

MEETING THE NEEDS OF HOMELESS SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

2015 NAEH Ending Family Homelessness Conference

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DV and Homelessness: A Quick Review

2

- ❑ Fleeing DV often means losing housing (38%) and becoming impoverished
- ❑ DV is a leading cause of homelessness for women and children (over 40% of family homelessness)
- ❑ DV interferes with access to housing and with success in maintaining it
- ❑ Abuse may be an ongoing; abusers often persist in attempt to sabotage success
- ❑ Survivors who can't maintain their housing are highly vulnerable to re-abuse

Survivors are in Y(our) Programs

3

- DV shelters lack capacity; many prioritize high current DV danger
- Over half of survivors who identify a need for housing services don't receive them
- Survivors often faced with choice of return to abuse or coping with chronic homelessness with little hope of housing

“Housing Made Everything Else Possible”

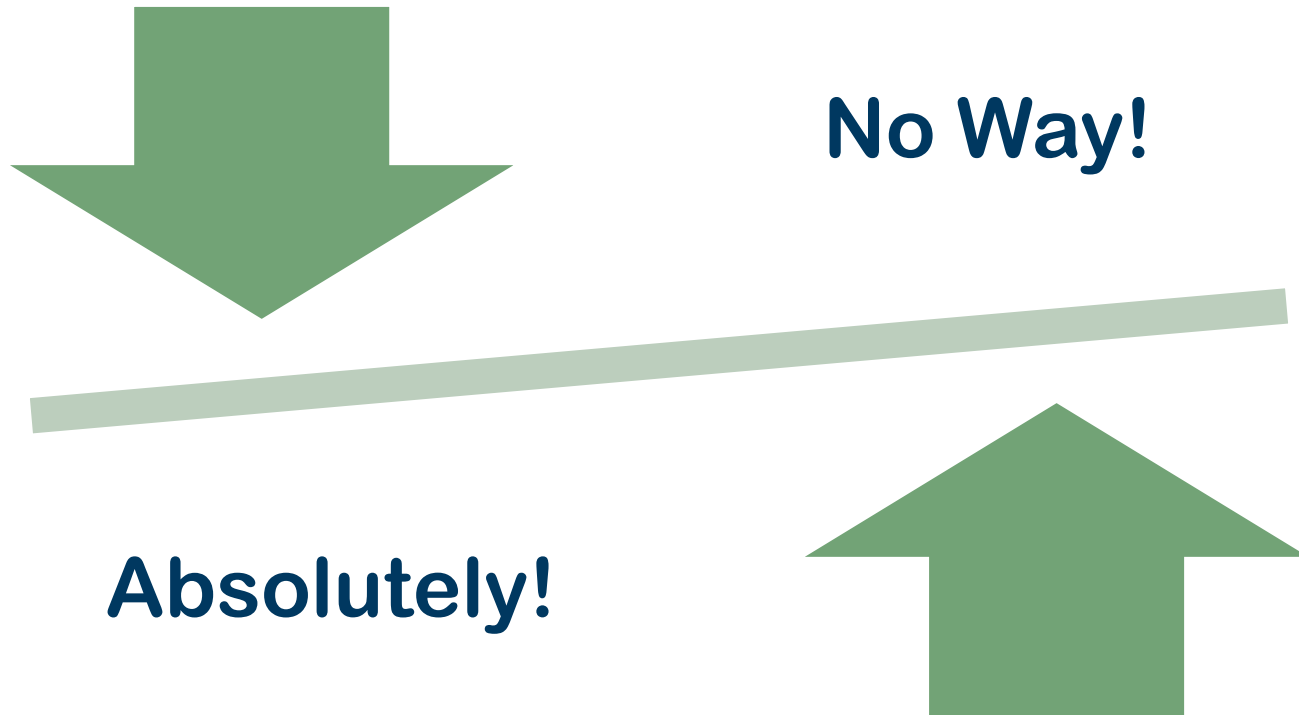
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Housing is key to safety for survivors; it provides protection against re-abuse, and is linked to a host of positive health outcomes in survivors and children.



Rapid Re-Housing: A Good Approach with Survivors?

