



As part of our 2013 Domestic Violence Awareness Month campaign, we present a four-part series on local and national organizations that support victims of domestic violence. Here is our first piece.

## *Life Span*

**What is your mission?** Life Span is committed to the cessation of domestic violence & the immediate relief of those who suffer from its consequences.

**What is your history?** We were founded in 1978 by a coalition of women & organizations in the North & Northwest suburbs of Cook County to address the urgent need of area battered women for services. In 35 years, we have grown from a small, grass roots agency staffed by an Executive Director & volunteers to one that employs 30 people.

**What type services are provided?** Our services are confidential, offered free of charge & include: Counseling for survivors & child witnesses of domestic violence; outreach, education & counseling for teens; criminal court advocacy; legal representation in “order of protection” & family law cases & civil legal remedies for sexual assault; immigration representation; employment readiness & financial literacy training; outreach, education & training for service providers.

**How many victims and/ or perpetrators did you serve last year?** In FY 13, Life Span served 3842 clients.

**How has your organization changed over the years?** We have grown from an agency that provided group counseling to one which is a leader in the provision of expert services – from counseling/ criminal court advocacy to legal representation in all types of family law cases. We have created a number of innovative programs, including Police & Immigration Projects. We were the first Illinois agency to put into practice Civil No Contact Orders for sexual assault survivors. Throughout our history, we have stayed true to our original mission – the eradication of domestic violence. Our direct services work toward this goal. We also use what we have learned to improve systems that impact domestic violence.

**If you could give one piece of advice to a victim, what would that be?** Get help after the first incident. Violence only gets worse. Early intervention is the best way to name the problem, work on safety planning & hold abusers accountable. Denial is a powerful force. Abusers continue to “act” because no one wants to speak out or challenge them to take responsibility for the harm they cause.

**If you could give one piece of advice to a family member/ friend who suspects someone they love is a victim, what would that be?** Ask direct questions. Giving victims permission to talk is the first step in creating safety. Understand victims are overwhelmed by shame & fear & may not know whom to trust with this devastating “secret.” Once they start talking, listen carefully & resist the urge to rescue. Each victim has to reach her own conclusion about what is right for her and when she is ready to change.

**How does someone contact you?** Call us at 847-824-0382. Our website is [www.life-span.org](http://www.life-span.org)