

News

Illinois Hairstylists Train to Recognize Domestic Violence Signs



Hanako Maki | The PHOENIX

Hairstylists and cosmetologists at salons like Tricoci University of Beauty Culture on North Sheridan Road near LSC will go through training to recognize signs of domestic violence in their clients. The first round of training will take place April 28-30.

By **Samar Ahmad**
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With the rise of movements such as Time’s Up and #MeToo, organizations across the country are working to help women gain support for issues related to domestic violence and sexual assault. Now, Chicago hair salons are being required to do their part.

[Chicago Says No More](#) is a local anti-domestic violence campaign that seeks to create awareness of the prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault. Last year, the organization worked with Illinois State Sen. Bill Cunningham and State Rep. Fran Hurley of Illinois, members of the Democratic party, to sponsor a bill that requires salon professionals in Illinois to

receive training in recognizing victims of domestic violence.

The bill was signed into law Aug. 12, 2016 and went into effect last January.

The first training session will be held at McCormick Place North in Chicago April 28-30.

Cosmetologists must take the courses to renew their license. Hair stylists have until September 2019 to complete the training. However, nail technicians, nail technology teachers, hair braiders and hair braiding teachers must receive the training by October 2018, according to Michele Rabenda, a representative from Chicago Says No More.

LUC Sports Updates

Date	Sport	Rival	Outcome
Feb 10	Softball	vs Fort Wayne	W 3 - 2
Feb 10	Softball	vs Eastern Kentucky	L 4 - 5
Feb 10	Men's Basketball	vs Indiana State	W 75 - 71
Feb 10	Men's Volleyball	vs Lindenwood	W 3 - 0



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Launched in April 2015, Chicago Says No More is a coalition of agencies that serve those affected by domestic violence and sexual assault, in addition to leaders from civic private sectors. Together, they dedicate themselves to harnessing the power of their coalition in addressing the challenges of domestic abuse and sexual assault.

Rabenda said the bill uses salon professionals to recognize victims of domestic abuse due to the intimate relationships clients often have with their stylists.

“We thought that, because salon professionals are in such close contact with clients, that it would be good for them to recognize the signs [of domestic violence],” Rabenda said.

Cunningham said the bill resonated with him immediately because his wife was a licensed beautician. He said he remembers her telling him stories about clients who experienced domestic abuse.

Cunningham said the law was passed to provide another path for domestic violence victims to receive support as reporting abuse to the authorities can be intimidating.

There are 88,000 salon professionals in the state of Illinois that have to be trained, according to the [law’s requirements](#).

Stephanie Sputnam, an educator at Tricoci University of Beauty Culture (6458 N. Sheridan Road), directly adjacent to Loyola’s Lake Shore Campus, said she thinks the bill is important because domestic violence is often seen in the industry.

“Being able to identify it better and not staying silent about it is very important,” Sputnam said.

Although she hasn’t gone through training yet, Sputnam said her role as an educator requires her to recognize signs of domestic violence in Tricoci students.

“I know with being an educator, we have to be able to identify if a student is a victim of domestic violence as well as sexual [violence],” Sputnam said. “We look for physical signs as well as social signs.”

Maria Sigman, owner of Salon Echo (1134 W. Bryn Mawr Ave.) in Edgewater, said she thinks the bill is using cosmetologists to recognize domestic violence because clients often look to hair stylists for trust and advice on what they should do with their hair.

The curriculum, called “Listen. Support. Connect.,” will provide salon professionals with the resources and knowledge to provide information for victims of domestic abuse. The curriculum was developed by Chicago Says No More in partnership with salon industry leaders from Cosmetologists Chicago and Pivot Point. The training course is a free, one-hour session for license renewal.

Salon professionals will be taught by field experts in domestic violence and sexual assault. These experts, who have earned a 40-hour certificate, will teach salon professionals how to respond to these issues. The field experts come from different sexual assault and domestic violence organizations across Illinois, according to Rabenda.

Salon professionals will be well-versed in understanding the dynamics of how one person exercises power and control over another and how to respond to salon clients, friends or family members who ask for help.



Ron Lawn, owner of Laws of Hair in Edgewater, said he thinks the bill won't be effective in aiding victims of domestic violence.

"I feel like we're not really trained as a psychologist would be to handle those situations," Lawn said.

Lawn said he doesn't want to push clients to their limit because it would make it harder for clients to enjoy their salon experience.

"When you're trying to psychoanalyze your clients, it takes away from the experience of why you're in the salon," Lawn said.

Rabenda said hair stylists won't be mandated to report cases of domestic violence or sexual assault.

Cunningham said while salon professionals will be exempt from criminal and civil liability, they'll be there to listen to and support their clients.

"This bill will make it easier to intervene with victims [of domestic violence]," Cunningham said.

There are 16 other states who have proposed similar legislation, according to Cunningham. These states include California, Arkansas, Texas, Florida, Colorado, Maryland, New Jersey and Hawaii.

While some don't support the bill, Ellen Phillips, a sophomore at Loyola, said she thinks the bill is important because domestic violence victims are often overlooked.

"If there's someone there to recognize victims, I think that's amazing," Phillips said.

As a member of Alpha Chi Omega, Phillips said she feels passionate about this subject

because she's done volunteer work relating to domestic violence awareness — which is the sorority's focus for philanthropy.

"With everything that's been going with the Time's Up and #MeToo Movements, it's been taboo to talk about domestic violence, but I think it's an awesome way to help these victims," Phillips said.

On the other hand, first-year student Ilma Seperovic, said she thinks the bill isn't relevant in the work of salon professionals because every person should know how to listen and support victims of domestic abuse, not just cosmetologists.

"I think everyone should have exposure of what to do for domestic violence victims," Seperovic said.