

ESTABLISHING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOUSING FIRST IN CALIFORNIA

A PROCESS EVALUATION

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PREPARED FOR:

Blue Shield of California Foundation
California Office of Emergency Services
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IMPLEMENTING THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOUSING FIRST MODEL IN CALIFORNIA

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE PROCESS EVALUATION OF SEVEN PILOT SITES

In 2016, 8 agencies piloted the DVHF model, an initiative that focuses on helping survivors get into safe and stable housing as quickly as possible, and on providing services to help them move forward with their lives. The three pillars of the DVHF model, designed to promote housing stability, are:



SURVIVOR-DRIVEN, TRAUMA-INFORMED MOBILE ADVOCACY

Advocates focus on addressing the needs identified by survivors rather than on pre-determined needs promoted by agencies. Advocates are mobile and are trained in trauma-informed practice.



FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSISTANCE

Many survivors need not only safe and stable housing, but also temporary financial assistance. They may need assistance with issues directly related to housing or funds that are critical to housing stability. Funds are targeted to support survivors so they can rebuild their lives.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Proactive engagement with housing providers, other service providers and community members changes how the community responds to domestic violence.



SEVEN AGENCIES PARTICIPATED IN THE PROCESS EVALUATION OF THE DVHF MODEL



\$926,838

total flexible funding distributed



100%

of survivors exiting the program had **stable housing**

After being in the program,



of survivors said they **learned more ways to plan for their safety**



of survivors **felt more hopeful about the future**

LESSONS LEARNED



Allocate funds toward administrative costs related to DVHF



Allow time for start-up activities needed to support the model



Be clear about how flexible funds can and cannot be used



Consider using some funds for clients needing significant support



Create a learning community for agencies incorporating DVHF into their work



For more information about Michigan State University's Research Consortium on Gender-Based Violence and their work with the DVHF Model, please visit www.vaw.msu.edu

For more information about DVHF, please visit: <https://wscadv.org/projects/domestic-violence-housing-first/>

OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS EVALUATION

In 2016, eight California non-profit agencies received demonstration funding from the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to pilot the Domestic Violence Housing First (DVHF) model. The Domestic Violence Housing First approach is a strategic initiative that focuses on helping survivors get into safe and stable housing as quickly as possible, and on providing services to help them move forward with their lives.

All of the programs had worked with homeless or precariously housed domestic violence survivors in the past; however, they had either not offered this model or had only partially offered it in the past. This process evaluation, then, was undertaken to document what it takes for agencies to implement the DVHF model, and to provide preliminary evidence for its impact on the lives of survivors and their children.

Over the course of 2017, the evaluators gathered detailed information about the process from key staff members, conducted site visits, and interviewed six clients of the DVHF program. This report covers the key lessons learned by the pilot programs and provides preliminary evidence of its success.

CORE COMPONENTS OF THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOUSING FIRST MODEL

The three pillars of the DVHF model, designed to promote housing stability, are:

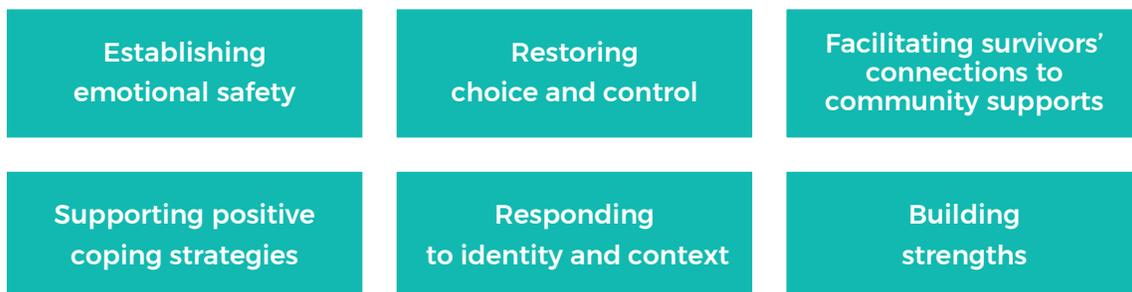




Survivor-driven, trauma-informed mobile advocacy

A critical component of the model is that advocates focus on addressing the needs identified by survivors rather than on pre-determined needs promoted by agencies. Advocates are also mobile, meeting survivors where it is safe and convenient for them, and advocacy continues as long as survivors need support. Advocates are aware of the myriad ways that abusers sabotage survivors' economic and housing stability -- even after the relationship has ended -- and they mobilize multiple resources and community supports to prevent or counter these abusive activities. In addition to advocating for survivors in other aspects of their lives (e.g., employment, immigration, health, children's needs) and engaging in ongoing safety planning, advocates work with survivors to obtain housing stability. This may involve helping a survivor safely retain their current housing, or helping find new affordable housing. Advocates are proactive and creative with their help, accompanying survivors to housing appointments, acting as liaisons with landlords, and negotiating leases.

Given the traumatic nature of domestic violence, as well as the likelihood that domestic violence survivors have also experienced other lifetime traumas such as child abuse and sexual abuse, a critical tenet of DVHF is to engage in trauma-informed practice. These practices include:



(Anderson, 2009; Goodman et al., 2016; Harris & Fallot, 2001; Sullivan & Olsen, 2016).

Understanding and appropriately responding to trauma reactions is especially important when helping survivors obtain and sustain housing, as sometimes these responses manifest after initial stability is attained (Ferencik & Ramirez-Hammond, 2013; Horesh, Solomon, Zerach, & Ein-Dor, 2011). Sometimes, trauma reactions such as depression, immobility, or PTSD are suppressed while a survivor is intently focused on the task of securing housing for themselves and their children. Once that housing is obtained, however, and an initial calm is established, the survivor is "safe" to experience the overwhelming feelings related to their trauma. Without a knowledgeable and supportive advocate available to them to help them through this crisis, the housing that the survivor has worked so hard to secure can be jeopardized.



Flexible financial assistance

Another component of the DVHF model involves providing flexible financial assistance to survivors. Many survivors need not only proactive advocacy to obtain safe and stable housing, but also temporary financial assistance to get back on their feet. They may need assistance with issues directly related to housing: a security deposit and temporary rental assistance, help clearing up rent arrears (often intentionally incurred by the abuser), or help with utility bills. Often, though, survivors need funds that may not be viewed by others as impacting housing but that advocates recognize are critical to housing stability: for example, help repairing their cars so they do not lose their jobs, help expunging a prior conviction that is preventing them from obtaining government-funded housing, or help repairing bad credit (often destroyed by the abuser). Funds are targeted to support survivors so they can rebuild their lives, including covering childcare costs, transportation, school supplies, work uniforms and permits required for employment, as well as time-limited and flexible rental assistance (Mbilinyi, 2015; Sullivan, Bomsta, & Hacskeylo, 2016).

