# Table of Contents

- **Introduction letters**  .................................................. 2  
  - From the Former Board Chair.  .................................. 2  
  - From the Executive Director.  .................................. 3  
- **Program Overview**  ................................................. 4  
  - Our Services  ....................................................... 6  
  - Success by the Numbers  ......................................... 8  
  - Testimonials  ...................................................... 10  
  - Key Partnerships  ................................................... 12  
- **Board Personnel**  .................................................... 13  
- **Financial Summary**  ............................................. 14  
- **Featured Media Coverage**  .................................. 15  
- **Strategic Plan Overview**  .................................. 16
Dear Friends of Chicago Survivors,

The year 2020 was a very challenging one for Chicago Survivors. On top of the pandemic, Chicago experienced a catastrophic year in homicides—there were 774 homicides in 2020, an increase of over 50% from 2019. Due to COVID-19, we had to devise new approaches to carry out our mission of providing citywide crisis response, grief counseling and support services for families devastated by the loss of a loved one to violence.

It has been difficult, but we could not be prouder of the way our committed staff and volunteers responded. Even though we were typically not able to meet families in their homes or, in the case of crisis responders, at the hospital when visitors were prohibited, we used a full array of media to stay in touch with our families who were suffering the impact of both plagues affecting Chicago—COVID-19 and homicide. In the spirit of adjusting to the pandemic, our volunteers and staff made our annual Holiday Gift Drive for survivor families a drive-by event.

Last year also had many positives, including welcoming our new Executive Director, Oji Eggleston. Oji came to us from the Near West Side Community Development Corporation where he was Director of Youth Programs and had other executive responsibilities. We were very excited to welcome him in June, although it was a challenge for him to get acclimated when the office was mostly closed, and he couldn’t immediately meet the staff in person. I hope many of you have had the chance to meet Oji since then.

We are grateful to our many partners, funders and supporters of Chicago Survivors who provided resources in 2020 that enabled us to do our critical work with families experiencing the terrible trauma of homicide of a family member.

As we head into the final stretch of 2021, we are pleased for a return to greater in-person support for our families. We will face new challenges, but as we saw this year, we will rise to these challenges because every day we see how important the services are that we provide to families during the worst days of their lives.

May we all be blessed with peace, hope and love in 2021.

Sincerely,

Barbara Shaw
Former Chair, Board of Directors
Dear Friend of Chicago Survivors,

In June 2020, I was incredibly honored to join Chicago Survivors as its new Executive Director. As someone who has dedicated my career to serving others and providing critical mental health and violence prevention services, I immediately connected to the organization’s mission to provide comprehensive crime victim services to families affected by homicide.

Upon reflection after my first year with Chicago Survivors, I can unequivocally say the services we provide are unfortunately needed far too often in our communities. I know firsthand how essential multi-cultural crime victim services are to survivors. While I was a student at Xavier University in New Orleans, I lost three friends to gun violence, including my college teammate who was murdered on campus. I saw how gun violence impacts families and the overwhelming grief caused by losing a loved one. This ignited my passion to provide essential support to survivors in underserved communities, a form of violence prevention in itself that cannot be underestimated.

While the mission of the organization and my personal experiences attracted me to Chicago Survivors, the dedication of staff, impact of the organization on families and the increased need for our services is the motivation that drives our work on a daily basis.

In Chicago, there were 774 homicides in 2020 alone and the number of families in need of our help grew exponentially. Behind every number is a person lost too soon and a family looking for answers. Every time a homicide takes place in Chicago, I receive a text message with the name, age, gender and race) of the victim. That makes our work personal.

While our work has always been critical, it is apparent that our services are needed now more than ever. Untreated trauma and grief turn into anger, and anger into retaliation. Therefore, it’s essential to consider our work as violence prevention and may help prevent a victim from becoming a perpetrator.

Due in no small part to the creativity and determination of our dedicated staff, we were able to adjust to the challenges 2020 presented without interruption to the services we provide and responded to virtually 100% of homicide notifications.

As we reflect on the past year and look ahead, we completed a strategic plan that will guide our efforts for the next three years and beyond. Through a combination of generous supporters, dedicated staff and board members, and strong partnerships, Chicago Survivors is in a strong position to enhance our impact in the year ahead.

We are pleased to share our inaugural annual report, which will provide insight into our work, as well as our impact on real families throughout Chicago. You will read descriptions of the services we provide, data points on just how many people we’ve been able to help, and personal testimonials from staff who work tirelessly for the families we serve.

With that said, the insurmountable challenges faced by these families or the invaluable impact of our support cannot be encapsulated in numbers, charts or even testimonials. Our work helps families live beyond violent loss, find community in others, and find some form of peace beyond unthinkable grief – work that wouldn’t be possible without supporters like you.

