

# Empowering Strategies

## Financial Empowerment for Domestic Abuse Victims

By Jennifer Kuhn



Did you know that nearly three-quarters of Americans personally know someone who has been a victim of domestic violence? According to the U.S. Department of

Justice and the Centers for Disease Control, 25 percent of women report being abused by a husband or partner in their lifetimes. That is one out of every four women. These are truly sobering statistics – but is the reality that many women in America live with every day.

### Economic abuse is on the rise!

When people think about domestic abuse, they often – and correctly so – associate it with violence and even death. However, there is an underreported and increasingly prevalent type of abuse that doesn't result in visible cuts or bruises, yet causes victims great pain. Many victims of physical, sexual and verbal abuse are also subject to economic abuse. Economic abuse is a tactic often used to control relationships, isolate women and maintain power by preventing access to money and/or other financial resources.

Approximately six out of 10 Americans strongly agree that lack of money and a steady income is often a huge obstacle faced by a survivor of domestic violence when trying to leave her/his abuser. Sometimes financial concerns and stability are central to a domestic violence victim's ability to live a financially secure life free from an abusive situation. For the past three years, The Allstate Foundation has been committed to providing knowledge and skills – particularly those related to financial empowerment – to support survivors of domestic violence.

### Raising money to help overcome Domestic Violence

In support of October's National Domestic Violence Awareness month, The

**The Allstate Foundation Domestic Violence Program offers these strategies for victims planning to leave abusive situations:**

- Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799- SAFE to find a domestic violence program where you can learn about resources, such as emergency assistance funds, shelter, public benefits and affordable housing.
- Get a copy of your credit report and monitor your credit often. You can request a free copy at [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) or (877) 322-8228. Most financial institutions also provide low-cost credit-monitoring services.
- Open a post office box—and change your mailing address—for any financial information you may receive before or after you leave an abusive situation. You can get one from the U.S. Postal Service or vendors including Parcel Plus or the UPS Store.
- Contact financial institutions and utility companies, including your cell-phone service, to secure your private information with new PIN codes and passwords. Change ATM and debit-card PIN codes and the passwords for e-mail and online banking accounts.
- Make necessary changes to your insurance plans, will or trust beneficiaries, appointing a new person if your abuser used to be your designee.

If you, or someone you know is a victim of domestic violence, or would like more information about our program please call or visit our website at: [www.econempowerment.org](http://www.econempowerment.org).

Allstate Foundation and the CMBWN hosted a networking event attended by more than 150 local advocates and members of Illinois government at Chicago's Hotel Allegro. The event concluded with guests attending a performance of The Color Purple, with an overarching message about women having the strength to triumph over violence and discover their unique voice in the world, the musical closely mirrors The Allstate Foundation's Domestic Violence Program's own mission.

This special event allowed the Allstate Foundation Domestic Violence Program to support Chicagoland domestic violence services by raising \$25,000 for the Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women's Network (CMBWN).

### Financial Empowerment on a National Level

On a national level, The Allstate Foundation is committing more than \$800,000 this fall towards national domestic violence initiatives specifically dedicated to promoting financial empowerment in women including support of domestic violence services throughout the U.S. and the development of specific curriculum on the issue and its prevention.

Financial independence is empowering – it allows domestic violence victims to make choices to secure a better future for themselves and their family. For victims

of domestic abuse, financial concerns can often be a matter of life or death. Gaining financial control can allow victims to find freedom from abuse.

*Jennifer Kuhn is the National Program Director for The Allstate Foundation's Domestic Violence Program. An attorney, she is a passionate activist for domestic violence prevention and education and an advocate for victims and their families. Kuhn formerly was the division chief of the Crime Victims Services Division within the Illinois Attorney General's Office and a Cook County Assistant States Attorney specializing in domestic violence prosecutions.*