The idea of providing flexible funding with individualized advocacy is similar to but distinct from the idea of “progressive engagement” promoted by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Progressive engagement involves providing every client with a very small and brief amount of assistance (“light touch”), and then providing additional funds and other supports only as needed to select clients over time (Culhane, Metraux, & Byrne, 2011; Levitt, 2015). While this is sometimes appropriate, the DVHF model promotes the idea of “flexible engagement,” tailoring financial and support assistance to the individual needs of each survivor. For some survivors, that may be a small amount of funding followed by a check-in to see if additional funds are needed (the traditional progressive engagement model). For others, however, a larger immediate investment may be necessary and sufficient to stabilize someone’s housing, and for others assistance will fluctuate with crises (sometimes caused by the abuser when a survivor initially becomes stable). **This flexibility is a critical component of the DVHF model**, and is consistent with the philosophy of domestic violence advocacy to provide individualized, survivor-centered services (Davies & Lyon, 2014; Goodman & Epstein, 2008; Sullivan & Olsen, 2016).





Community engagement

The final component of the DVHF model includes proactive engagement between advocates and people in the community who can help support the safety, stability and well-being of survivors. This includes engaging with health care professionals, law enforcement and the legal systems, educators and school administrators, religious and spiritual leaders, and others. With specific regard to obtaining housing, advocates forge mutually beneficial relationships with landlords, city officials, and housing councils to obtain vouchers or rental agreements on behalf of domestic violence survivors. Through these relationships, advocates not only obtain housing for individual survivors, but they change and improve the way communities respond to domestic violence overall (Sullivan & Olsen, 2016).

CALIFORNIA DVHF PILOT PROJECT EVALUATION PARTICIPANTS

In 2016, eight California non-profit agencies received demonstration funding from Cal OES to pilot the DVHF model. All of the programs had worked with homeless or precariously housed domestic violence survivors in the past; however, they had either not offered this model or had only partially offered it. Seven of the eight agencies participated in the process evaluation. Brief information about the participating agencies, their plan for DVHF, and the amount of money they devoted to flexible funding, are below:

- 1) **Agency:** 1736 Family Crisis Center
Location: Los Angeles, CA
Services: Assist survivors, with or without children, throughout LA County to access permanent housing as quickly as possible, and then address issues that may be impeding their long-term stability and safety.
Plan: Serve 15 families per year
Flexible funding: \$293,250

- 2) **Agency:** Crisis House
Location: El Cajon, CA
Services: Offer humanitarian services to socioeconomically disadvantaged people and those in crisis. They focus on serving those in the East region of San Diego County.
Plan: Serve 15 families per year
Flexible funding: \$264,997

- 3) **Agency:** The Downtown Women’s Center
Location: Los Angeles, CA
Services: Provide assistance to domestic violence survivors and families to get back into safe, stable housing by paying for security deposits, temporary rental payments, furniture, and other needed move-in costs.
Plan: Serve 30 families per year
Flexible funding: \$247,330

- 4) **Agency:** Marjaree Mason Center
Location: Fresno, CA
Services: Provide survivors with services to help them attain and retain housing as quickly as possible, to get their lives back on track. The housing/process is based on survivors’ unique needs, which may include such supports as transportation, career training, job-related expenses, childcare, necessities for children, lock changes, home security features, advocacy with a landlord, and temporary rental assistance.
Plan: Serve 10 families per year
Flexible funding: \$264,750

- 5) **Agency:** Next Door Solutions
Location: San Jose, CA
Services: Provide safety for domestic violence survivors, and offer services such as housing solutions, crisis and community support, support groups, and help clients reach self-sufficiency.
Plan: Serve 36 survivors per year
Flexible funding: \$410,000

- 6) **Agency:** Rainbow Services
Location: San Pedro, CA
Services: Address multiple barriers DV victims encounter in maintaining stable housing: access to employment, reliable transportation, childcare and basic needs. All victims who contact Rainbow for assistance are offered the full array of supportive services available.
Plan: Serve 30 “light touch” clients over two years, offering many services to help them stabilize; 15 “medium touch” clients, offering rent deposits and 6 months of rental assistance; 5 “high touch” clients, offering 24 months of rental assistance, including all services offered to light and medium touch clients.
Flexible funding: \$457,539