With gratitude,

Oji Eggleston
Executive Director

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Forged out of personal tragedy, Chicago Survivors was founded in 2010 by a grieving mother after the senseless and violent loss of her son.

After realizing the lack of crisis or support services available for families of homicide victims, she worked to create a first-of-its-kind program in Chicago.

Chicago Survivors has grown into the premier provider of multi-cultural crime victim services to family members of Chicago homicide victims.
Chicago Survivors is the only organization providing comprehensive and compassionate crime victim services to the families across the City of Chicago. We are a non-profit organization and all of our services are free, voluntary and open to all. Our services are survivor-shaped, trauma-informed, family-centered and delivered primarily at the homicide scene, hospital, or morgue immediately after the homicide, with follow-up support services provided in survivors’ homes.

All services are provided by our qualified staff members who are trained in trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, complicated grief psychological first aid, and other important aspects of trauma-informed care. Nearly half of our staff are survivors themselves and are also quite diverse in gender, age, race, ethnicity, language and lived experienced, which increases our ability to relate effectively to the families we serve.

Since our founding, we have provided comprehensive services to more than 3,000 survivor families in Chicago.
Our Services

Chicago Survivors is deeply committed to the practice of evidence-based services and trauma-informed care.

Following the violent loss of a loved one, in addition to overwhelming grief, surviving families are vulnerable to misinformation, confusion, predatory behavior, threats and intimidation and the risk of re-injury and multi-victimization. Without free crime victim services and support, families experience job loss, financial instability, social isolation, victim/witness intimidation, re-victimization and decreased emotional and physical health.

We earn our reputation by providing services families want and need during the worst days of their lives. The following description of our services details how we provide services in non-pandemic times. In 2020, we adapted our services to provide them virtually.
**Crisis Response**

Our Crisis Responders arrive at the scene or hospital within hours of a homicide to help survivor families cope and take the next steps. Crisis Responders seek to calm the family of the victim and deescalate emotional responses that could cause additional harm, protect the family’s crime victim rights, including rights in funeral planning; walk the family through next steps; and provide liaison between the family of the victim and law enforcement.

**Family Support**

Family Support Services provide proactive, field-based case management and support services for up to 6 months, typically beginning around one week following the homicide. Family support specialists develops a care plan with the family that includes supportive counseling, advocacy, emergency financial assistance in key areas associated with the homicide, and Comprehensive Referrals for appropriate immediate and long-term services.

**Youth Clinical**

Youth Clinical Services provide supportive counseling to children in the family. Our youth clinical counselors are licensed and trained in trauma counseling for children and utilize three modalities that have a strong evidence base in work with children: Psychological Skill Building, the Child Family Traumatic Stress Intervention (CFTDI), and Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR).
Success by the Numbers

All staff receive 55 hours of training in

- First Aid
- CPR
- Psychological First Aid
- Crisis Response Services
- De-escalation
- Triage of Needs
- Rapid Assessment of Youth
- Retaliation Assessment & Prevention
- Supportive Counseling
- Ethics
- HIPAA
- Traumatic Stress Intervention
- Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing
- EMDR-Acute Trauma Incident Processing
- Psychological First Aid
- Psychological Skill Building.
Chicago Survivors responded to 648 homicide notifications.

Chicago Survivors served 1,748 youth and adults.

1,190 Total number of clinical hours provided to youth.

2,174 Supportive counseling sessions provided to adults.

80% Reduction in PTSD symptoms for those who completed assessments.

Chicago Survivors delivered over $20K in emergency crisis funds for food, transportation and relocation.
Testimonials

“Chicago Survivors impacted more than just my children and me, more than my grandchildren and me. I don’t know if they know it, but Chicago Survivors also touched my mother, my father, my sister, my aunts, my nieces, my nephew. They all were traumatized by this.

And at the time I was very upset with my family. But working with JaShawn I learned techniques to not be so mad at them. I had to learn that was all part of the process. I went through the Chicago Survivor classes, and I was able to share the handouts. So Chicago Survivors has impacted all of our lives. It helped all of us to maintain a sense of calm almost, because before it was kind of a whirlwind.”

Zheine Washington, Survivor

“As parents you think you know what is good for your child. Timothy was 14, he had just started high school, and he missed his brother. He was in a lethargic state, he wasn’t engaging, he was sleeping all day, he was not playing his games, he just wasn’t himself. We took him to the emergency room; they said there was nothing physically wrong with him; they said it was emotional.

