

SOUTH SUBURBAN FAMILY SHELTER

South Suburban Family Shelter, Inc. (SSFS) is a community based, not-for-profit, non-sectarian, social service agency. The mission of SSFS is to provide comprehensive, coordinated services for families in which domestic violence exists without imposing any one solution.

SSFS assists victims of domestic violence in the southern suburbs of Chicago. The primary service area includes Bloom, Rich, Thornton, Bremen, Monee and Orland Townships of Cook County, communities in northeast Will County and other communities in Northwest Indiana. However, all victims of domestic violence may use our services regardless of where they live.

SSFS provides the following services to victims of domestic violence:

- A 24-hour bilingual hotline
- Emergency shelter
- Crisis intervention
- Individual and group counseling for adult victims
- Individual counseling for child victims/witnesses
- Parenting classes
- Court advocacy
- Medical advocacy
- Violence prevention program
- B.R.O. Boys Respecting Others
- Abuser intervention program
- Referrals

All services are available in Spanish and English and are free of charge for victims.

SSFS also provides the following services to the community:

- A public education and prevention program for businesses, school systems, faith communities, the medical community and the social services community
- Professional trainings for criminal justice personnel, police and fire departments, medical personnel, religious and educational communities, and social service providers
- 40-Hour Domestic Violence Training
- 20-Hour Abuser Intervention Facilitator Training
- Transitional housing for homeless women with children

SSFS also has a practicum/intern program that is available to students in counseling and related programs through local colleges and universities.

Here is an overview of our current programs:

24-Hour Bilingual Hotline The hotline has a fully-trained, professional staff of advocates who speak English and Spanish and are available 24 hours per day, seven days a week. Our hotline number is (708) 335-3028.

Abuser Intervention SSFS Domestic Violence Abuser Intervention Project (DVAIP) offers Abuser Intervention Groups which teach about the cycle of violence, non-violent behavior, cultural norms, sex stereotyping and the importance of accountability and respect and responsibilities in a healthy relationship. Participants meet weekly for 30 weeks with others who want or are mandated by the court to change their behavior. Classes are available in English and Spanish and are facilitated by staff who have been specially trained in the Duluth Model of Intervention for "Men Who Batter." There is a sliding scale fee charge for all classes and in special circumstances, fees are waived.

Community Outreach SSFS provides speakers for clubs, organizations, faith and other community groups who wish to learn more about domestic violence and the services provided by SSFS. Presentations are available free of charge.

Counseling Services SSFS offers individual, family, and group counseling to adult victims of domestic violence and child victims/witnesses from birth to age 17. Services are offered in English and Spanish. Sessions are by appointment only. Domestic violence survivors interested in seeking services for themselves and their children can call (708) 798-7737 for an assessment.

Court Advocacy The Court Advocacy program informs victims of their legal rights and assists them through the criminal and civil court systems. The Court Advocates assist victims of domestic violence through criminal and civil court proceedings Monday through Friday. All services are offered in Spanish and English. Advocates can be reached at (708) 331-7253.

Crisis Intervention Our Crisis Intervention and bilingual Hotline Advocates assist victims needing emergency shelter and referrals for follow-up services. Crisis Intervention Advocates also meet with the clients in shelter and discuss arrangements for long-term shelter and safety.

Faith Outreach Faith Outreach is designed to educate religious/spiritual leaders and congregations within the community on domestic violence issues. Services include faith-based staff training and faith group education awareness.

Medical Advocacy Hospital Advocates make contact with every woman and man seeking health care in the Emergency Department in four area hospitals seven nights a week from 6:00 pm – 10:00 pm, excluding agency holidays. They are also in three Ingalls Urgent Aid Centers (Calumet City, Flossmoor, and Tinley Park) seven days a week from 2:00 – 6:00 pm. The goal is to identify victims of domestic violence, provide education and safety planning as needed, provide appropriate outreach and referrals as needed, and provide public awareness about the services offered by SSFS. The hospitals include:

- Advocate South Suburban Hospital – Hazel Crest
- Ingalls Memorial Hospital – Harvey
- Franciscan St. James Hospital & Health Centers – Chicago Heights
- Franciscan St. James Hospital & Health Centers – Olympia Fields

Prevention Services The School Prevention program provides prevention education about family and dating violence to elementary, junior high and high school students. Curriculums are developmentally and age appropriate. Additionally, if requested, we offer an “Alternative to Suspension” (ATS) program which deals with anger management and healthy choices for high school students. We also offer professional trainings for teachers and other educational professionals.

Professional Training SSFS offers professional trainings to the community on various topics relating to domestic violence. These include the state-approved 40-Hour Domestic Violence Training, 20-Hour Abuser Intervention Facilitator Training, trainings for medical professionals, and trainings for other social service organizations and professionals.

Project RENEW Within Counseling Services, Project RENEW (Recognizing the Economic Need to Empower Women) assists current counseling clients achieve economic independence. Services include budget assessments, savings planning, employment and housing referrals, and financial assistance when deemed necessary/appropriate. Referrals for this program must be made by the client’s current counselor.

The Sanctuary The Sanctuary is a holistic approach to providing transitional housing and supportive services to homeless women with dependent children. The goal is to move the families from homelessness-to-work-to-permanent housing. The Sanctuary is a partnership among several local agencies that draws upon the strengths of each organization so that participants receive high quality, comprehensive services. SSFS is the lead agency in the Sanctuary. Partner agencies include the South Suburban Council on Alcoholism & Substance Abuse, Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center, Prairie State College and Rich Township. Referrals of potential tenants are considered from Sanctuary partners as well as non-partner domestic violence agencies, homeless shelters, substance abuse treatment programs, community groups, schools, faith communities, hospitals, police departments and other social service agencies. Families at the Sanctuary reside in their own two-bedroom apartment in an apartment building owned by SSFS for six months to one year (or longer). During that time, case management and supportive services including substance abuse, domestic violence counseling, health, budgeting, parenting and employment are provided. Those who successfully complete the program can continue to receive services for one year after they leave. The Sanctuary number is (708) 283-1421.