respond to the DVCLA's outreach, or the DVCLA is later informed that the consultation is no longer needed. These cases are denoted as "referral only." In most cases, the DVCLA has at least one, if not ongoing, consultations with the child welfare worker to discuss dynamics of domestic violence at play in a case and explore what kinds of support, resources, and information are needed. In many cases, where the appropriate consent has been secure, the DVCLA may also have direct contact with members of the family. A consultation must occur before the DVCLA can have direct contact with the family, but not every consultation will lead to direct contact.

Program Wide Cases in 2024

Location	Referrals Only	Consultation	Direct Contact
Rockford - Remedies Renewing Lives	1	52	6
Waukegan - A Safe Place	0	278	202
S. Emerald Chicago - Family Rescue	0	55	35
S. Indiana Chicago - Sarah's Inn	1	111	27
Program Wide Total	*2*	*496*	*270*

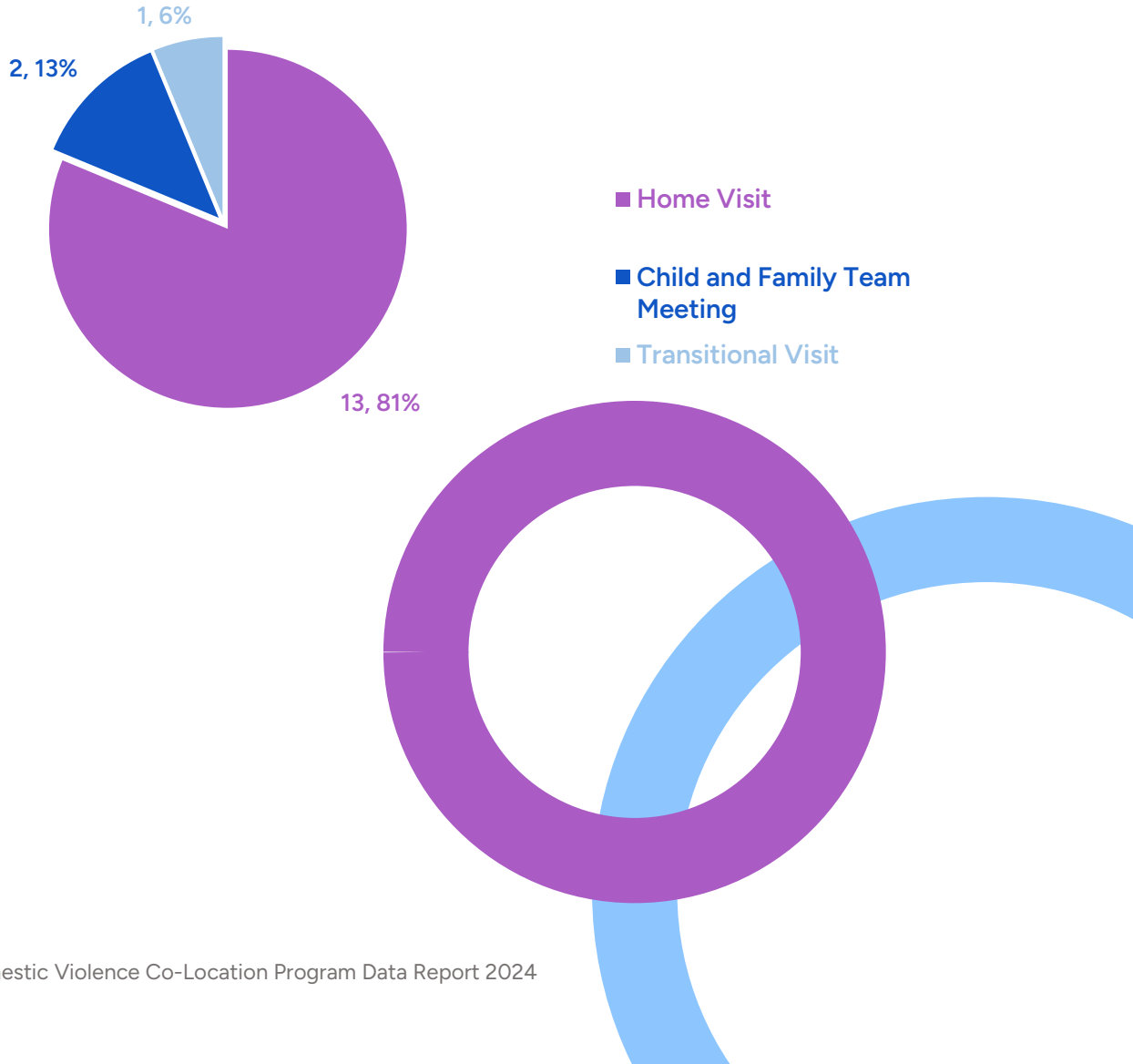
Across the entire program, .4% of cases were referral only, and 99.4% involved at least one consultation. **Among consultations, 54% involved direct contact with one or more family members, which can include the adult survivor, child survivor, and/or PUVCC.** This is a significant increase in the rate of direct contacts compared to 2023, which had a 49% direct contact rate, indicating that despite turnover and co-location issues, the DVCLAs were able to have increased interactions with child welfare-involved families. Direct contact rates varied substantially by site, with the Waukegan site seeing the highest direct contact rate (73%), followed by S. Emerald, (64%) S. Indiana (24%), and Rockford (12%). This coincides with sites that were able to consistently co-locate throughout the year, highlighting the importance of co-location for program efficacy.

