



EVALUATION OF LIFEWIRE'S DV RAPID RE-HOUSING PROJECT

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

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LifeWire's DV Rapid Re-Housing Project

In 2015, the King County Housing Authority (KCHA) used its Moving to Work funds to implement a Domestic Violence Housing First Rapid Re-Housing Demonstration Project with LifeWire. Moving to Work (MTW) is a demonstration program for public housing authorities that allows them to test innovative, locally-designed interventions created to stabilize housing. Knowledge gained from these demonstration projects is then expected to inform Housing and Urban Development (HUD) about ways to best address diverse community needs.

Funds within this project were used to provide financial and advocacy assistance to families experiencing housing instability or homelessness as a result of domestic violence, with the intent of increasing their safety and housing stability over time. Eligibility criteria for the program included:

- 1) 18 years or older;
- 2) no sex offenders;
- 3) no conviction for manufacturing methamphetamine in federally assisted housing;
- 4) total household income at or below 50% of Area Median Income (AMI); and
- 5) US citizen or legal immigration status.

Each family could be provided with up to \$7,000 in housing assistance. Eligible expenses included:

- Rental application fees
- Move-in fees
- Deposit assistance fees
- Rent arrears up to \$5,000 (excluding amounts owed to KCHA and other Public Housing Authorities)
- Utility arrears
- Monthly rental assistance (generally up to 3-6 months)
- Unit deemed habitable
- Rent within KCHA limits
- Non-leasing client assistance (safety-related housing expenses)

In addition to financial assistance, program participants were provided with advocacy and support from LifeWire, in order to eliminate housing barriers, locate and secure housing, and address other issues families may be facing that jeopardized their housing stability, safety and well-being (e.g., employment or educational support, protections from abuser).

Given the eligibility requirements and limited financial support available through the program (e.g., financial help of only 3-6 months), LifeWire enrolled domestic violence survivors into the program whom they hoped would best benefit from this form of assistance.

DV RAPID RE-HOUSING PROJECT EVALUATION

Procedures

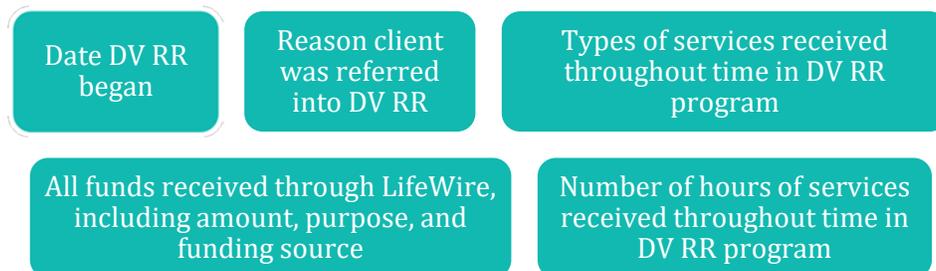
With funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (subcontracted through the Washington Coalition Against Domestic Violence), the evaluation team collected detailed process and outcome data about LifeWire's DV Rapid Re-Housing Project (DV RR). Data collection occurred through a three-stage process:



STAGE 1: IDENTIFY PARTICIPANTS AND GATHER AGENCY DATA



LifeWire kept an extensive database that captured a great deal of information about services provided to clients and other programmatic information. For each client identified as having received LifeWire's DV Rapid Re-Housing services, the evaluation team collected:



STAGE 2: INTERVIEW DV RR ADVOCATE



When a client was about to complete their receipt of DV RR funding, their primary advocate was interviewed by telephone in order to obtain more specifics about services they provided to the client. Interviews were focused on gathering the following information from the advocate:



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STAGE 3: INTERVIEW DV RR CLIENTS



LifeWire's DV RR clients were interviewed five times over the course of twelve months after the financial portion of the program ended (1 week, 3 month follow-up, 6 month follow-up, 9 month follow-up, 12 month follow-up), and were paid \$25 for each of the interviews.



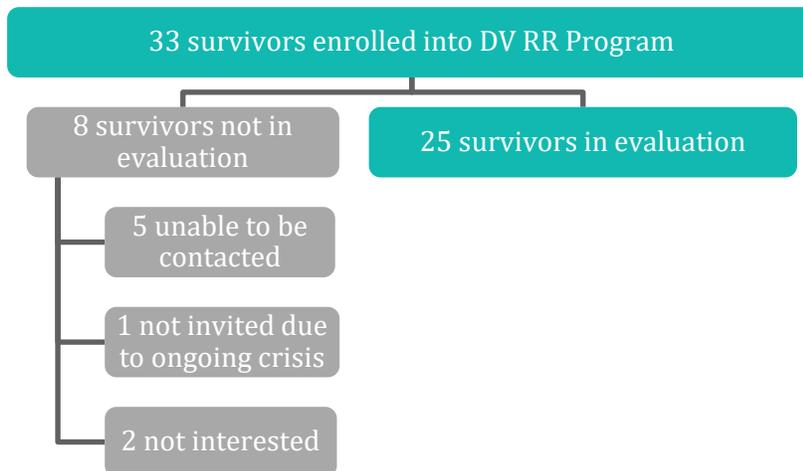
Once a client agreed to hear more about the study, a member of the evaluation team contacted them (approximately one week after DV RR funding ended for them) and provided detailed information about the study and their rights as a research participant. Telephone interviews with DV RR clients focused on gathering information about:



