

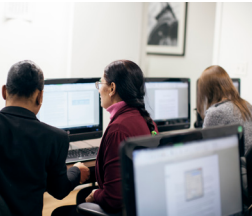


Sanctuary  
for Families



# Strategic Plan

## 2023-2025



## Letter from Board President, Denis McInerney and Executive Director, Judy Harris Kluger

Sanctuary for Families was founded on the belief that when provided with services tailored to their needs, survivors of domestic violence can live independently and safely, free from abuse. Since our inception in 1984 as a grassroots organization, tens of thousands of survivors have received legal services, clinical support, housing assistance, and employment training to transform their lives. Today, Sanctuary operates out of 11 locations throughout New York City and employs over 230 staff, including lawyers, clinicians, employment specialists, and support staff, and has mobilized thousands of volunteers.

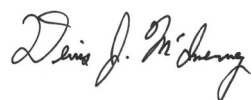
The past three years have marked a pivotal moment for New York City and the rest of the country. New Yorkers have experienced immense suffering and trauma because of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the greatest impact felt by communities of color, just as the damage of long-standing systemic racism has been brought into sharper focus. Amidst the pandemic, concerns for the safety of domestic violence survivors rose to new heights as stay-at-home orders forced many survivors to isolate with their abusers without access to services, putting their safety at even greater risk.

Sanctuary responded swiftly by adjusting its programmatic offerings to meet survivors' needs in this moment of crisis. Staff shifted counseling services and employment training to be completely virtual and administered an emergency cash assistance program for survivors. Lawyers mobilized to ensure that clients could obtain much needed protective orders when the courts were essentially closed. While many of us were working from home, resident managers and other shelter staff were showing up day in and day out to run our shelters, putting themselves at risk while instituting new protocols to keep residents safe.

With these events as a backdrop, Sanctuary engaged in a strategic planning process to strengthen the organization and its impact and create a roadmap for the next three years. Led by a committee of members from Sanctuary's Board of Directors and executive leadership team, the process spanned ten months and involved intensive engagement with and input from staff, survivors supported by Sanctuary's services, Board members, and leading voices in the field of domestic and gender violence from government, philanthropy, and nonprofit organizations.

As part of this strategic plan, we make more explicit our commitment to equity and justice as central to our work. We have also made combating sexual assault among survivors of domestic violence an explicit priority of our work and advocacy, and plan to enhance our economic empowerment program offerings to extend the depth of our client services. This plan will help Sanctuary remain steadfast in its commitment to creating a world in which freedom from gender violence is a basic human right.

Sincerely,



Denis McInerney  
President of the Board of Directors



Judy Harris Kluger  
Executive Director



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## INTRODUCTION

### Meeting the moment

Domestic violence, and other forms of gender violence, remain a pervasive issue in our society. Nationally, one in four women and one in seven men will experience physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime<sup>1</sup>—and one in ten women in the United States will be raped by an intimate partner in her lifetime. In New York City alone, police respond to nearly 165,000 domestic incidents each year.<sup>2</sup> The prevalence of domestic violence is a national public health crisis that affects all neighborhoods and communities and threatens our most vulnerable residents.

For nearly forty years, Sanctuary has played a pivotal role in providing life-saving services to reduce trauma and help survivors heal and live without the fear of violence. The organization has experienced tremendous growth—particularly over the past eight years. During this time, Sanctuary has increased its staff by 50 percent and nearly doubled its operating budget.<sup>3</sup> Sanctuary has expanded programming to respond to our clients' experiences with human trafficking, campus sexual assault, and the criminalization of survivors, and developed a new dyadic model of clinical care where children and parents receive services together. New York City officials continue to turn to Sanctuary to strengthen communities and support survivors.

Never has the need for Sanctuary's services been greater. Recent rulings by the Supreme Court that restrict access to abortions and grant more power to abusers to carry guns will require the advocacy and service provider community to increase its efforts in the battle for human rights. Sanctuary is at the center of this effort to protect survivors in New York City and beyond. With this reality in mind, our strategic plan has a dual purpose—to make our organization stronger, better equipped, and more resilient in the face of an increasingly perilous environment for the people we serve, and to amplify our services and advocacy strategies to meet the needs and support the interests of our clients.

<sup>1</sup> *Fast Facts: Preventing Intimate Partner Violence | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC. (2021). CDC.* Retrieved June 29, 2022, from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/fastfact.html>.