5



Core Components of RRH (NAEH)

6

□ Housing Identification

Recruit landlords, address barriers to participation, assist households to secure appropriate housing

□ Rent and Move-In (Financial) Assistance

Financial assistance that supports immediate move out of homelessness and stabilization in permanent housing; typically six months or less

□ RRH Case Management and Services

Identify best housing options, address barriers, make supports available to aid stabilization

“Core Components” as Applied to DV

7

- A great “values match:” participant-directed, housing assistance offered with no pre-conditions, tailored services and resources



a
perfect
match

- Recognizes that some elements may be provided through partnerships

1. Housing ID and DV

8

- ❑ Landlords anticipate police presence, property damage, high probability unit will be vacated
- ❑ Survivors may have evictions, lease violations, repairs, bad credit, spotty employment, housing-related debt
- ❑ Survivors may have pets they can't leave behind
- ❑ Housing in high-crime areas may trigger trauma
- ❑ Some locations a bad idea due to abuser's proximity



Housing ID Recommendations

9

- **Survivor-led safety-planning, to include safeguards against discovery - beginning with where housing is located**
- **Landlord education about DV dynamics**
- **Messaging around strong incentives survivors have to ensure their safety through maintenance of rental agreements**



Housing I.D. Recommendations (con't)

10

- Offer landlord guarantees and other incentives; describe your commitment to support survivor
- Cultivate relationships with “second-chance” landlords, especially “Moms-and-Pops” (small businesses)
- Provide coaching and preparation to survivors to speak directly with landlords
- Listen for Fair Housing violations and connect to your local legal resources

2. Financial Assistance and DV

11

- May have substantial debt and arrears due to historic lack of control over finances
- Abuser's power and control results in dislocation from social supports and resources
- Employment sabotage is common
- Complex aftermath of systems involvement
- Trauma impacts compromise ability to quickly enact income development plan



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Fin. Asst. Recommendations

12

- Flexible rather than fixed length of rental subsidy with allowance for extensions



- Wherever possible, advocate for expanded scope of allowable costs
 - Budget includes discretionary funds (repairs to substandard housing, rent buy-downs, funds for needs beyond rent and utilities, etc.)
- Provision for moving to new unit if necessary for safety

3. Services and DV

13

- ❑ Trauma impacts (survivor and children)
- ❑ Ongoing legal issues
- ❑ Fears about child custody, deportation
- ❑ Isolation from social supports
- ❑ Interrupted/sabotaged employment history
- ❑ Bad credit, inexperience with handling money
- ❑ Criminal record
- ❑ Chemical dependency
- ❑ Stalking-prone abuser



Services: Recommendations

14

- You don't have to do it all – be a link to DV-specific services (partnerships are key)
- Voluntary, trauma-informed and survivor-driven approaches restore dignity and agency
- Individualize services, including duration of retention services/support
- Employment Access/Financial empowerment services with a DV lens
- Restoration of Natural Support System/Connection to Community



Services: Recommendations (cont.)

15

- ❑ Avoid victim-blaming; barriers/issues a result of compromised ability to control own life
- ❑ Remember that trauma can masquerade as apathy, opposition, unreliability, or deeper mental health issues
- ❑ Know the federal and state laws that provide protections and recourse to survivors
- ❑ Don't expect survivor to "control" abuser's behavior (ex. showing up at unit, police presence, etc.)
- ❑ Safety planning is a process, not a one-time event or check list
- ❑ Develop a transfer policy

Confidentiality: A Cornerstone

16

- Federally funded programs (VAWA, HUD) have statutory requirements protecting survivor confidentiality
- Robust Informed Consent process around HMIS, ROIs, etc.
- Examine all programmatic aspects for breaches of confidentiality – use of technology, sharing paperwork, using personally identifying info., etc.
- When in doubt, ask survivor. *Which info is OK to share? Is it OK to leave a message? Should we have a code word?*

Learn More About DV

17

- **National Network to End Domestic Violence**
www.nnedv.org
- **State DV Coalitions**
<http://www.ncadv.org/resources/StateCoalitionList.php>
- **National Resource Center on Domestic Violence**
www.nrcdv.org
- **Federal Office on Violence Against Women**
www.ovw.usdoj.gov
- **The Northwest Network (LGBT survivors)**
www.nwnetwork.org
- **National Center on DV, Trauma, and Mental Health**
www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org

Last Thoughts...

18

- **Ensure that DV providers have meaningful involvement in your CoC, governance body, and in development of your coordinated access plan**
- **Communities must maintain/develop other housing options for survivors for whom RRH is not a good fit**