Direct contact with families can occur in a variety of ways. DVCLAs may have conversations over the phone or in person with members of the family, typically centering the discussion on explaining the child welfare intervention, understanding the family's needs and connecting them to the appropriate services and concrete supports.

DVCLAs can also provide additional support through home visits, child and family team meetings, transitional visits between DCFS divisions, juvenile court support, and Administrative Case Reviews (ACR). In this report, contact with families in these additional support roles is referred to as Direct Contact External Activities.

In 2024, DVLCAs attended 16 direct contact external activities. In contrast to the proportion of direct contacts to consultations, which increased in 2024, there was a 68% decrease in direct contact external activities compared to 2023. The type of external activities that DVCLAs attend are determined by the DVCLAs' relationships with the staff in the partnered office. As DVCLAs leave and enter the program and form unique relationships with DCFS caseworkers, the counts and type of external activities fluctuate. Sites that previously had a higher number of home visits and juvenile court attendance saw a decrease in these external activities due to personnel changes. Of the 16 direct contact external activities conducted across all program sites, the majority (13) were home visits, 2 were child and family team meetings, and 1 was a court visit. There were no ACR or transitional visits in 2024.

Direct Contact External Activities
Program Wide in 2024



Domestic Violence Trends Among DVCLP Cases

When conducting day-to-day activities of the program, DVCLAs voluntarily record anonymous notes about the cases they work on. Typically, these notes capture the nature of violence facing adult and child survivors of abuse during their cases, examples of the service connections made for all members of the family, effort to contact members of the family, and reflections on discussions with caseworkers. Due to the voluntary design of this data collection process, not every case is accompanied by case notes and each DVCLA chooses to emphasize different items in their notes.

For the purposes of this report, 436 individual case notes were compiled and analyzed for themes. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of these notes demonstrates the alarming experiences of violence and complex needs that are faced by the families working with DVCLAs.

Lethal Violence

In 2024, the DVCLP supported DCFS staff on at least one case where a child has passed away. The DVCLAS also supported DCFS staff on at least 19 cases where a PUVCC threatened or attempted to kill a survivor and/or their children. In these cases, DVCLAs and DCFS caseworkers closely collaborated to connect the surviving parent and siblings with financial assistance, safe housing, counseling resources, and education about the nature of domestic violence.

Non-Fatal, High-Lethality Risk Violence

Outside of this fatality, there were a myriad of cases that demonstrated non-fatal, high-lethality risk factors, **such that involving the DVCLA alongside connection to domestic violence services and education became potentially lifesaving support.** This included violence severe enough to result in arrest (at least 36 cases), incarceration (at least 10 cases), gun violence (at least 17 cases), severe injuries that resulted in hospitalization (at least 16 cases), stabbings and knife violence (at least 13 cases), strangulations (at least 29 cases), violence escalation during pregnancy (at least 8 cases), violations of orders of protections (at least 16 cases), and home invasions (at least 6 cases). The number of **non-fatal, high lethality cases identified by DVCLAs has increased a striking 78% compared to 2023, indicating that DVCLA cases are intervening in increasingly dangerous cases even as case counts declined**.