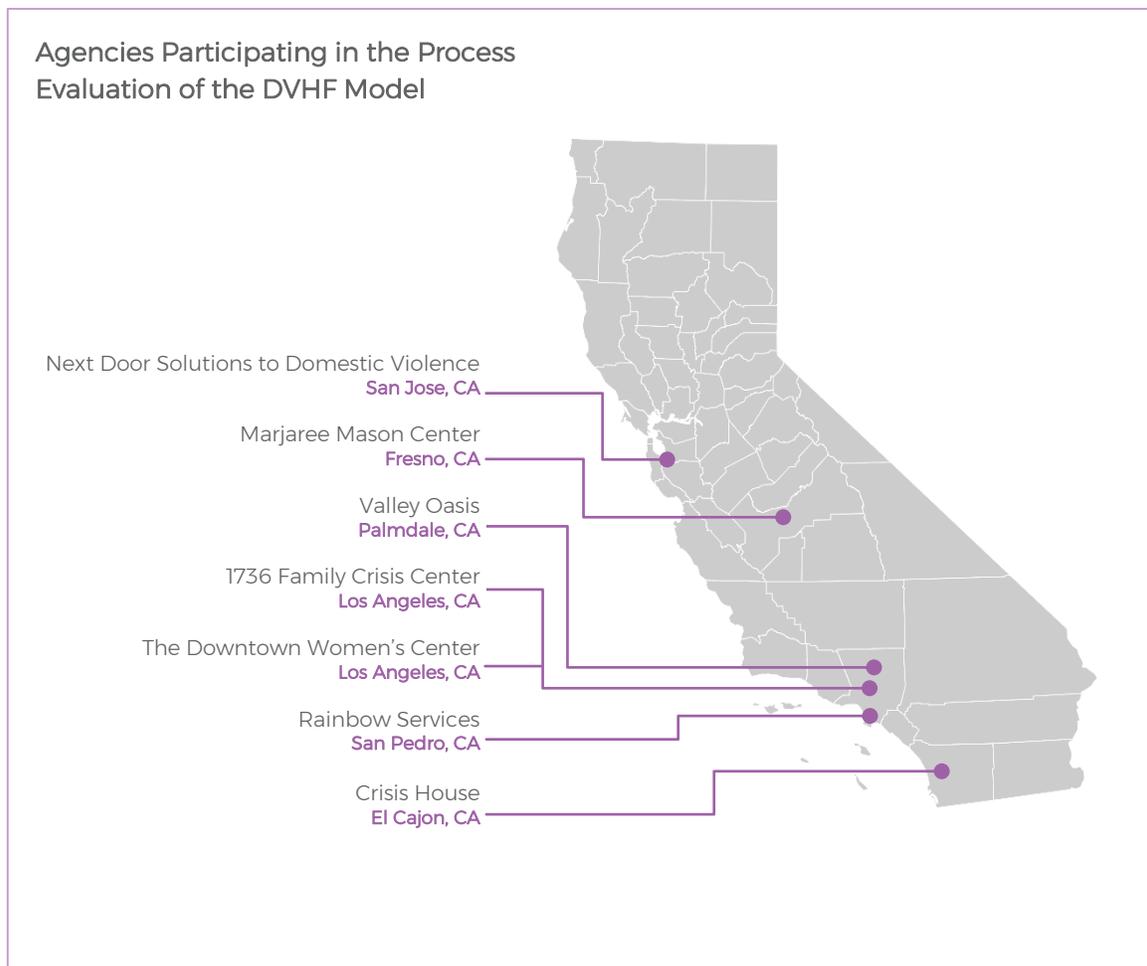
7) **Agency:** Valley Oasis

Location: Palmdale, CA

Services: Focus on helping victims of domestic violence access and retain safe permanent housing, and providing tailored supportive services such as transportation assistance, job development, job related expenses, child care and temporary rental assistance. The program also provides flexible, trauma-informed advocacy for victims and their children and offers financial assistance that addresses victims' unique and evolving safety needs, which allows them to choose how to best rebuild their lives.

Plan: Serve 20 clients per year

Flexible funding: \$268,960



HOW AGENCIES USED THE DVHF GRANT FUNDS

Telephone interviews were conducted with all seven of the participating agencies, using a semi-structured, qualitative interview format. Interviews were conducted with a designated DVHF contact within each agency. Contacts included a Housing Supervisor, a Program Manager, a Program Director, Domestic Violence Advocates, an Assistant Director, and an Assistant Executive Director. Interviews were conducted in March and April of 2017. The interviews included questions about how each agency was implementing the DVHF pilot project. Interviewees also were asked about the core components of the DVHF model, including how they were providing mobile advocacy, their DVHF flexible funding and how it differed from previous flexible funding, and how they engaged with communities and landlords.



Mobile Advocacy

All of the programs had engaged in some sort of mobile advocacy prior to the DVHF pilot project. All programs had employees they could send to meet clients in a place where the client felt most comfortable and safe. Two programs offered advocate accompaniment to court or to meet with landlords. Other mobile advocacy services offered included: once a month home visits, hospital visits, police station visits, and a teleconferencing system to help rural clients appear in court or sign legal documents without a long commute.

"[Advocate name] went with me to meet my mental health worker. She asked me if this is what I needed, 'how can I meet with her and combine what we have to help you?' When she met with my mental health worker, I just felt like things were changing for me. This program, just from beginning to end, they are following through."

-Survivor, DVHF Project

The most **common supports in place for mobile advocacy** were mileage reimbursement, laptops, cellphones, insurance, and agency cars.

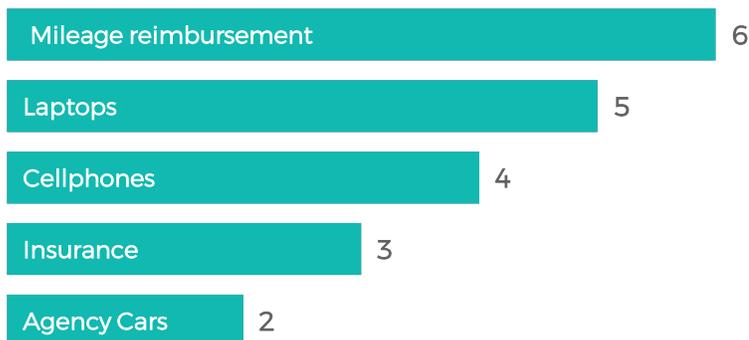


Figure 1. Number of agencies providing each type of mobile advocacy support



Flexible Funding

About half of the agencies had some sort of flexible funding before receiving the DVHF grant, but these funds were generally quite small. Funds came from various sources, including the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), private foundations, the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), individual donors, and private funders. LAHSA, HUD, and OVW flexible funding were seen as more restrictive than Cal OES, whereas private foundation flexible funding was seen as more flexible than Cal OES.

The most **common sources of flexible (or semi-flexible) funding** before receiving the DVHF grant included LAHSA and private foundations, with 3 out of 7 of the agencies receiving this type of funding.



Figure 2. Number of agencies by type of flexible funding, outside of Cal OES.

FLEXIBLE FUNDING SUCCESS



One agency client with a Section 8 voucher located an apartment that she could afford if she had help with the security deposit and first month’s rent. The housing agency would not take a “third party check” from the DV agency to cover these costs. The DV agency provided funding directly to the client so that she could pay these expenses herself. She is now stably housed.

The agencies had similar processes for deciding when and how much flexible funding to give a client. First, the case manager or advocate would sit down with the client and assess their needs with them. They would then fill out a funding request, and hand it off to their immediate supervisor to sign. From there, an upper manager, such as the assistant director or the program director, would receive the request and sign it. Finally, if the request was large or needed to be written directly to the client, the Executive Director may have needed to sign the request. The request would then be processed through the finance department, who would cut the check.

Agencies tracked the distribution of funds to clients through a spreadsheet provided by the evaluation team. The spreadsheet tracked how much money each client received, what the funds were used for, what the immediate outcome was after receiving the funds, and when permanent housing was achieved. Table 1 presents how funds were distributed.

Category	Funds	Percent of Total
Rental Assistance	\$788,439.11	85%
Move-in Costs and Deposit	\$49,476.09	5%
Children’s Needs	\$48,859.45	5%
Utility Bills	\$11,835.86	1%
Housing Readiness	\$8,360.61	<1%
Education/Training	\$6,663.25	<1%
Transportation Assistance	\$4,731.18	<1%
Security Assistance	\$3,361.76	<1%
Legal Assistance	\$1,773.95	<1%
Physical/Mental Health Needs	\$1,561.34	<1%
Employment	\$1,016.65	<1%
Other	\$758.36	<1%
Total	\$926,837.61	100%

Table 1. Agency Financial Tracker Use of Funds

As shown in Table 1, the flexible funding was used mostly for rental assistance funds. One agency, that had other funds they could spend beyond rental costs, decided to spend all of their DVHF funds on rental assistance. The other agencies ranged from spending 46% of their funds to 95% of their funds on rental assistance.

