



action & impact.

The Ascend Justice Newsletter • December 2024



Together, we can create possibility.

This is the time of year when we ask you, our incredible supporters, to invest in Ascend Justice once again. Help us create possibilities for people impacted by domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking, stalking, and the child welfare system. Let's support survivors. **Together.**



Your donation to Ascend Justice gives survivors a chance to use a legal system they may not otherwise have access to, to take back control of their own lives. Your investment means that more people will be able to access **FREE high quality legal services** and a **holistic support system** that can help get them the full range of services they need to escape abuse and navigate the complex child welfare system.

Your support is also an investment in fixing the systemic problems our clients face every day. It's

not enough just to help our clients navigate complex and inadequate systems; we also need to make our systems fairer and safer for future survivors. When our clients have a hard time accessing justice, Ascend Justice gets to work to **change policies and laws** so that survivors' needs are front and center. We frequently lend our expertise to national, state, and local committees and working groups, and we actively support legislation that makes life easier and more fair for survivors.

So join us. Invest in our work today! There are so many ways to give.

Donate Today!



New Emergency Pantry

We've started a Food Drive to help stock our new emergency pantry! Many of our clients are facing food insecurity right now, so we are collecting shelf-stable, nonperishable food items. You can directly help feed people by making a donation! Here are some foods we need:

- Canned vegetables
- Canned fruit (low or no sugar added)
- Pasta and pasta sauce
- Packaged rice/pasta meals
- Honey
- Oats
- Granola/protein bars
- Bouillon (cubes or jars)
- Boxed goods (stuffing, mashed potatoes, bread mixes)
- Canned soup
- Cooking oils
- Nut butter
- Dried beans
- Rice
- Salt and pepper

Please only donate foods that are unexpired - think about easy meals you could feed your family in tough times. We will be collecting food starting this week. Message our Client Support Manager, [Kayla Martinez](#), to arrange your donation day and time!

If you cannot make a direct donation and still want to help, please consider purchasing a Visa or Instacart gift card from our Amazon wishlist - all gift cards go directly to clients who are struggling:
<https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/202IUSEFL902Q>

Learning from Tragedy

Recent domestic violence data indicates that domestic violence fatalities and near-fatalities are on the rise. More people are dying or nearly dying from abuse in 2024 than in previous years, and Ascend Justice is working to understand why.

Our Managing Director of Advocacy and Partnerships, Sara Block, is the Co-Chair of the Illinois Statewide Domestic Violence Fatality Review (DVFR) Committee. The goal of the Illinois DVFR project is to prevent future domestic violence-related deaths and near-deaths, and to reduce the severity and frequency of domestic violence overall. The committee is made up of experts across many domestic violence-related fields who come together to look at domestic



violence interventions that may lead to adverse outcomes for survivors, victims, and their families. In other words, Illinois DVFR review teams look at each domestic violence-related death or near-death to see what happened, what interventions were tried, what went wrong, and what we could have done differently. The Committee then makes concrete policy recommendations so that we can develop better procedures and systems that better protect people experiencing abuse.

Learn more about the Illinois DVFR Committee:
<https://dvfr.illinois.gov/>.



Some Good News!

Our work can feel heavy at times, so we are delighted to be able to share some good news on the home front.

We are thrilled to announce that our Director of Human Resources and Training, Chavon Martin (pictured left in her cap and gown), successfully defended her dissertation in August and was awarded her PhD in Organizational Leadership from Adler University in October. Her research focused on employee satisfaction and retention. We are so proud of Dr. Martin!!



We are likewise thrilled to announce that our Fellow for Economic Justice, Nia Crosley (pictured bottom left alongside Ascend Justice colleagues Alexis Mansfield and Mary Kate Winn), passed the bar in October and was sworn in as an attorney in early November. We look forward to all the amazing legal work Nia can now do for our clients!

A Generous Gift

In October, Alexa Rollins was one of 14 Katten attorneys who received the annual Pro Bono Service Award. Alexa, a Capital Markets Associate at Katten, was recognized for her work helping to form nonprofit corporations, assisting with immigration law matters through NIJC clinics, and aiding our clients at our clinic at the Domestic Violence Courthouse.

Each person who receives a Katten Pro Bono Service Award also gets to award \$1000 to the nonprofit organization of their choice, and Alexa chose Ascend Justice! We are so grateful for the contribution, Alexa! Thank you!!



#TogetherWeAscend



The 104th Illinois General Assembly spring session begins on January 8, 2025, and runs through the end of May. Ascend Justice will need help getting bills passed this session, which means we need YOU!

During legislative sessions, we send out opportunities to get involved when specific bills are up for consideration. Usually this means filling out "witness slips," which are easy forms that help tell Illinois legislators you're on our side. So make sure to sign up for our advocacy newsletter to answer the call when we need you (we promise we'll only send it out when we need help!):
<https://www.ascendjustice.org/advocacy/>



Happy Holidays 2024

Holiday Hours: Our Ascend Justice offices will be closed for the holidays December 24 – January 1. We will reopen for the new year on Thursday, January 2.

If you or someone you know needs immediate help, please call the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline at 877.863.6338.

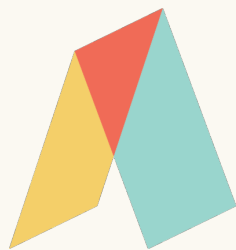
We wish you and your families a safe and happy New Year!



Want a no-hassle way to support our work? Join our Sustainer Circle and become part of our reliable base of support that helps us serve more people throughout the year. No amount is too large or too small.



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