Complex Case Needs

In addition to cases that demonstrated lethality risk factors, many also featured other complicated factors. These included at least two cases in which an adult and/or child survivor reported experiencing mental illness, suicidal ideation, and thoughts/actions of self-harm as the result of their physical or sexual abuse. Some parents also faced compounded issues of substance use. At least 7 families were non-English speaking, which required DVCLAs to navigate language access barriers to provide services in Spanish and Arabic and ensure that each person clearly understood their rights, responsibilities, and choices.

Program Impact & Outcomes Data

Institutional Impact

DVCLAs engage in institutional advocacy work through collaboration with DCFS workers during consultations, where they provide support at every level of the child welfare process, and through the trainings and educational activities they conduct.

Trainings

Given that DVCLAs work at a unique intersection of child welfare interventions and domestic violence expertise, they use this perspective to provide nuanced training and education to a variety of audiences. Over the course of 2024, DVCLAs attended and presented in English and Spanish at a minimum of 32 events. These included opportunities to educate the public at conferences and community stakeholders like the Chicago Police Department during roll calls, the Cook County's State's Attorney Office and in other professional development settings. DVLCAs also regularly provided education about DCFS to their own agencies, and domestic violence education to DCFS staff in formal and informal settings.

Outcomes for Participating Caseworkers

Outcomes for participating caseworkers who consult with the DVCLAs are based on the observations, interactions, and perspectives of the DVCLAs. When consultations do not result in observable feedback, the DVCLAs do not record an outcome. Each DVCLA brings their own perspective to these observations, which means that staff changes often impact how caseworker outcomes are perceived. Caseworker outcomes data is available by site and across the entire program.

Beyond the outcomes that are tracked and outlined below, the data notes and interviews reveal that **DVCLAs forge supportive, mutually respectful relationships with caseworkers that help to cultivate a trusting and valued working dynamic.** These investments in individual relationships are what form the foundation of the program, leading to referrals, openness to change, and facilitating effective institutional advocacy. While these dynamics are harder to capture in quantitative data, they emerge in stories from DVCLAs who identify the moments that make these relationships work.

DVCLA Voices

Building Relationships with Caseworkers

"[The program] works because DCFS is getting educated in DV and why and how victims might interact or leave. It's giving them trauma informed education. It's also removing blame from the survivors. It also helps DV agencies and DCFS work together to plan something with the survivor, versus just expecting the survivor to do something…I've seen more caseworkers starting to do safety plans and also educating survivors of DV. The main thing is that they're all working together to keep the family together versus removing the children."

At all sites, caseworkers who consulted with the DVCLAs received information about domestic violence in the vast majority of cases, ranging from 28% - 92%. **Across the entire program, an average of 82% of caseworkers received information about domestic violence**, up from 75% in 2023. The data notes indicated that this information might include a discussion of domestic violence dynamics, understanding survivor behavior and safety planning opportunities, contact information for local resources, and dispelling myths that may impact a caseworker's perspective on a case.

Caseworkers that received information about domestic violence in 2024

Location	Count of Caseworkers	% of Cases
Rockford - Remedies Renewing Lives	15	28%
Waukegan - A Safe Place	257	92%
S. Emerald Chicago - Family Rescue	38	68%
S. Indiana Chicago - Sarah's Inn	100	89%
Program Wide Total	*410*	82%

The majority of caseworkers who consulted with the DVCLAs demonstrated an increased understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence at three of four sites, Waukegan (87%), S. Emerald Chicago, (61%), and S. Indiana Chicago (52%). The Rockford location saw 15% of caseworkers demonstrate increased understanding of these dynamics. Overall, **69% of caseworkers demonstrated an increased understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence**. Advocates may not always have the opportunity to observe a change in perspective with the caseworker, especially if they only have a brief consultation. Misconceptions of domestic violence may not improve after only a single interaction. The DVCLP posits that the more frequently a caseworker consults with the DVCLA, the more their understanding and capacity will grow.