When we met JaShawn (of Chicago Survivors), it was such a blessing. She was so empathetic and we knew our son would get the help he needed. Today, Timothy is awesome! He planned a balloon release with JaShawn and we were spellbound. He’s coming out of his shell and his new confidence I owe all to JaShawn. The way she was with Timothy was just awesome. She understood him. We are so grateful.”

Coretta Black, Survivor
“She was my first client, and she lost her only son – and she wasn’t sure how I could help. Together, we explored the supports Chicago Survivors had for victims of violent loss. She allowed me to give her my best, even when I fumbled along the way.

We walked together through every system she had to face: crime victim services, housing, employment, depression, spirituality, and the like. Five years later, we still talk and go out for meals. She attends groups with other mothers I have served, and we have created a relationship that speaks to the need for not doing it alone. I will forever hold her near and dear to my heart.

My perspective, my lens to serve and support is shaped by this experience. I will never be the same! I have seen their eyes, I have shared their tears and walked alongside the most tragic experiences, yet I have found hope in it all. I have always been a person of light, but the radiance has strengthened and broadened because of this place!”

JaShawn Hill, Staff

“I wanted to join Chicago Survivors staff because I think these community-based, grassroots, anti-violence agencies do the best job at treating survivors of trauma. It is not enough to go to an office and talk with a therapist. It is the culture of the entire agency that really drives traumatic healing. I’ve worked in a number of settings (intensive outpatient programs, private and group practice) and agencies like Chicago Survivors really do the best job of treating trauma.”

Bret Nielson, Staff

“Since Covid started I’ve done almost all of my counseling sessions via phone. The odd thing is that I may have had some of the most emotionally vulnerable moments with a survivor despite not knowing how they look in person.”

Pedro Gonzalez, Staff
Key Partnerships

Chicago Survivors has developed and maintained strong working relationships with community agencies.

In addition to developing key partnerships with community agencies, Chicago Survivors has coordinated with a number of community-based organizations, formally or informally, to provide services to homicide victim families.

Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office  
Cook County Medical Examiner’s Office  
Chicago Battered Women’s Network  
Chicago Police Department  
Chicago Department of Public Health
Board Personnel

Barbara Shaw  
Former Chair

Ronald Chennault  
Chair

Matthew Primozic  
Treasurer

Kenneth Thomas  
Secretary

Oji Eggleston  
Executive Director

Sarah F. Bradley  
Member

Warren Guthrie  
Member

Mark Laboe  
Member

Maria Pike  
Member

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Financial Summary

2020 Funding Sources

Donor list, including foundations and corporate partners

- Chicago Department of Public Health
- Death Penalty Abolition Fund
- Victims of Crime Act
- Anonymous Donor
Featured Media Coverage

His daughter’s murder nearly ended Andrew Holmes’ crusade against gun violence, but 5 years later he’s still at it: ‘I get out there and do what’s on my heart.’

When Andrew Holmes appears on the scene after an area shooting, he’s dressed like a police officer, walkie-talkie office and all. He is always willing to speak from his heart to the grieving friends and relatives left behind. He is also well known for his weekly segment on News-Talk 770 WBBM, where he promotes gun safety and encourages people to seek help.

Little Boy Who Cried ‘It Hurts!’ Joins Chicago’s Grim List

Three-year-old Mekhi James had just gotten his first barbershop haircut when he became one of 104 people shot in Chicago on Father’s Day weekend. “It hurts! It hurts!” Mekhi cried out after a bullet struck him in the back. The injury had come from a rheumatic heart attack.

‘When they killed her, they killed me, too’

chicagosurvivors.org
As we reflect on 2020 and look ahead, we have created a three-year strategic plan to guide and strengthen Chicago Survivors for the next three years and beyond.

Through a combination of generous supporters, dedicated staff and board members, and strong partnerships, Chicago Survivors is in a strong position to enhance our impact in the years ahead. A Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) comprised of Chicago Survivor staff and board members, and McAlpine Consulting for Growth consultants have led this process.
Major strategic priorities include:

1. Chicago Survivors’ Community Role and Partnerships: Chicago Survivors will contribute to safe and healthy communities by providing services to survivor families and by partnering with mission-aligned organizations to coordinate and enhance services in the crime victims’ services field.

2. Organizational Structure: Chicago Survivors will enhance organizational infrastructure to ensure sufficient and supported staff, facilitate quality programming, and inspire institutional growth while adapting to an evolving crime victim services landscape.

3. Marketing and Communications: Chicago Survivors will increase awareness of the organization, enhancing its value and reputation through the development of marketing and communications initiatives.

4. Board Development: Build a diverse board that understands, supports, and enables the mission of the organization and engages with staff to meet that mission.

5. Financial Sustainability: Establish financial stability through the development of a mission-aligned financial plan which includes development of public, private and earned income resources.