

Leslee Rhodes

HOPE of East Central Illinois

Position: Legal Advocate

Time at Agency: 2 years

Commitment to advocacy on behalf of those affected by domestic violence:
Leslee has established strong relationships with judges and State's Attorneys in the counties she serves. She actively advocates for survivors, ensuring their rights are upheld within both the civil and criminal justice systems. Her efforts help to provide survivors with the support and justice they deserve.

Personal qualities that reflect an ongoing commitment to ethical, peaceful, and respectful work with others:
Leslee is an exceptional advocate who listens to clients without judgment and uses her extensive knowledge of the Illinois Domestic Violence Act (IDVA) to assist those seeking help. Her calming demeanor provides much-needed support, and she offers diplomatic solutions to difficult situations, showcasing her ability to build strong relationships with other agencies and offices.

Ways in which they still instill a spirit of advocacy in others:
Leslee is incredibly helpful and always ready to provide guidance when needed. She supports her colleagues and serves as a role model for effective advocacy. Her dedication and approach set a high standard for others to follow.

Experience that demonstrates a broad commitment to social justice:

Leslee is well-informed about Illinois law changes, particularly the Safe-T Act implemented in September 2023. She has been a strong advocate for survivors in the criminal justice system, working closely with law enforcement and State's Attorneys. Leslee assists survivors in making reports and supports them when charges are filed against respondents for violations or new charges. Her dedication ensures that survivors receive the necessary support and justice.

Creativity in building the domestic violence movement within a social change framework:

Leslee's creativity shines through in her work with survivors and professional entities. She creates a welcoming, calm, and clean office space where survivors feel comfortable sharing their fears and safety concerns. Her ability to navigate difficult situations by presenting options to survivors, even when they feel they have none, is remarkable. This creativity and diplomacy are crucial in addressing survivors' fears, providing options, and supporting their choices. Leslee is truly an incredible advocate.



Leslee Rhodes (left) accepts her award from incoming ICADV Board President, Sharon Spinks (right)