Caseworkers who demonstrated increased understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence in 2024

Location	Count of Caseworkers	% of Cases
Rockford - Remedies Renewing Lives	8	15%
Waukegan - A Safe Place	243	87%
S. Emerald Chicago - Family Rescue	34	61%
S. Indiana Chicago - Sarah's Inn	58	52%
Program Wide Total	343	69%

DVCLA Voices

Understanding Domestic Violence

"It matters that we have the opportunity to teach about domestic violence and give DCFS another outlook or avenue to look at different reasonings, as opposed to what they used to look at when it comes to abuse. It's gonna work or it's working because we have an opportunity to help DCFS better serve their clients in a positive way, like extra help."

At one site, Waukegan (81%), the majority of caseworkers who consulted with the DVCLAs engaged meaningfully with the person using violence and coercive control (PUVCC) aimed at creating avenues of accountability. The remaining locations, Rockford (21%), S. Indiana Chicago (11%), and S. Emerald Chicago (7%), only a quarter or fewer caseworkers demonstrated this outcome. Overall, **55% of caseworkers engaged meaningfully with the person using violence and coercive control aimed at creating avenues of accountability.** PUVCCs are the family members that DVCLAs have the least direct contact with. In addition, this outcome, like others, may be substantially skewed by what is and is not seen by advocates, given that these locations had lower rates of direct contact with families where they could observe this outcome.

Caseworkers who partnered with the adult survivor in crafting interventions that buffer risk and enhance strengths in 2024

Location	Count of Caseworkers	% of Cases
Rockford - Remedies Renewing Lives	7	13%
Waukegan - A Safe Place	210	76%
S. Emerald Chicago - Family Rescue	12	21%
S. Indiana Chicago - Sarah's Inn	10	9%
Program Wide Total	*239*	*48%*

DVCLA Voices

Helping Survivors and their Children Navigate Systems

"Once I did a domestic violence consult with an investigator and I had direct contact with a family. A positive of that case is that mom was bilingual and the investigator wasn't. I'm bilingual so it was helpful that I was able to assist her and help her understand what was going on. Even though the investigator used the language line she still couldn't understand, so just me having my position here and her being bilingual helped her understand her case better. Especially when they referred her to intact family services. Me and her continued to have contact so that I could help explain to her everything that was going on. Being able to communicate in the client's own language really helped her understand the DCFS case, develop trust, and access help."

At all sites, Rockford (8%), Waukegan (11%), S. Emerald Chicago (4%), S. Indiana Chicago (6%), less than a quarter of caseworkers who consulted with the DVCLAs engaged meaningfully with the person using violence and coercive control (PUVCC) aimed at creating avenues of accountability. Overall, 9% of caseworkers engaged meaningfully with the person using violence and coercive control aimed at creating avenues of accountability, a significant 87% decrease from 2023. PUVCCs are the family members that DVCLAs have the least direct contact with. In addition, this outcome, like others, may be substantially skewed by what is and is not seen by the DVLCAs.

Caseworkers who engaged meaningfully with the person using violence and coercive control aimed at creating avenues of accountability in 2024

Location	Count of Caseworkers	% of Cases
Rockford - Remedies Renewing Lives	4	8%
Waukegan - A Safe Place	31	11%
S. Emerald Chicago - Family Rescue	2	4%
S. Indiana Chicago - Sarah's Inn	7	6%
Program Wide Total	*44*	*9%*

At one site, Waukegan (70%), the majority of caseworkers who consulted with the DVCLAs addressed the unique needs of child survivors in connection with their families and communities. The remaining locations, Rockford (13%), S. Emerald Chicago (0%), and S. Indiana Chicago (4%), had less than a quarter of caseworkers demonstrate this outcome. Overall, 41% of caseworkers addressed the unique needs of children. Here again, these outcomes are impacted by the frequency at which DVCLAs are able to observe a child survivor's interaction with the caseworker involved.

