



## FAQs

On Sept. 1, Hands of Hope, a division of Family Service Society, Inc., moved to a mobile advocacy model to better serve victims of intimate partner or sexual violence in our community. This innovative approach allows us to reach more victims through increased access points, locations, and services. Below are frequently asked questions to hopefully answer questions you might have.

**Q. What does mobile advocacy mean?**

A. Mobile advocacy means our advocates (staff members) will meet survivors in a safe location of the survivor's choice. It means we go to where are victims are. Advocates will meet individuals outside of a shelter environment, in their neighborhoods or their homes, when and where they feel safe.

**Q. Will Hands of Hope continue serving survivors?**

A. Yes! In fact, our client driven mobile advocacy programs will allow us to provide even more critical services to more victims. We will provide supportive case management, safety planning, educational and therapeutic support group, court accompaniment, protective order filing assistance, therapeutic counseling and legal support.

**Q. What are some of the benefits of mobile advocacy?**

A. The barriers our clients face in getting to us often include transportation, childcare, and time. Having our advocates go to them rather than making clients come to us increases access tremendously. Mobile advocacy reduces the barriers for victims to access our services. The primary benefit of mobile advocacy is that the power is in the survivors' hands to rebuild control over their lives. Survivors lead the process, choose their own goals, and define what is going to be safer for themselves.

**Q. What if someone needs immediate help? Who will help them?**

A. The 24-hour helpline will continue to function, and staff will provide emergency responses 24 hours a day. We remain committed to survivors and have established strong partnerships in the community and robust protocol practices are in place to ensure that survivors are safe, and their needs are met.

**Q. How will victims of domestic violence find advocates?**

A: The Hands of Hope 24-hour helpline will remain in place so anyone can continue to call 765-664-0701 in Grant County or 260-563-4407 in Wabash County. Hands of Hope has contracted with a company called Nextiva that has created a phone tree that also has individual phone numbers for each mobile advocate so that as they are working with a client, they can give the client that individual phone number to reach them specifically.

**Q. Will you be serving children through this new model?**

A. Yes. In fact, Hands of Hope is exploring the addition of a Family Resource Advocate who will work with the entire family and plan structured activities for children that focus on safe, stable, and nurturing environments. As plans to repurpose the Flannery-Keal Home into the Flannery-Keal Center, the Family Resource Advocate will explore opportunities to transform the playroom, kitchen, and fenced in backyard to a space for individual and group activities. Additionally, we will leverage Barnes Park and other community organizations and locations for family activities.

**Q. Why the change from shelter-based services to mobile advocacy?**

A. Members of the Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence did a deep listening to survivors in 2018 to hear what survivors needed from us as service providers. We heard the need for easier access to services. Rather than providing programs and asking survivors to come to us, we're now saying we will come to you and be a partner in planning for your safety. Hands of Hope Director Linda Wilk was part of the committee that worked on the Re-Centering report, conducting individual interviews with survivors locally, as well as organizing a focus group for survivors to participate in.

**Q. Does this have to do with funding?**

A. This is not about economics, it is about meeting the ever-changing needs of the population we serve. Family Social Services, Inc. is a financially stable organization, with great support from funders and community partners. Funds to operate the Flannery-Keal Home will be diverted to provide more services and financial assistance for survivors.

**Q. What will happen to the building?**

A. The Flannery-Keal Home will become the Flannery-Keal Home Center and all Hands of Hope staff will be located at the facility. We renaming the facility from Flannery-Keal Home to the Flannery-Keal Center to keep the original intent of the name. Flannery-Keal was named after one of our directors, Judi Flannery, who was killed in an auto accident in 1997. Keal came from Bonnie Keal, our first shelter manager. Changing Home to Center will reflect the greater use of the space.

**Q. Why is Hands of Hope making this change now?**

A. Nationally, domestic violence shelters are only reaching about 5% of individuals who are experiencing abuse. We believe there are more victims in need of services, and we are committed to their safety. Hands of Hope has always been at the forefront of leading the adoption of innovation in domestic violence programs and services. We believe this innovative change is the right change for victims of intimate partner or sexual violence in our community and all who are committed to their safety.

**Q. How do you know what survivors need?**

A. We conducted a focus group with seven survivors in early May that resulted in key findings and needs. These finding will guide our programming. Six of the seven focus group attendees agreed to continue connecting with the Hands of Hope Director to provide technical assistance as the mobile advocacy initiative continues to be developed and fine-tuned.

As we talk with survivors, we hear their needs to focus on their mental health through exercise so we will look at providing temporary memberships to the local exercise facilities. We will also be seeking funding to invest in summer camp registrations for survivors' children who otherwise might not have the opportunity to go to camp. Survivors have told us that weekly support groups, art therapy, and other activities will help in their healing. We will explore these opportunities as well.

**Q. Has this model worked in other communities?**

A. Yes. This model has been proven successful across the nation. In Indiana, the Center for Women and Families in Southern Indiana made the shift successfully in 2018. Programs that have adopted mobile service models report significant increases in the reach of their services. When domestic violence programs in Iowa shifted to mobile advocacy, they doubled the number of domestic violence victims they served and quadrupled the number of sexual violence victims served.

**Q. How will my past donations be used now that there is a shift in services?**

A. All funds will continue to be used to address the changing needs of the survivors we serve. As we expand our services and move into a new generation of doing things, we will leverage past gifts and donations creatively, efficiently, and effectively.