The proportion of **rental assistance expenditures** compared to all other expenditures across agencies is displayed below.

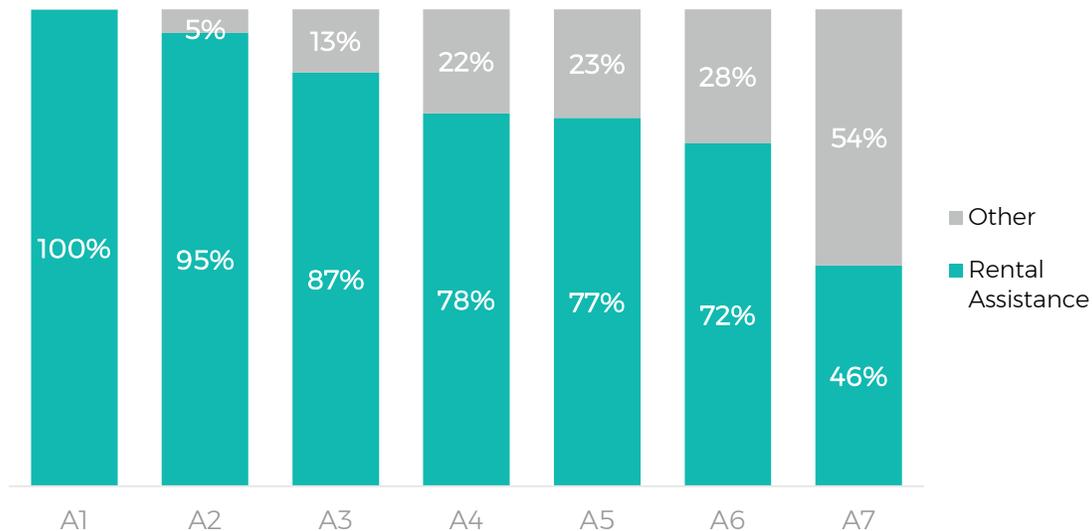


Figure 3. Use of flexible funding for rental assistance versus other assistance, per agency.

DVHF funds were seen as more flexible than many other types of funding previously received by the agencies. For example, Cal OES funds allowed agencies to fund both rental deposits and 1st month's rent, whereas some of the agency's housing funding did not. Funds were also used to help clients fix their automobiles, obtain mental health services, pay for educational costs, and cover a variety of other expenses that were not allowed by other funding sources but that were critical to survivors' safety and housing stability.

FLEXIBLE FUNDING SUCCESS

One agency worked with a client who had experienced horrific physical violence by her husband. The client was successful in getting a restraining order against her husband, which in California can include a move out order. He was arrested, the order was issued, and he was not allowed back into the apartment. However, he had failed to pay the prior 2 months' rent, and because the family had been subletting to an undocumented person, the client thought no housing program would help her. She had been trying to navigate the problem herself.

Within two hours the client had back rent and rent paid. Using the flexible funds of the DVHF project, she was able to pay directly to the landlord, which is unusual for a housing agency in California.

The DVHF funds used in this pilot had a few restrictions due to coming from the US Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime. For example, they could not be provided to clients who were defendants in a criminal justice proceeding. Staff discussed the importance of trying to have at least some funding available for clients through private foundations or donations, that could cover some of the costs that governmental funding could not cover.

An important component of flexible funding is to get money out to survivors quickly; this was a priority of all of the agencies. The time it took to issue a check for DVHF funds varied across the agencies, with three agencies averaging two to three days to a week to issue a check. Two of the agencies averaged two days to a week, and two of the agencies were extremely fast with their turnaround time, averaging one to two days to get funds to survivors.

Only one program had a cap on the amount of flexible funding that could be used per client (\$4,000). The other agencies monitored the amount of flexible funding and budget in order to make funds last throughout the year.

“They helped me find housing which was like the number one situation that I was really needing, but I didn’t know that they ended up offering all these other services so it was like, wow, you guys are going to help me find furniture, just regular things like soap and a can opener? I didn’t know that they helped with all that here. It was just like a surprise, it was such a blessing, it was like a domino effect for things that I had really needed and had been looking for. They just contacted me and said ‘we have someone that is donating furniture, do you need furniture?’ It was just all a blessing how it all worked out.”

-Survivor, DVHF Project

FLEXIBLE FUNDING SUCCESS

“On some days I couldn’t get [my child] to school, because I had no gas. [Advocate] helped me with gas cards to get my daughter to school, get to my appointments, get to my counseling. Before the program started helping me with the room, everything was going to the room and food. Even though you get food stamps and cash, all that cash would go to the room for a week. I would do everything I could, you know, to make it to the 8th so that I could get my stamps...When [agency staff] found out, she gave me grocery cards. She actually went and picked up the groceries for me and brought them to me, because I had no way to get there.”

-Survivor, DVHF Project

Flexible Funding Challenges



Agencies encountered some challenges with the flexible funding component of the DVHF project. At an administrative level, none of the agencies had budgeted sufficient funds for the administrative costs associated with the DVHF, such as overseeing advocates and the distribution of the flexible funds.

Another challenge experienced by the agencies was determining what the flexible funds could be used for to cover their clients' needs. Some agencies reported feeling anxious about potentially not getting reimbursed if the expense was not covered under the flexible funding. Since this was a new use of funds under the US Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime, it was difficult to get clear guidance about which expenses were and were not allowable.

Finally, some agencies struggled with whether and when to provide funds directly to survivors rather than to housing or service providers. Providing a check to a landlord, for example, requires obtaining a tax form from them since it is income that needs to be reported to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). This became challenging if either a landlord was not willing or available to complete the form, or if a survivor wanted to rent a room from a friend or relative who was unwilling to complete the form. Providing funds directly to survivors also had pros and cons. It is easier to give funds directly to a survivor and to simply document the use of funds and receive a signature that the money was received by the client, but agencies had two concerns: (1) would OVC and their agency accountants allow this? and (2) would clients have to count the funds against their receipt of other government assistance such as TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families). TANF is a federally organized function of public benefits that is managed locally within state jurisdictions. In California, TANF is provided through CalWORKS, which is managed differently across counties. Some of the pilot agencies mentioned that, in their county, paying a client's rent or giving them cash assistance affects their CalWORKS benefits. Therefore, agencies need to check whether or not temporary cash assistance provided directly to families is considered an asset that clients must report, and if it is, share this information with clients so they can make informed decisions.