<sup>2</sup> NYC Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence, Community Board Snapshots (2016-2020); retrieved from <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/ocdv/press-resources/community-board-snapshots.page>.

<sup>3</sup> \$15,000,000 (FY 2014) to \$28,000,000 (FY 2022).

## INTRODUCTION

### **Our Plan**

Three goals anchor our strategic plan, and will guide our work over the next three years:

- Impact: Strengthen our model to address unmet needs and amplify advocacy efforts to increase positive impact for survivors.
- Excellence: Achieve operational excellence across the organization and support our staff to provide the highest quality of service for our clients.
- Equity: Embed diversity, equity, and inclusion into our service model, organizational practices, and culture.

This plan represents Sanctuary's commitment to fulfilling our vision for our clients, staff, and partners. It is intended to serve as a roadmap and includes a series of ambitious and pragmatic strategies that will advance our goals. Below we elaborate on the three overarching goals of the plan and outline the strategies we intend to pursue to achieve them.

## GOAL 1: IMPACT

# Strengthen our model to address unmet needs and amplify advocacy efforts to increase positive impact for survivors

Sanctuary is a client-centered organization dedicated to the safety, healing, and self-determination of survivors of gender violence. As we consider how to increase the impact of our work, we are focusing on areas in which we can enhance the support we provide to our clients through new programmatic approaches, stronger organizational practices, and more expansive approaches to our advocacy work. This includes building upon flagship programming like Sanctuary's Economic Empowerment Program (EEP) to serve more clients with varied skills and career interests. It also means recognizing that, in addition to being survivors of domestic violence, many of our clients have also faced other forms of abuse, such as sexual abuse, cyber sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation, which require tailored approaches to supporting clients and specialized training for staff. For each of the strategies under this goal, our clients' unique and specific strengths and needs will continue to be centered in our work and shape our approach.

### Strategy 1a. Expand economic empowerment programming to support clients to achieve self-sufficiency

#### **Develop a new Economic Mobility and Empowerment Center**

Building on the success of EEP, Sanctuary seeks to expand the range of economic and workforce development opportunities that it offers its clients. Sanctuary will create a dedicated Economic Mobility and Empowerment Center—a new department that will house existing and new career development programming. In standing up this new department, Sanctuary will design new programs to fill gaps in addressing client needs and interests, including on behalf of undocumented clients, and those with interests that extend to employment opportunities beyond EEP's current focus on administrative work. Additional programmatic options for Sanctuary to pursue include training clients for careers in human services, creating new workers' co-operatives, and entrepreneurship skills training.

#### **Improve service coordination**

Sanctuary offers various other economic and workforce development-related services that are currently located in departments across the organization, with limited coordination. With the formation of the new Economic Mobility and Empowerment Center, Sanctuary seeks to improve coordination among its existing career-focused services, including the programs that fall under EEP, the economic stability services offered at the Family Justice Centers, the career services provided by EMPOWER Center staff, and the workers' co-operative.

## GOAL 1: IMPACT

### Strategy 1b. Increase advocacy efforts to amplify the voices of survivors and activate targeted support for their most pressing needs

#### **Tackling systems-level change**

Sanctuary clients face numerous challenges interacting with public institutions that are not trauma-responsive and victim-centered. From confronting complex immigration systems to navigating bureaucratic hurdles when applying for public entitlements to filing police reports, survivors are often confronted with systems that are not equipped to address their unique needs. Building off Sanctuary's success as a leading voice in advocating for legislative change, Sanctuary seeks to extend its advocacy work to focus on system change. Potential areas of focus for this work include addressing bias in the family law system and improving law enforcement's response to gender violence survivors, among other areas of focus.

#### **Focusing on DEI**

Sanctuary will also develop new internal routines and practices to align its advocacy priorities with its diversity, equity, and inclusion goals (see Goal 3 focused on equity). Through increased collaboration between the Advocacy and DEI Committees and a new DEI Officer, Sanctuary will ensure that advocacy priorities contribute to its DEI objectives. To ensure that Sanctuary's advocacy work is informed by client perspectives, the Advocacy Committee will also develop a process for inviting survivors to play more of a central role in its work.