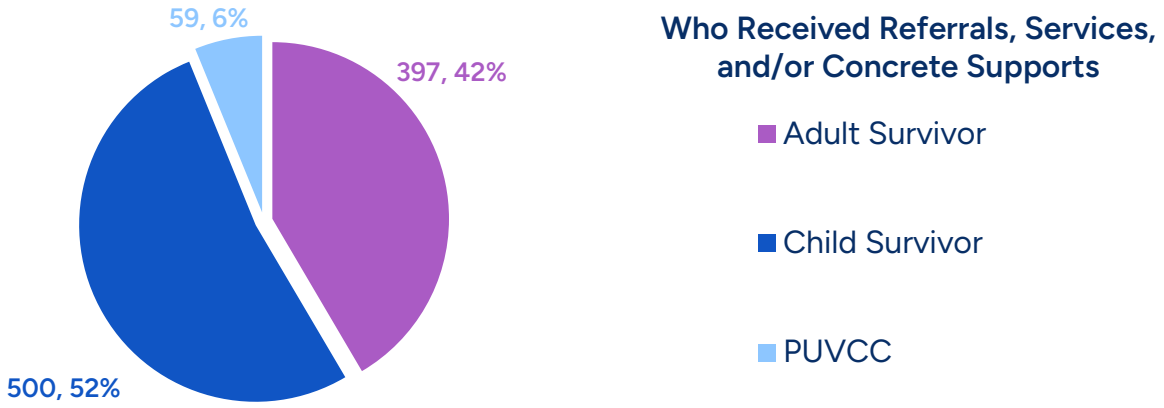
Caseworkers who addressed the unique needs of child survivors in connection with their families and communities

Location	Count of Caseworkers	% of Cases
Rockford - Remedies Renewing Lives	7	13%
Waukegan - A Safe Place	195	70%
S. Emerald Chicago - Family Rescue	0	0%
S. Indiana Chicago - Sarah's Inn	4	4%
Program Wide Total	*206*	*41%*

Family Outcomes

Outcome data for the families served by the DVCLP are limited to what is known by the DVCLAs through their interactions with child welfare staff and DCFS-involved families. If known to them, DVCLAs tracked the referrals for services provided to families, the results of the child welfare investigations, and information about if children remained with the adult survivor or were removed. In 2024, DVCLAs knew less about case outcomes for adult survivors and PUVCC outcomes compared to 2023. Specifically, the proportion of cases with known outcomes decreased 57% for adult survivors and 41% for PUVCCs. However, DVCLAs knew a greater proportion of outcomes for children, which increased 6% this year compared to last.

The DVLCAs have the most direct knowledge about whether clients received referrals, services and/or concrete support. In 2024, **397 adult survivors (80% of cases), 500 child survivors (57% of the children served across the program), and 59 PUVCCs (12% of cases) received direct referrals, services, or concrete supports** during the child welfare intervention and/or from the DVCLA. This is a significant increase compared to 2023 when referrals, services, and/or concrete support were received by 73% of adult survivors, 7% of PUVCCs, and 29% of child survivors. DVCLAs learn about this essential exchange of information during direct contact with family members. When they provide resources to caseworkers to share or when they provide the referral or concrete support themselves to the family member.



Individuals Who Received Referrals, Services and/or Concrete Supports in 2024

Location	Adult Survivor	Child Survivor	PUVCC
Rockford - Remedies Renewing Lives	42	43	15
Waukegan - A Safe Place	238	456	29
S. Emerald Chicago - Family Rescue	27	0	0
S. Indiana Chicago - Sarah's Inn	90	1	15
Program Wide Total	397	500	59

DVCLA Voices

Supporting Survivors and their Families

"An undocumented mother had a child who was eight years old at the time. The father is a US citizen. The mother allowed the child to go with the father for visitation for a week. Then the father asked for an additional two or three days. When she went to get the child, the father wouldn't give him back. She called the police multiple times, but she's undocumented so she didn't have an understanding of the legal process. Since he's on the birth certificate and there's no court order, police couldn't intervene. She came to DCFS to see if they could return the child but they couldn't either because it was a family court matter. That's when I got involved. DCFS pulled me in and told me about her history with DV. I helped her start a family court order and contacted Prairie State Legal to help represent her. During that time, she hadn't seen her son for a year, the father did not allow it. He moved the child to a different school, changed doctors, and changed everything. Since she was undocumented and not listed as a mother, they wouldn't give her information and called the police on her. I helped her gather information to show she was a main caregiver for eight years. With the help of Prairie State [Legal Services], she got visitation with the kid back. She lost her employment as well and she had two other kids. She wasn't able to pay the rent. My DV agency helped [with rent] for three months, and she applied elsewhere and got two or three more months as well. She would come to the office crying because she couldn't see her kid. When she finally did, it was a big happy moment."

