



# THE WOMEN'S ADVOCACY CENTER

**Sharing hope. Changing lives.**

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## OUR MISSION

### WHY WE SERVE

There are various reasons why women remain in homes where there is domestic abuse. Some fear leaving out of guilt and shame. Leaving puts the victim's life in the spotlight where she can fear judgment and misunderstanding. Other women stay because they do not believe they can overcome obstacles such as, affordable and safe housing, childcare, gainful employment, financial assistance, food security, legal representation, and reliable transportation. We are here to empower and support survivors with the love of Christ.

### OUR APPROACH

We serve women and their children from a foundation of the Gospel. From that foundation, we build relationships through a 24-month vertical intervention model known as our A.I.M. Program. Through this Program we assist women in meeting their basic needs, invest in their overall well-being, and mentor them through one-on-one coaching.

At The Women's Advocacy Center, our purpose is to empower and support survivors of domestic abuse in East Shelby County. We accomplish this by educating women on how to achieve financial security and form healthy relationships, while stabilizing their families and strengthening their faith.

#### ASSIST

- Access to household and personal care items
- Bi-weekly meals
- Childcare
- Emergency and transitional housing
- Transportation assistance

#### INVEST

- Financial literacy
- Job placement
- Mental health counseling
- Parenting classes
- Summer camp for children
- Support group

#### MENTOR

- Yokefellows who walk alongside survivors and provides discipleship



## WHY IT MATTERS

One in four women has been or will be a victim of domestic abuse in her lifetime. Women from ages 24-35 experience domestic abuse more often than any other age group. In our geographic service area, these women are usually stay-at-home moms or women who work part-time. They are married or have a dating partner who is the primary earner. In their intimate relationships, the women we serve report patterns of abuse such as economic abuse, physical abuse, spiritual abuse, and/or verbal abuse. When that happens, we are here to help.

## OUR IMPACT SINCE 2018

### Safety

- More than 3,000 consultations and services have been provided to women in East Shelby County and across the country.
- Emergency shelter has been provided for more than 30 women.
- More than 100 women in our communities were prevented from experiencing extended homelessness.

### Stability

- Fifty women gained or maintained employment to provide for themselves and their children.
- 200 meals have been delivered to overcome food insecurity.
- Transportation assistance has given women freedom and mobility.

### Strength

- Women were supported in obtaining treatment for anxiety, depression, PTSD, and substance abuse.
- Healthier lifestyles resulted from improved financial management, informative parenting classes, and structured support group meetings.
- Faith has increased as the love of Christ was modeled.



## **SAFE FAMILIES: EMPOWERED2THRIVE**

Domestic abuse is a public health crisis in our communities. A common narrative is that social issues like abuse only happen in poor, urban neighborhoods where people are uneducated. It does. However, it can also happen in areas where families are high-earning and highly educated families. There is no one demographic which experiences domestic abuse. It can and does happen to women and children of all ages, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds. When it happens in rural and suburban Shelby County, we are there to empower and support survivors.

We serve women and their children who have experienced the trauma of domestic abuse. Our goal is to stop harmful cycles of abuse in their lives by intervening in a way that promotes emotionally healthy living, informed decision-making, and most importantly safety. Through our programs and services, we empower our clients to thrive not just survive.

Our services include bi-weekly meals, emergency and transitional housing assistance, access to household and personal care items, referrals for counseling, legal services, and transportation. We offer wellness assessments, parenting workshops, job readiness preparation, and a bi-weekly support group. For those who qualify, we also offer fifteen months of financial assistance. At The Women's Advocacy Center, we are sharing hope and changing lives.

### **THE BENEFIT**

The impact of domestic abuse is felt throughout our community. Attorneys, employers, law enforcement, medical professionals, mental health professionals, school personnel, and social workers are all affected by the abuse in just one family. In the U.S., the financial cost of domestic abuse is more than \$37 billion. Working together, we can make a difference for these families. In the process, we create a safer community for all of us to grow and live.



## **FOOD ON THE TABLE MEAL PROGRAM**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines food insecurity as the "limited or uncertain availability of or access to nutritionally adequate and safe foods." Addressing an issue as complex as food insecurity requires a collaborative and strategic approach. At a community level, it also requires awareness, advocacy, donations, and volunteers.