Community Engagement

Agencies were engaged with their communities in a variety of ways. Many had contacts in the community that offered free or discounted services, including free mechanical work, free dental work, free child psychiatric evaluations, and pro-bono lawyers to assist immigrant survivors with obtaining U Visas to legally stay in the country. Several agencies worked closely with the local Housing Authority, referring clients to various services and programs that could assist them with housing or rent. One agency had staff attend weekly Coordinated Entry System (CES) meetings, that included members from the Department of Housing, Mental Health of America (MHA), and LAHSA. A few agencies conducted outreach meetings at various shelters and community agencies.



Landlord Engagement

All of the agencies were engaged with landlords in their communities to some extent. These points of engagement include attending/hosting community or housing events, using a housing coordinator to communicate with landlords, updating resource binders, keeping previous landlord relationships current and close, calling and emailing new landlords, and having advocates negotiate agreements with landlords on their clients' behalf.

The **most common landlord engagement strategies** used were attending and hosting housing or community events and using a housing coordinator to communicate with landlords.

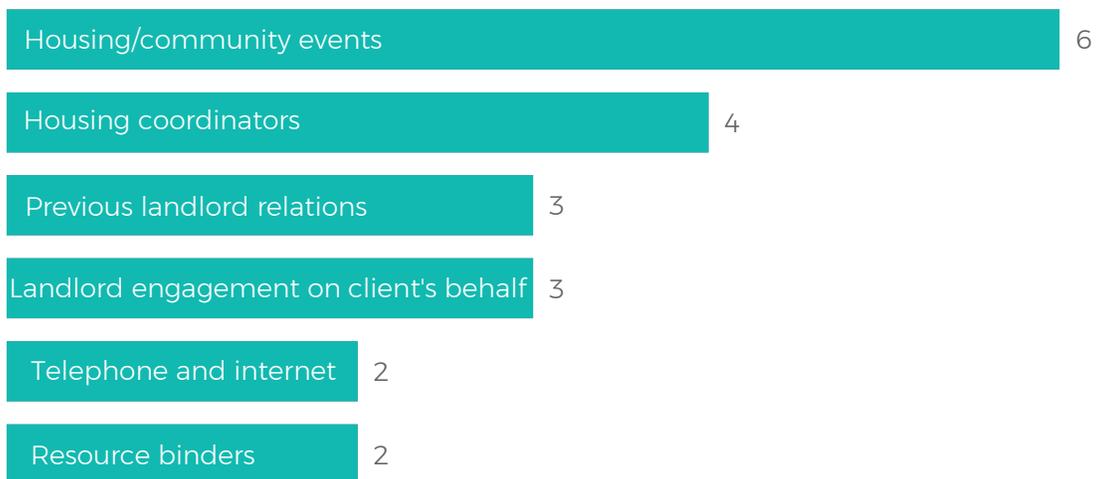


Figure 4. Number of agencies using each type of landlord engagement

There were a few unique landlord engagement techniques, such as offering double security deposits, using flyers to recruit landlords, and using volunteers to locate and engage landlords.

Landlord Engagement Challenges



Engaging landlords in a tight housing market was extremely challenging for agencies. In many areas within California, landlords are able to charge double the rent they would have charged a short while ago simply because of the housing shortage. They can also rent to people with excellent credit and employment histories. Another issue mentioned by many programs was that not all landlords accept third party checks, which was a bind for the agencies that did not (yet) have a policy that allowed them to give funds directly to clients. Related to this, some agencies found it hard to engage landlords without disclosing that they were a domestic violence agency, and it was not always in the client's best interest to have this connection publicized. Still others noted the unique issues of engaging landlords in a rural community where people tend to know each other, properties are leased by word-of-mouth rather than through ads, and properties are located long distances from resources and bus lines.

INCORPORATING DVHF INTO THE AGENCY



Half of the agencies saw the DVHF pilot program as being woven into the agency, rather than as a separate program. By this they meant that any of their agency clients could be eligible for DVHF, as long as they were currently participating in at least one agency program. It also meant that staff throughout the organization had the ability to use flexible funding and provide mobile advocacy.

Others had created DVHF as a stand-alone project, with dedicated staff and protocols. In at least one of the agencies, DVHF was initially created as a stand-alone project because it felt more manageable to work out kinks and issues with a small number of staff before infusing the model into the overall agency. Their intent, however, is to incorporate the model into all of their agency programs over time.

"I love this contract because of it's really stress-free for our client, stress-free for [staff] too, because we don't have to say 'you are not eligible because of this', we can just go ahead and assist them."

-DVHF Staff

STAFF IMPRESSIONS OF DVHF



Staff impressions of the DVHF model were extremely positive. Employees noted that having flexible funding allowed them to be more survivor-centered and allowed them to address more issues that were not only important to their clients but that were directly related to their safety and housing stability. They saw immediate impacts of the funding on either preventing homelessness or on stabilizing families, and this reduced the stress that staff often feel when they are unable to help their clients. Some staff noted that even a small amount of money, when provided quickly, can make an immediate and profound impact on a survivor's life. If, for example, the client does not have the \$300 to get their car fixed, the loss of their transportation could result in losing their job and ability to get their children to school. Losing their employment could then result in losing their home, and this snowball effect would end up being much more costly and traumatic for the family for potentially years to come. Staff members shared how, when their agency simply does not have the resources to help in these cases, it is demoralizing and painful. Having the funds and flexibility to help survivors with a multitude of needs helped staff feel more effective, which helped them want to continue doing this difficult work.

AGENCY CHANGES AS A RESULT OF IMPLEMENTING DVHF



Implementation of DVHF funding inspired some interesting changes in the participating agencies. One agency created a petty cash fund in order to help clients with housing application fees. Another cut down the length of their assessment, after realizing they were collecting unnecessary information. Two agencies are in the process of adjusting their case management to be more empowerment-based and survivor-centered. One agency was looking to change how long it offered assistance to clients, as they recognized the need to provide services for as long as they were needed rather than for a prescribed length of time.

"We've come to learn more about the problems that we have with the domestic violence victims out in the community and how there is not enough resources for them. So DVHF gives them an opportunity to reach out and ask those questions and get that assistance that they need."

-DVHF Agency Staff

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

While this process evaluation was focused primarily on documenting what agencies did and learned during the first year of piloting DVHF, we did want to also capture any preliminary evidence of how the program was impacting survivors. This was accomplished in two ways:

- 1) The spreadsheet documenting the use of flexible funds included information on how the funds impacted housing stability
- 2) A client feedback survey was created and piloted



Flexible Funding's Impact on Housing Stability

Across the seven agencies participating in the evaluation, 234 families received funds, which was greater than the original plan to serve 176 families. Seven agencies distributed \$926,838 in flexible funding through 620 payments.