DVCLAs also record the outcomes of the child welfare investigations when they have knowledge of the findings. Following a case for its full duration is not a common experience for DVCLAs, so information on case outcomes is very limited. In 2024, across all program sites, the DVCLAs had knowledge that 75 adult survivor cases were unfounded, 37 adult survivor cases were indicated, and 67 PUVCC cases were indicated. The allegations of the findings are not specified.

Program Wide, Case Findings in 2024

Location	# Adult Survivor Unfounded	# Adult Survivor Indicated	# PUVCC Indicated
Rockford - Remedies Renewing Lives	39	10	30
Waukegan - A Safe Place	31	20	33
S. Emerald Chicago - Family Rescue	0	3	0
S. Indiana Chicago - Sarah's Inn	5	4	4
Program Wide Total	75	37	67

In 2024, **42% of adult survivor cases with known outcomes were unfounded, and 37% of PUVCC in cases with known outcomes were indicated**.

A primary goal of the DVCLP is to prevent unjustified indicated findings against adult survivors. Indicated findings of neglect related to domestic violence have significant negative impacts on adult survivors that can decrease safety, increase instability, and hinder healing, including:

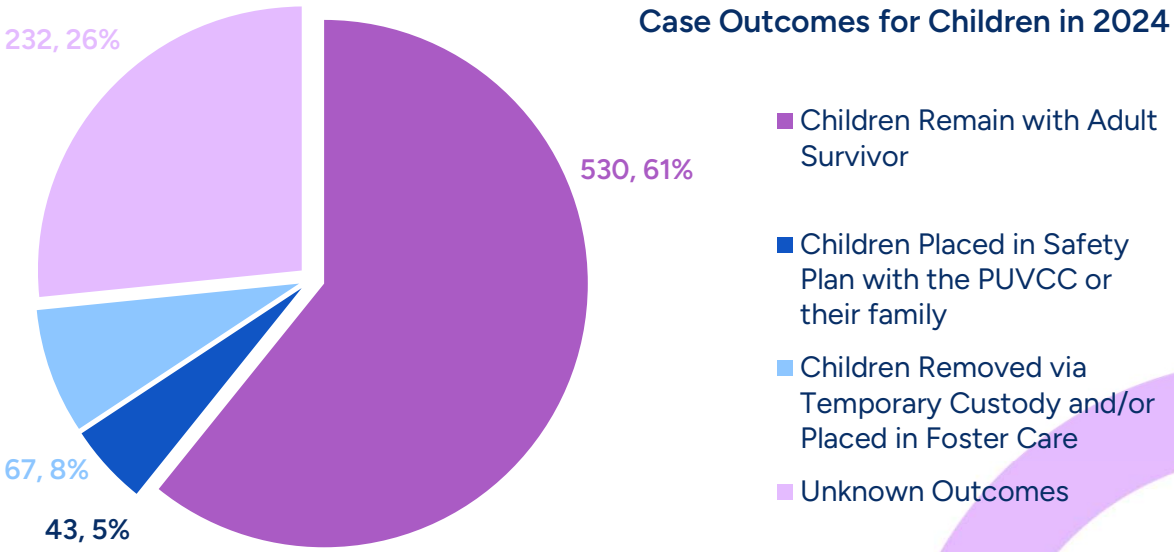
1. Limiting employment opportunities that involve working with children;
2. Potentially disqualifying eligibility for specific immigration relief;
3. Deterring future help-seeking behavior;
4. Replicating the abusive dynamics of the relationship;
5. Increasing feelings of shame and disempowerment; and
6. Escalating domestic violence because a state agency is affirming the blame the PUVCC places on the adult survivor.