### Strategy 1c. Strengthen organizational responses to sexual abuse, cyber sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation for existing clients

#### **Screening and tracking sexual abuse, cyber sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation**

National studies have shown that physically and psychologically abusive partners are often sexually abusive as well.<sup>4</sup> According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, nearly half of women in abusive relationships will also be sexually assaulted during the relationship.<sup>5</sup> Sanctuary clients are no exception to these statistics. Information about the prevalence of sexual victimization is not systematically tracked at intake, making it difficult to bring full awareness to the issue. As a part of this strategy, Sanctuary will make clear its commitment to supporting its clients who face multiple forms of gender violence and will improve screening tools and intake procedures to better assess and track client needs related to sexual abuse, cyber sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation.

#### **Developing treatment modalities and training**

Sanctuary will develop new treatment modalities and clinical interventions to support clients who have experienced both intimate partner violence and sexual abuse, cyber sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation. Sanctuary will also strengthen training for staff on how to address these needs, for example, by making the existing cyber sexual abuse training more widely available.

<sup>4</sup> NCADV | National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. "Quick Guide: Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse," 4 Apr. 2018, [ncadv.org/blog/posts/quick-guide-domestic-violence-and-sexual-abuse](https://ncadv.org/blog/posts/quick-guide-domestic-violence-and-sexual-abuse).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

## GOAL 1: IMPACT

### **Building capacity to address sexual abuse, cyber sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation through coalitions and partnerships**

Sanctuary will expand its network of partner organizations with expertise in sexual abuse, cyber sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation when external referrals may be necessary to comprehensively address client needs. Sanctuary will also continue with movement-building efforts to advocate for legislative and policy reforms and system-level change related to sexual abuse, cyber sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation.

### **Strategy 1d. Prioritize the deterrence and prevention of femicide for intimate partner violence survivors**

#### **Enhancing lethality assessments and response protocols**

The fatality risk that survivors of intimate partner violence face is a pervasive national problem. One study estimates that nearly three women are murdered every day across the United States by a current or former intimate partner.<sup>6</sup> Other experts predict that the risk of fatality for women will increase in the context of legal constraints on access to reproductive health services.<sup>7</sup> Sanctuary's staff are faced with this reality in the course of their work every day and need to be equipped with the most effective tools to mitigate these risks for their clients.

Sanctuary will review and enhance—and train staff to consistently use—its danger assessment tool to effectively screen clients for risk factors at intake. The collection of more detailed information will support Sanctuary in its effort to enhance safety plans and activate a set of trauma-responsive protocols for cases where there is a heightened lethality risk. In addition, while Sanctuary provides vicarious trauma support to staff, it is not sufficient to meet the demand. Sanctuary will expand its vicarious trauma resources and training for staff to ensure staff have the support in place to effectively perform their work and respond to survivors' needs.

#### **Amplifying awareness and advocacy**

Sanctuary will also amplify its advocacy efforts to improve legislation, policy, and system responses to bring greater awareness to the lethality risks that intimate partner survivors face. This may include enhanced training for police in victim-centered practices, advocating for enhancements to the City of New York's fatality review process, and raising the profile of femicide as a domestic public health issue that requires additional federal and state funding for preventative services.

<sup>6</sup> *When Men Murder Women*. (2021, September). Violence Policy Center. Retrieved October 10, 2022, from <https://vpc.org/studies/wmmw2021.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, M. (2022, May). Abortion Opponents Don't Care if Pregnant Women Get Murdered. Salon. Retrieved October 17, 2022, from <https://www.salon.com/2022/05/30/abortion-opponents-dont-care-if-pregnant-women-get-murdered/>



## GOAL 2: EXCELLENCE

### **Achieve operational excellence across the organization and support our staff to provide the highest quality of service for our clients**

Sanctuary has grown rapidly, but our organizational structure, internal systems and resources needed to sustain this growth have not kept pace. Staff training, onboarding, and professional development opportunities have been largely driven by individual departments, rather than an organization-wide training curriculum. Approaches to case management vary greatly across programs, and information is not consistently recorded and exchanged from one unit to the next. Measures of impact also vary between programs, rooted more in funder requirements than a holistic vision of client impact. To support these efforts, we will create the position of a Chief Program Officer to help integrate services across program areas and implement an impact vision that spans the organization. This new leadership role will also help the organization identify opportunities for innovation and build programmatic breadth as we continue to evolve and grow.