The final outcomes of clients completing the program were documented using an online spreadsheet created by the evaluation team. Final housing outcomes were entered for 72% (169 out of 234) of the clients. Some of the clients are still receiving flexible funding in the program, and some may have left the program before a final housing outcome could be determined.

Of those clients with final housing outcomes reported, all ended the program with housing. 63% (106 out of 169) of all survivors were able to stay in their own home. 31% had been homeless and were now housed. These findings should be interpreted cautiously, however, as final outcomes were not included for 28% of the clients.

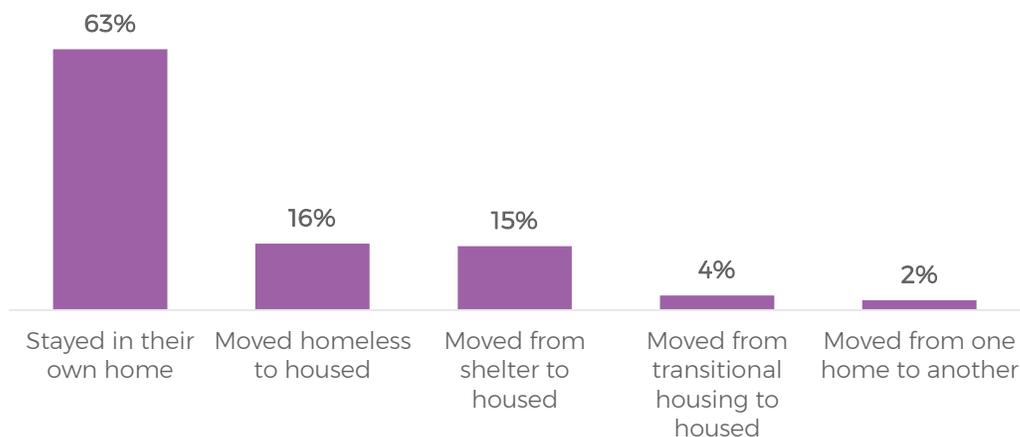


Figure 5. Final housing outcomes for clients receiving flexible funding.

Feedback on Effectiveness from the Clients Themselves

One of the goals of the process evaluation of California's DVHF Pilot Program was to design and test a brief survey that clients could complete about their experiences with DVHF. The desire was to create a short form that would measure the immediate outcomes that one might expect to occur as a result of the DVHF program, and that agencies could use to evaluate their programs themselves.

The evaluation team first requested that the pilot programs share any client feedback surveys they were already using, and to provide feedback about how they were working. The evaluation team also drew on earlier surveys created by the first author of this report that have been successfully field tested. Survey items were chosen to assess whether the core components of DVHF had been met (according to the survivor), and to capture life changes that may have occurred as a result of their participation in the DVHF program.

The two primary goals of DVHF are to **increase housing stability** and **increase safety** for survivors. In addition, one might expect survivors to report greater **hopefulness about the future, increased self-efficacy**, and more **life satisfaction**, as these have been found in evaluations of similarly focused programs (Sullivan & Bybee, 1999; Sullivan, Goodman, et al., in press; Sullivan & Virden, 2017). We also decided to include the two mandatory FVPSA outcomes, for those agencies receiving funds from the Family Violence Prevention & Services Administration:

I feel I know ways to plan for my safety.

I know more about community resources.

Final Survey Development & Implementation



A brief client feedback survey was drafted and shared with the seven pilot programs in July 2017. The feedback survey being used by Next Door Solutions was also shared with the program representatives, and the group noted a great deal of overlap across the two surveys. Since Next Door Solutions had already been successfully using this survey, and it was already available in both English and Spanish, the group made only minor changes to it and all agreed to use it for the following few months. The surveys are appended to this report.

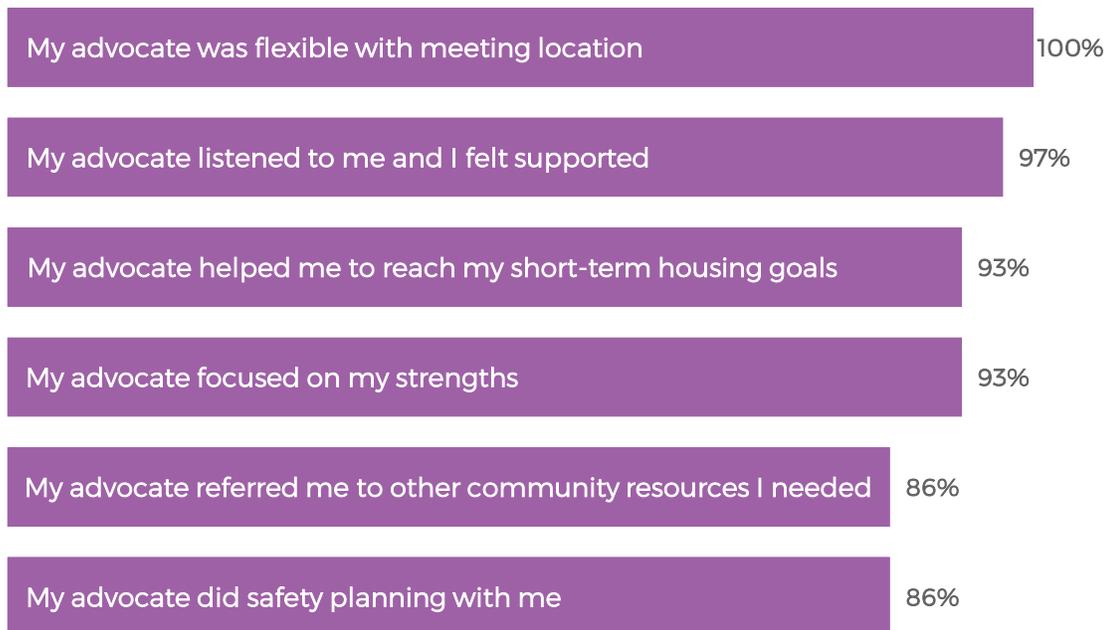
All organizations agreed to ask clients to complete the survey after they had finished receiving services (or after enough time had passed that change could have occurred). Surveys were anonymous, and staff then scanned and emailed them to the evaluators for analyses.

Results from the Client Feedback Surveys

Between August and October of 2017, 29 surveys were received from five of the participating agencies and sent to the evaluation team. Over half (55%) of the survey participants were 30 to 44 years old, 24% were 18 to 29 years old, and 21% were 45 years old or older. All participants identified as female. At the time of taking the survey, 63% of the participants had been in the program less than six months, and 37% had been in the program over six months.

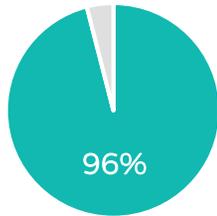
Support from Advocates

Clients were asked about the support they received from advocates while receiving services. Out of the responses on a 4-point scale of “not at all” to “very much”, the responses of ‘very much’ are highlighted below.