In 2024, there was a 72% increase in the proportion of known adult survivor case outcomes that were indicated. The cases that DVCLAs consult on are not a representative sample of all cases, and case outcomes, that the DCFS sites handle. The growing proportion of indicated survivors could be due to the type of cases DVCLAs are referred to by DCFS. DCFS supervisors and caseworkers ultimately decide when to consult a DVCLA and may be choosing to consult DVCLAs in particular serious or challenging situations that may have a greater likelihood of leading to indicated findings. The increase in the proportion of indicated survivors could also be a sign of the difficulties with co-location and turnover that hinder DVCLA relationship building with DCFS workers. Most likely, several factors outside of the scope of the data have contributed to the increase in this key outcome.

Despite an inability to determine causality, the data does indicate that increased collaboration and co-location between the domestic violence agencies and DCFS is key to reducing the growing proportion of adult survivors in the program that are indicated.

Despite the increase in the proportion of indicated adult survivors, **there was a promising growth in the proportion of children who were able to remain with the adult survivors, which increased 7% from 2023**. This pattern of improvement aligns with the growth and longevity of the DVCLP, which saw increases in this area in 2023 as well.

Keeping adult survivors and their children together is another primary goal of the program, as evidence suggesting that connectedness with the non-abusive parent is essential to positive child outcomes, especially their ability to heal. **These trends suggest that the program's outcomes and goals are growing into closer alignment the longer these working relationships are in place.**



DVCLA Voices

Impacting Children's Futures

"There was a seventeen-year-old who was formerly in foster care with DCFS. Her family's case had closed. She was now pregnant, dating a twenty-three-year-old and homeless living in a garage. There was DV in her relationship. She came to A Safe Place (ASP) through a pastor. I connected her to services but could not provide her with shelter because of her age, or a hotel to stay in with her boyfriend. So, I connected her with an agency that takes in young adults. There is a satellite family, connected to the agency that can support her for two years after turning eighteen. A casework at ASP met with her daily at the library to discuss DV, and she was eventually willing to go to the satellite family. The agency and the DVCLA spoke with DCFS. Now the survivor is placed in the new home, enrolled in school, and has found employment. But, there's a risk that her baby would go into the system when she is born. The seventeen-year-old told DCFS they did not do right by her when she was kid and DCFS apologized. With ASP's support and partnership with DCFS, we are committed to working together so her baby can safely stay with her after she gives birth."

Cost Analysis

One key DVCLP goal is to reduce the separation of children from their adult survivor parent and safely prevent children from entering substitute care, which would also reduce the financial costs of substitute care incurred by the state. The potential cost savings on foster care services is one way to demonstrate the added value created by the DVCLP for the state from a financial perspective, in addition to other programmatic strengths highlighted in this report. The cost analysis below offers a high-level estimation of the financial savings created by the DVCLP.

The cost analysis here was based on a similar cost analysis conducted by a comparable program in Florida. The Florida Child Protection Investigation Project placed a domestic violence co-located advocate in 67 child welfare offices. The Florida program used the following calculation to determine the potential cost savings:

(Number of children the program served who were not removed) x (Average number of months in foster care) x (Lowest monthly foster care board payments) – (Expense of the program)

Based upon this analysis, the Florida program saved the state nearly $26 million in 2015.[18]

The following explains the analysis of the potential cost savings of the DVCLP in 2024 across the four program sites in Illinois. The 2021 B.H. Consent Decree Monitoring Report issued by the University of Illinois Department of Social Work concluded that the median length of stay in substitute care for children in Illinois for the last several years has been 32 - 34 months.[19]

Placement of a child in foster care costs the state anywhere from $388 to $656 a month, depending on the age of the child and the kind of placement.[20] In 2024, 530 children whose cases had DVCLA involvement were known to stay with their adult survivor parent, therefore avoiding substitute care placement. Even as the program faced staffing challenges that reduced case capacity, this was a 7% increase in the proportion of children known to remain with the adult survivor. Anecdotally, the DVCLP believes that this is the product of the program growing more established and effective over time that results in an increased capacity of DCFS workers to meet the nuanced needs of adult and child survivors.

The total costs of the program in 2024 was $245,347.23. **As a result of the DVCLP in 2024, the need for foster care services in Illinois was significantly reduced and resulted in a potential cost savings of between $6,335,132.77 to $11,575,772.77 by safely keeping children out of the foster care system.**[21] Compared to 2023's estimated savings, these findings are relatively stable. Representing a 4% decrease in the lowest estimation of savings and a 5% decrease in the highest amount of savings.