In 2021, at The Women's Advocacy Center we decided to partner with a local church to address this issue for survivors of abuse living in the communities we serve. Our goal was to give the women and their children the security of knowing there would be food available for them on a regular basis. With a grant from a local foundation, we launched the Food on the Table Meal Program.

This program has made it possible for women and their children to receive food during the most difficult times. The bi-weekly program, managed by volunteers, supports food security for up to twenty women and their children. It is by far, one of the best programs we offer.

### **THE BENEFIT**

Surviving domestic abuse is hard. Having food on the table shouldn't be. Our goal for families in Arlington, Bartlett, Collierville, Cordova, Eads, Germantown, Lakeland, Millington, and Northaven is consistent food on the table for their families. Through our bi-weekly meal program, we help bring hope to women and their children in the communities we serve. By doing so, we demonstrate our commitment to their overall well-being as we assist them in meeting a basic need - food security.



## LEGAL REPRESENTATION

Having an advocate in your corner can give you a sense of confidence. Many women who have experienced domestic abuse feel anything but confident when faced with the legal challenges of dissolving a marriage. There are issues such as child custody and support, the division of marital assets, and joint access to marital property which must be decided. More often than not, women who have experienced various forms of abuse do not feel strong enough to navigate an unfamiliar judicial system alone.

This is where we come in. At The Women's Advocacy Center, we have Community Champions who make the process easier to understand. These Champions, who are skilled family law attorneys, offer *pro bono* representation to our clients. To relieve the burden of this service, we assist clients with consultation fees, the legal filing fees, and some mediation costs. Even if women choose not to file for divorce, having access to quality legal representation makes all the difference.

## THE BENEFIT

Legal advocates play a crucial role in upholding justice, ensuring fair representation, and advocating for the rights and interests of individuals within the legal system. Such advocacy is particularly important to women who have experienced domestic abuse. An attorney helps make the judicial process less intimidating and ensures that woman's voice is heard. We help ensure survivors have access to attorneys and justice.



## CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

Each year, more than three million children witness domestic abuse in their homes. Understanding how this **adverse childhood experience** impacts children's development and growth is important. It is also important to understand how children are affected by **adverse community experiences**, such as discrimination, a lack of affordable housing, poverty, and violence.

Together, these two types of experiences - adverse and community - are known as "The Pair of ACEs". They can have long lasting effects on children, unless there is a positive intervening factor in a child's life. At The Women's Advocacy Center, we are the positive intervening factor.

Without our involvement, children who experiences this type of adversity are on a path to become abusers and/or victims who suffer from mental illness, obesity, poor physical health, or substance abuse. The goal of our Children's Program, is to overcome these risk factors and to help create positive experiences through:

- Gymnastics
- Music Lessons
- Seasonal Sports
- Summer Camp
- Zoo Membership

### THE BENEFIT

Our Children's Program gives us the opportunity to be a positive intervening factor in the life of a child who is at risk. The program gives each child of the women we serve, the opportunity to attend a week of summer camp, or enroll in arts and sports, or even music lessons. The investment we make in our children has the potential to impact generations.



## CHILDCARE

Childcare assistance is one of the top requests from women served by The Women's Advocacy Center. The average cost per month for childcare in the U.S. is \$850. When added to other monthly expenses, women who earn less than \$30,000 per year and are therefore considered at the poverty level quickly feel the financial strain of living on their own. For this reason, those who leave an abuser, will sometimes return, because the cost of living independently is considered too high.

We understand those costs, which is why at The Women's Advocacy Center supports women in overcoming financial obstacles which prevent them from leaving abusive relationships for good. Remaining in such a situation without a transformative change by the abuser does not honor God. It's not safe and the long-term harm to women and their children can be irreparable.

## THE BENEFIT

When we care for those who live in poverty, God is honored. He is honored when we reach out our hands to support women and children living in poverty. Women who are impacted by domestic abuse are not looking for hand-outs. They are looking for a way forward. With our assistance, they can confidently pursue their economic goals, assured their children are receiving quality childcare.





## HOUSING

Clients in our geographic service area need vital supports advance their economic security and contribute to safe housing environments. This support includes rental assistance and utility assistance, as well as resources to assist with relocation/moving, and emergency and transitional housing. In suburban East Shelby County, we are the only comprehensive victim service organization providing this level of support.