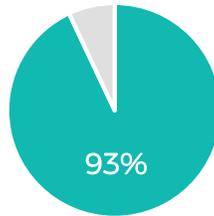


Increase in Housing Stability & Safety

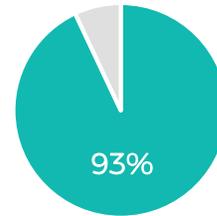
Clients were asked about the result of meeting with their advocate and effect it had on their knowledge of resources and their access to housing. Out of the responses on a 4-point scale of “not at all” to ‘very much,’ the responses of ‘very much’ are highlighted below.



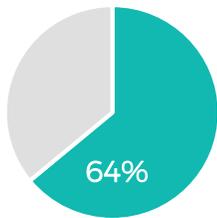
I feel more hopeful about the future.



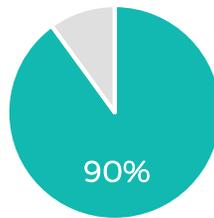
I was able to remain in my home or secure safe housing.



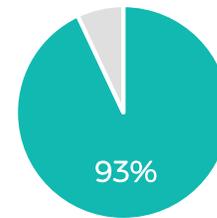
I have more ways to plan for my safety.



I am financially more stable.



I know more about community and/or social resources I may need.



I have a greater understanding of the financial power and control my partner used/uses in our relationship.

These preliminary survey results show positive outcomes from the DVHF Pilot Project. In future evaluations of the program, surveys will continue to be used to collect short-term outcomes.

LESSONS LEARNED

All of the agencies participating in this evaluation believed that the DVHF program was a great success, allowing them to better meet the unique and complex needs of their clients. They were all grateful to have participated in the pilot and hope to continue this program well into the future. Below are the major lessons these pilots learned that they believe would be useful for future agencies to know when implementing this model:



Lesson #1: Allocate funds toward administrative costs.

None of the agencies had allocated sufficient funds for administrative costs related to DVHF. They each spoke, to varying degrees, about the need for adequate administrative support to oversee the advocates and, most of all, to oversee the distribution of the flexible funds in a timely manner. Allocating funds quickly is a key component of DVHF, and this requires staff time and support.



Lesson #2: Allow time for start-up activities.

Depending on an agency's prior experience providing mobile advocacy, offering flexible funding, and engaging in relationship-building with housing and service providers, time will be needed at the start of creating this program to develop protocols, hire and train staff, determine client caseload size, and make any other organizational changes needed to adequately support the model.



Lesson #3: Be clear about how funds can and cannot be used.

California was the first state to use Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) funds to pilot the DVHF model, and as such, there was some ambiguity about how "flexible" the flexible funds were. This caused some anxiety and confusion among grantees, who worried they would not get reimbursed for particular expenses. Especially for agencies that had never had flexible funding before, and who were used to more rigid funding sources, spending the funds on anything other than rent for survivors was challenging and sometimes anxiety-provoking. Some staff could not really believe they could use funds in flexible ways, and were afraid they would spend funds inappropriately and not get reimbursed. Meeting together with other grantees, and hearing how they were using flexible funds, was reassuring and even exhilarating for these staff.



Lesson #4: Consider using at least some of the funds for clients needing significant support.

Two of the agencies in the pilot had specifically proposed using flexible funds proportionally for clients needing “light touch” (small amount of funding, given once), “medium touch” (larger amount of funding but for a brief period of time) and “heavy touch” (higher funding for a longer period of time). Both found it difficult to use a significant amount of their funding for the clients needing “heavy touch,” due to concerns about fairness (who gets this money and who doesn’t?) and running out of funds. Yet they also recognized the importance – and long-term savings – of providing the actual amount of support a family needs in order to maintain safety and housing stability.



Lesson #5: Create a learning community for agencies incorporating DVHF into their work.

The pilot agencies were able to meet together in person twice over the course of the first year of the project. They met together shortly after they had received funding, in order to meet each other, hear about the process evaluation, and learn more about the key components of DVHF and the evidence supporting it. They met again when the evaluators were conducting site visits and they had all been operating for at least nine months. Participants learned a great deal from each other during these meetings, and expressed the desire for some type of “learning community” through which they could continue learning how to handle various situations, how to overcome obstacles, and share success stories and creative solutions.



“I was declined so many places trying to find help, and mistreated and this was the first place where I didn’t have any problem. They were available to me and they got back to me. I’m living in an apartment in my name, it’s a one bedroom, but it’s all we needed.”

-Survivor, DVHF Project

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APPENDIX A: HOUSING FIRST PROGRAM CLIENT FEEDBACK SURVEY (ENGLISH VERSION)

Housing First Program

Client Feedback

We appreciate you taking the time to tell us what our program is doing well and how we can improve our services.

Please place an X on the answer that most fits your experience.

1. How was your experience with program staff?

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
My advocate listened to me and I felt supported.				
My advocate focused on my strengths.				
My advocate was flexible with meeting location (came to me): home, work, etc...				
My advocate went with me to other agencies or services.				
My advocate referred me to other community resources I needed.				
My advocate did safety planning with me.				
My advocate helped me to reach my short-term housing goals.				

2. **As a result of** meeting with my advocate:

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very Much
I was able to remain in my home or secure safe housing (<i>other than shelter or transitional housing</i>).				
I have a greater understanding of the financial power & control my partner used/uses in our relationship.				
I have an increased understanding of how to budget to help me stay housed.				

I can identify at least one new person in my family or community who supports me.				
I know more about community and/or social resources I may need.				
I was able to work on my well-being and overall health.				

3. Because of my experience with this program:

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very Much
I feel more hopeful about the future.				
I am able to set goals for myself and obtain them.				
I have more ways to plan for my safety.				
I am financially more stable.				
I know the abuse & control my partner used was not my fault.				
I know about community resources I might need.				
I am aware of the other services the agency provides...support groups, hotline, legal, etc....				