Estimated Cost Savings to State of IL by Supporting the DVCLP

Lowest Median Number of Months Children in IL are in Foster Care	Lowest Monthly Payments Made to Foster Families & Caregivers (Unlicensed Families)	Number of Children Known to Remain with Adult Survivor in 2024	Cost of DVCLP	Lowest Estimated Savings
32	$ 388.00	547	$ 245,347.23	**$** 6,335,132.77
Highest Median Number of Months Children in IL are in Foster Care	**Highest Monthly Board Payments Made to Foster Families & Caregivers (Children Age 9 - 11)**	**Number of Children Known to Remain with Adult Survivor in 2024**	**Cost of DVCLP**	**Highest Estimated Savings**
34	$ 656.00	530	$ 245347.23	**$** 11,575,772.77

The DVCLP saved the state of Illinois anywhere from

$6.3 – $11.6 million

03

Vision for the Future

Vision for the Future

The vision for the DVCLP is to expand to become a statewide program that works in collaboration with every division and office of DCFS and CWCAs.

This expansion would include partnering a DVCLA with every DCFS office in the state and enabling the DVCLAs to have the capacity to meet the demand of the DCFS and CWCA caseloads involving families experiencing domestic violence. In addition, collaborating with the DCFS Hotline and serving as a resource for Child Welfare Service Referral workers and families is another area of envisioned expansion. As of October 2024, the DVCLP became funded to operate in six sites in all four DCFS regions – Northern, Cook, Central, and Southern. Additional funding through state agencies and federal grants is necessary to sustain and expand the DVCLP into a statewide program serving all child-welfare involved families experiencing domestic violence at each child welfare intervention point.

DVCLA Voices

Why We Do the Work

"I do this work because I'm passionate about what I do. I think the program is important. We see day to day that survivors are being judged and not having the important resources that they need. It makes a difference because we are part of helping the caseworkers understand domestic violence overall. We are helping to provide direct support to the survivors we are working with. We want to see the program grow to a point where there are, if none, very few children removed from their homes based on the fact that they have been exposed to DV. Understanding that it is not their fault, they are not responsible for someone else's choices. I want to see the program be intentional in addressing what we see is not working and work together in collaboration to make things better. The program is amazing; it's something that I don't think a lot of people foresaw working. But the expansion itself speaks volumes of the work we've been doing in the program. I really think that this is a program that is needed nationwide to support survivors and their children."

04
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2. Kim, H., Wildeman, C., Jonson-Reid, M., & Drake, B. (2017). Lifetime Prevalence of Investigating Child Maltreatment Among US Children. American Journal of Public Health, 107(2), 274-280.
3. Tamara Fuller, Michael Braun, Satomi Wakita, Kyle A. Adams III, University of Illinois, School of Social Work, Children and Family Research Center, Racial Disproportionality In the Illinois Child Welfare System (Oct. 2020).
4. Id.
5. Id.
6. Northern Illinois University, Center for Child Welfare and Education, DCFS Northern Region Permanency Enhancement Project, FY 20 Annual Report – July 2019 to June 30, 2020 (2020).
7. Although the two new DVCLP sites of Sojourn Shelter and Services, Inc. and Violence Prevention Center of Southwestern Illinois were funded in October 2024, the DVCLAs did not start serving families until 2025.
8. Footnote: The DVCLP recognizes that families may have different racial makeup from member to member and that the racial categories used in this data are a non-exhaustive list.
9. Population data based on 2023 Rockford, IL demographic estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/rockfordcityillinois.
10. Population data based on 2023 Waukegan, IL demographic estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/waukegancityillinois.
11. Population data based on 2024 Chicago, IL demographic estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/chicagocityillinois.
12. Id.
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15. Population data based on 2024 Calumet Heights demographic estimates from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning: https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/Calumet-Heights.pdf.
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21. The authors of this report do not have access to the names of the families nor the administrative data to determine if subsequent child removals occurred following the closed child welfare case that involved the DVCLA.

Domestic Violence Co-Location Program