



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WINGS Pioneers Coordinated Response for Survivors Recovering from Traumatic Brain Injuries

Chicago (May 3rd, 2024) - WINGS is embarking on **one of the first of its kind coordinated collaboration** to improve access to care for survivors recovering from Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs) in the Chicagoland area. WINGS and nine domestic violence partner agencies are working with local hospitals to **provide a toolkit and develop procedures for domestic violence survivors recovering from TBIs**. As a result, survivors will receive all eligible resources ranging from **additional scans, to housing**, to assistance with setting and meeting goals.

This pilot expansion of WINGS Hospital Program will hire a part-time staff to assist TBI survivors with case management, housing, and all eligible resources. The newly created TBI planning committee will develop a TBI response toolkit which will launch at local hospitals throughout the Chicagoland area. While WINGS is the lead agency, TBI committee member agencies include: Apna Ghar, Arab American Family Services, Between Friends, CAWC, Illinois Coalition to Address Intimate Partner Violence-Induced Brain Injury, Mujeres Latinas en Accion, Pathways, Sarah's Inn, and The Network. Northwest Community Hospital will refer survivors as well as provide necessary scans.

“Our mission at Endeavor Health is to help everyone in our communities be their best.

We are proud at Northwest Community Hospital of our long-standing partnership with the WINGS program and the work we do together to support patients disclosing abuse.

This new program will undoubtedly make a difference,” says Michael Hartke, President, Northwest Community Hospital.

TBIs are often an overlooked sign of domestic violence. Head injuries occur when an abuser strikes the victim in the head, strangles the victim's neck, severely shakes the victim, or causes the victim to lose consciousness or have trouble breathing. Research shows that **50% of strangulations had no physical signs.** Without ordering a CTA scan to look for internal injuries, doctors may misdiagnose patients.

Survivors of TBIs may experience life altering and on-going psychological injury including PTSD, suicidal ideation, depression, memory problems, nightmares, and/or amnesia. **TBIs affect the daily functioning of survivors** which may lead to clients missing appointments, having difficulty managing their finances, or suffer from depression or mood swings. With increased hospital staff awareness and having a dedicated Medical Advocate to support survivors through their diagnosis and treatment, a survivor's ability to follow through on a path toward stability increases.

"We are so excited to be one of the first communities taking this collective approach to such a pervasive problem. We are grateful to Michael Reese Health Trust for funding this project, seeing the need, and allowing domestic violence agencies to have the time and resources to develop a holistic response," says April Flores-Brayton, WINGS Director of Community-Based and Suburban Safe House Services.

WINGS Medical Advocate would provide one-on-one assistance to approximately 5 to 10 clients in the first year. This advocate would help survivors with TBIs with whatever challenges they may be facing: receiving an official diagnosis, enrolling in medical benefits, connecting survivors with a primary care doctor, following up with medical scans, as well as basic needs, counseling, housing, children's services, and legal resources. **WINGS anticipates 80% of this initiative's participants would follow through with their medical plan and 75% of participants will obtain or maintain stable housing.**

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ABOUT WINGS PROGRAM, INC.

The mission of WINGS Program, Inc. is to provide housing, integrated services, education, and advocacy to end domestic violence. As the largest provider of domestic violence services in Illinois, WINGS offers a continuum of resources across Metropolitan Chicago.

Since 1985, WINGS has continued to break the cycle of violence and create new opportunities for women, men, and children with proven programs and impact. WINGS innovative, scalable, impactful, and community-based solutions assist hundreds of survivors change their lives annually. Of clients completing an exit survey, 99% reported not returning to their abuser.

Anyone experiencing domestic violence can receive help by calling the 24-hour hotline at 847.221.5680. Survivors interested in learning more about WINGS counseling services may call 847.519.7828. **For more information, visit www.wingsprogram.com.**