#### **Strategy 2a. Bolster staff expertise and readiness to meet client needs**

##### **Develop a standardized training curriculum and learning standards**

The content and frequency of trainings that Sanctuary offers to staff varies widely across programs. Sanctuary will develop a standardized training curriculum to equip staff with the core skills needed to perform their work. Staff in specialized roles (*e.g.*, case manager, clinician, lawyer) will receive more specific trainings tailored to their job functions. In addition, Sanctuary will also develop a set of learning standards so that learning objectives are clearly outlined and can be measured. Sanctuary will also begin to systematically track training participation in personnel records.

##### **Address staff trauma**

To better address staff needs, Sanctuary will increase the availability of primary trauma and vicarious trauma services, making services more accessible and underscoring the organization's commitment to staff well-being and self-care.

## GOAL 2: EXCELLENCE

### Strategy 2b. Reinforce Sanctuary's approach to case management and ensure integrated services with a robust information-sharing and referral system

#### **Assess and train staff on information-sharing and referral processes**

Sanctuary's case managers play a critical role coordinating services for clients. However, the systems in place to facilitate information-sharing and referrals for clients are not used consistently, making it difficult for case managers to provide holistic care. To address these gaps, Sanctuary will conduct an organization-wide assessment of how information-sharing systems across Sanctuary's program departments are used. Sanctuary will also refresh the design of the user interfaces for Salesforce and the intranet, train staff on best practices for consistent client assessment, documentation, information-sharing, and referral, and form a working group to explore new ways of improving Sanctuary's knowledge-management practices.

#### **Pilot a model of case coordinators to manage client service plans**

Sanctuary will pilot a new approach to case management where clients are assigned to a dedicated case coordinator responsible for coordinating their service plan across departments. Shifting to a "case coordinator model," in which case managers are connected to the individual rather than to any one program or department will support the delivery of holistic care in a more integrated and streamlined way across the organization.

### Strategy 2c. Strengthen impact measurement to fine-tune Sanctuary's understanding of clients' holistic needs, make targeted investment decisions, and better serve clients

#### **Create department-specific impact measures**

Sanctuary defines success in terms of creating safety, independence, and self-sufficiency for its clients; however, the organization's impact metrics focus on individual programs, levels of service, and short-term vs. long-term client services, which do not illustrate whether clients' holistic needs were met. To address this, Sanctuary will develop department-specific impact measures that track client outcomes beyond levels of service (*i.e.*, number of clients served), train staff on new metrics and routines, and incorporate client feedback into impact tracking and reporting through client surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

#### **Establish routines and practices around impact tracking**

Sanctuary has made significant strides in enhancing its data and performance measurement capacities in the past few years; there is now an opportunity to reinforce this progress by institutionalizing a set of routines and practices around impact measurement. This will include internal meetings to share what is behind the numbers, elevate cross-departmental issues, and discuss implications for their work.

## GOAL 3: EQUITY

### **Embed diversity, equity, and inclusion into our service model, organizational practices, and culture**

The focus on equity in this plan underscores our commitment to creating a client experience and workplace culture that is inclusive and culturally humble. We recognize that to advance our DEI commitments as an organization at our size and scale, we need dedicated leadership to help develop an overarching, intersectional vision for diversity, equity, and inclusion that is shaped by perspectives from the Board, staff, and clients. As an initial step, we will hire a DEI Officer to lead this work and develop a process for bringing together the Board and staff leadership to develop a set of goals to drive our work forward and activate our commitment to embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion into our culture and work.

#### Strategy 3a. Increase opportunities for transparent and open discussion and learning related to DEI

##### **Bolster training**

The DEI Officer will create and put into practice a dynamic DEI curriculum to guide training and learning for staff, leadership, and the Board.

##### **Create space for peer learning and discussion**

Sanctuary staff and leadership need opportunities to learn from each other about how DEI priorities are shaping the organization's activities and outlook. Therefore, Sanctuary leadership will conduct periodic town halls to present positions on policy topics, share areas where Sanctuary has engaged in advocacy, and discuss these with staff. The DEI Officer will also support the development of self-identifying staff affinity groups to promote shared learning among staff in safe spaces.

#### Strategy 3b. Incorporate DEI-focused practices to support client journeys across the organization

##### **Focus DEI on program design, advocacy, and development**

The DEI Officer will work to ensure that Sanctuary's services are aligned with the organization's goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion. The DEI Officer will perform a program audit to assess whether intake procedures, client training modules, engagement strategies, and other aspects of direct service work are guided by the principles of cultural humility and responsiveness. The DEI Officer will also develop processes for vetting new initiatives and funding opportunities to align these practices and decision points with the organization's DEI goals.