Addressing housing needs at this level can be a challenge. This is due, in part, to the fact that there are no shelters for survivors of domestic abuse, who live in East Shelby County. Therefore, to receive emergency and transitional housing clients must often travel outside our service area.

At The Women's Advocacy Center, we believe women should be able to find emergency housing closer to where they live and work, and where their children attend school. We understand the trauma of being homeless and by faith seek out the right local partners who will help us identify affordable and safe housing solutions for our clients and their children.

## THE BENEFIT

Domestic abuse happens at all times of the day and night. The difference between a woman finding emergency shelter in her car or having a safe place to stay in her local community for up to ten nights can depend on a phone call. We answer the call for women needing emergency or transitional housing. With internal resources and through our external partners, we use a "housing first" approach to fostering dignity and stability for families left homeless by domestic abuse.



## SOUL CARE SUPPORT GROUP

Our Soul Care Support Group empowers women who have survived domestic abuse. Through evidence-based practices we give women a safe space to voice their concerns, fears, frustrations, and even their anger. In the group, led by a professional counselor and a master's level spiritual director, women are educated on how to manage triggers, how to set boundaries, and how to cope with anxiety. Group facilitators use proven strategies to help women process trauma as they move towards emotionally healthy living.

The support group is a woman's first placement with The Women's Advocacy Center, unless she needs emergency housing. Joining with other women in the group, a woman realizes she is not alone. She has the opportunity to engage at her own pace, before being introduced to other programs and services she and her children may need. We respect her autonomy and meet her where she is giving her the power to decide her next steps.

The journey from grief and loss to growth and healing never happens in a straight line. Women who have lived through domestic abuse have adult and childhood trauma, which can make the journey forward difficult to navigate alone. We are here to offer support.

### THE BENEFIT

Women in our Soul Care Support Group are more likely to find the strength to move forward from an abusive relationship. They discuss their abuse, and they also discuss healthy ways to cope and process it. The benefit is women receive tools to identify unhealthy relationships and to reclaim their identity. In the process, they find a safe and supportive space for acceptance and community without judgment.



## THE NEED FOR TWAC

Shelby County has the highest reported incidents of domestic abuse in the State. While many of these incidents occur in Memphis, women in suburban communities also experience domestic abuse. In fact, it is estimated each year, more than 8,000 women will experience domestic abuse in the East Shelby County communities served by The Women's Advocacy Center.

## COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

We cannot minister to those in need without the involvement of Community Champions. In the community, we work with committed men and women who want to help transform lives. They trust God to use their talents, time, and treasures to impact generations by advancing our mission. You can find them in the community serving in various areas to include:

- Business Owners and Professionals
- Churches
- Civic Organizations
- Community Foundations
- Corporate Executives
- Court Advocates and Officers
- Educators
- Family Law Attorneys
- Law Enforcement
- Local Agencies and Nonprofits
- Professional Counselors and Therapists
- School Counselors



## WHAT YOU CAN DO

### PARTICIPATE

Champion our mission and find a place to serve others with your talents, time, or treasure. In doing so, you contribute to our community impact and our growth. Share your gifts with us in any of these areas.

- **Your Talents - monthly commitment**
  - Board of Directors
  - Fundraising or Outreach Committee Volunteer
- **Your Time - bi-weekly or weekly commitment**
  - Children's Program Volunteer
  - Food on the Table Meal Program Volunteer
  - Volunteer Yokefellow

### PROMOTE

You can help us raise awareness about the effect of domestic abuse on families by promoting The Women's Advocacy Center. Champion our mission to your co-workers, family, friends, and to your broader circle of influence through one-on-one conversations or your social media platforms. Promote not only how we serve women and children, but also how we provide training, which helps increase awareness about domestic abuse.

### PLAN

Plan your giving to support our mission. We are focused on empowering and supporting women and children in a way that is holistic. This means not only are we ministering to their spiritual well-being, but we are also meeting more practical needs. With your financial gifts, we are able to meet needs for childcare, counseling, food, housing, legal representation, and transportation. Become a Champion and plan your giving to help serve women and children in our communities.



## **Find Us Here:**

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