4. Please tell us a little about you, if you don't mind! But remember this is private and anonymous.

I am:

- Female/Woman
- Male/Man
- Non-Binary/Third Gender
- Prefer to self-describe _____

I identify as Transgender:

- Yes
- No

I am:

- 18 to 29 years old
- 30 to 44 years old
- 45 to 64 years old
- 65 years old or older

I consider myself to be (*X all that apply*):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> -African American/Black/African | <input type="checkbox"/> -Native American/Alaskan Native |
| <input type="checkbox"/> -White/Caucasian | <input type="checkbox"/> -Latina(o)/Hispanic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> -Asian American/Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> -Middle Eastern |
| <input type="checkbox"/> -Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | <input type="checkbox"/> -Other (please describe)_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> -Indian | |

How many months have you been in this program working in partnership with an advocate to help you with housing and/or safety? (place X next to answer)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> -Less than 1 month | <input type="checkbox"/> -7 to 8 months |
| <input type="checkbox"/> -1 to 2 months | <input type="checkbox"/> -9 to 10 months |
| <input type="checkbox"/> -3 to 4 months | <input type="checkbox"/> -11 to 12 months |
| <input type="checkbox"/> -5 to 6 months | |

5. How many adults are in your household (over 18, living together)? _____

How many children? _____

6. Did you need financial help with something that the program staff was NOT able to assist you with? If yes, what?

7. How, if at all, did the Housing First program assist you in meeting your housing plan goals?

8. What else, if anything, would you like to tell us to help improve our program?

-Please X if you give us your permission to share your comments on promotional materials and/or funding reports. Again, this information will remain anonymous.

Thank you!!

Remove this page and return it separately IF you want us to contact you.

May we contact you in 1 month, 3 months, and 6 months for a follow-up and support check?

Gift cards will be given for follow-up appointments

O-Yes

O-No

Name: _____

Address:

Safe Phone #:(____)____-_____

2nd Safe Phone #: (____)____-_____

Email: _____

Note: Your personal information, name, address, phone number(s), and email address will remain confidential! Only staff will have access to your personal information.

Thank you!!

APPENDIX B: HOUSING FIRST PROGRAM CLIENT FEEDBACK SURVEY (SPANISH VERSION)

Programa de Vivienda Primero Retroalimentación del Cliente

Agradecemos mucho que usted se tome el tiempo para contarnos qué es lo que nuestro programa esta haciendo bien y cómo podemos mejorar nuestros servicios.

Por favor coloque una X en la respuesta que más refleja su experiencia.

1. ¿Cómo fue su experiencia con el personal del programa?

	Para Nada	Un Poco	Algo	Mucho
Mi intercesor(a) me escuchó y me sentí apoyada/o.				
Mi intercesor(a) se concentró en mis fortalezas.				
Mi intercesor(a) fue flexible con el lugar de nuestras reuniones (vino a mi): casa, trabajo, etc....				
Mi intercesor(a) fue conmigo a otras agencias o a recibir otros servicios.				
Mi intercesor(a) me refirió a otros recursos de la comunidad que yo necesitaba.				
Mi intercesor(a) hizo un plan de seguridad conmigo (safety planning).				
Mi intercesor(a) me ayudó a alcanzar mis metas de vivienda a corto plazo.				

2. Como resultado de las reuniones con mi intercesor(a):

	Para Nada	Un Poco	Algo	Mucho
Pude permanecer en mi casa o aseguré otra vivienda permanente (que no es un refugio o vivienda de transición).				
Tengo una mayor comprensión del poder y control financiero que mi pareja utiliza o utilizó en nuestra relación.				
Tengo una mejor idea de cómo manejar mi presupuesto para ayudarme a permanecer alojada/o.				
Puedo identificar al menos una persona en mi familia o comunidad que me apoya.				

Sé más acerca de los recursos comunitarios y/o sociales que yo pudiera necesitar.				
Pude trabajar en mi bienestar y en mi salud en general.				

3. Debido a mi experiencia en este programa:

	Para Nada	Un Poco	Algo	Mucho
Me siento más esperanzada/o acerca del futuro.				
Soy capaz de establecer metas para mí mismo/a y obtenerlas.				
Tengo más maneras de planificar para mi seguridad personal.				
Estoy más estable económicamente.				
Sé que el abuso y control que mi pareja usó no fue mi culpa.				
Sé de recursos comunitarios disponibles en caso de necesitarlos.				
Estoy consciente de los otros servicios que proporciona la agencia... grupos de apoyo, hotline, legal, etc....				

4. Por favor cuéntenos un poco acerca de usted, si no le molesta! Pero recuerde que esto es privado y anónimo.

Yo soy:

- Femenino / Mujer
- Masculino / Hombre
- No Binario / Tercer Genero
- Prefiere describirse como: _____

Me identifico como trasngénero:

- Sí
- No

Edad:

- Entre 18 y 29 años de edad
- Entre 30 y 44 años de edad
- Entre 45 y 64 años de edad
- 65 años de edad o mayor

Me considero ser (*coloque una X en todas las que apliquen*):

- Afroamericano(a) / Negro(a) / Africano(a)
- Nativa(o) Americana(o) / India(o) Americana(o)

- Blanca(o) / Anglo-americana(o)
- Latina(o) / Hispana(o)
- Asiática(o) / Asiática-estadounidense
- Mediorienta
- Nativa(o) de Hawaii / Isleña(o) del Pacífico
- India(o)
- Otro: (Por favor, especifique: _____)

¿Cuántos meses ha estado en este programa trabajando en colaboración con un(a) intercesor(a) para ayudarle con la vivienda y/o su seguridad personal? (*coloque una X al lado de su respuesta*)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> - Menos de 1 mes | <input type="checkbox"/> - 7 a 8 meses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> - 1 a 2 meses | <input type="checkbox"/> - 9 a 10 meses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> - 3 a 4 meses | <input type="checkbox"/> - 11 a 12 meses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> - 5 a 6 meses | |

5. ¿Cuántos adultos viven en su hogar (mayores de 18, viviendo juntos)? _____

¿Cuántos niños? _____

6. ¿Necesitó ayuda financiera con algo que el personal del programa no pudo ayudarle? Si la respuesta es afirmativa, ¿Qué necesitaba?

7. ¿De qué forma le ayudó el programa de Vivienda Primero a cumplir con sus metas de vivienda?

8. ¿Le gustaría compartir algo más con nosotros para ayudarnos a mejorar este programa?

- Por favor marque con una X si nos da su autorización para compartir sus comentarios en materiales de promoción y/o reportes de financiamiento. Nuevamente, esta información permanecerá anónima.

Remueva esta pagina y entrégala por separado si le gustaría que nosotras le contactáramos.

¿Le podríamos contactar en 1 mes, 3 meses y 6 meses para darle seguimiento y chequeo?

Tarjetas de regalo serán entregadas en estas citas de seguimiento

- Sí

- No

Nombre: _____

Dirección:

No. de Teléfono Seguro: (____) _____ - _____

2do No. de Teléfono Seguro: (____) _____ - _____

Correo Electrónico: _____

Nota: Sus datos personales, nombre, dirección, números de teléfono y dirección de correo electrónico permanecerán confidenciales! Sólo el personal tendrá acceso a su información personal.

!!!Gracias!!!