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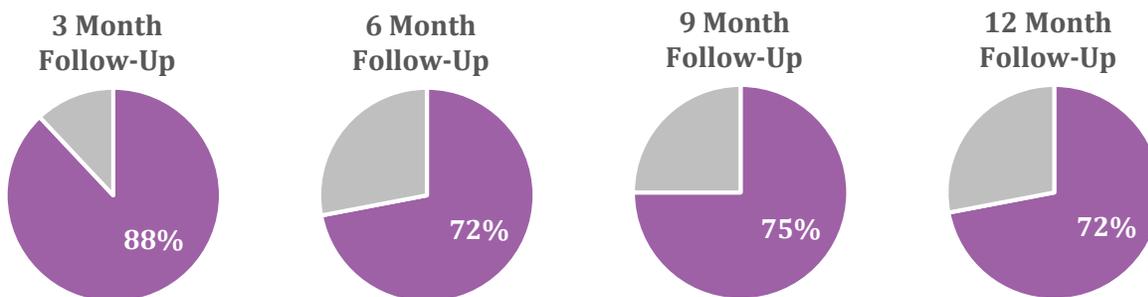
Participants

LifeWire enrolled clients into the program from October 2015 through March 2017. During the first year of funding, LifeWire provided 33 domestic violence survivors with funding and assistance through their DV RR Program. Of these survivors, 25 agreed to participate in the longitudinal evaluation.



If the evaluation team was unable to retain a participant at one time-point, attempts were still made to contact them at the following time-point. As shown below, we retained 72% of the sample at the 12 month follow-up.

Participant Sample at Follow-Up Time Points



DV RAPID RE-HOUSING PROJECT EVALUATION

SURVIVOR DEMOGRAPHICS, AT ENROLLMENT IN EVALUATION

Age of survivors in the evaluation

The 25 survivors enrolled in the evaluation ranged in age from 22 to 60 years old, with the most common age being 34 years old. Almost half (48%) of the survivors enrolled in the evaluation were 32 to 41 years old. A small portion (16%) of the participants were 52 years of age or older. See Figure 1.

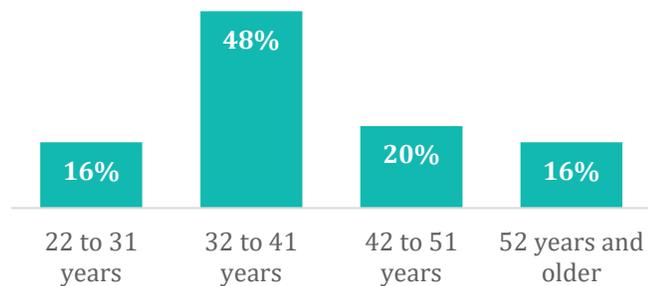


Figure 1. Age of survivors in evaluation, at enrollment (n=25)

Race/ethnicity of the survivors

Most of the survivors in the sample were African American (36%), White (36%), or Hispanic/Latina (20%). See Figure 2.

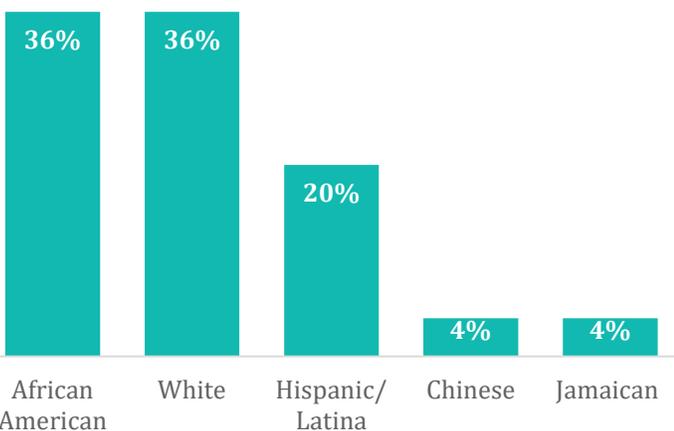


Figure 2. Race/ethnicity of survivors in evaluation, at enrollment (n=25)

The entire sample identified as female. The majority (88%) identified as heterosexual, 8% as bisexual/pansexual/ queer, and 4% as asexual.

Education of survivors

Almost three-quarters (72%) of the participants had completed at least some college, including bachelor's and advanced degrees. See Figure 3.

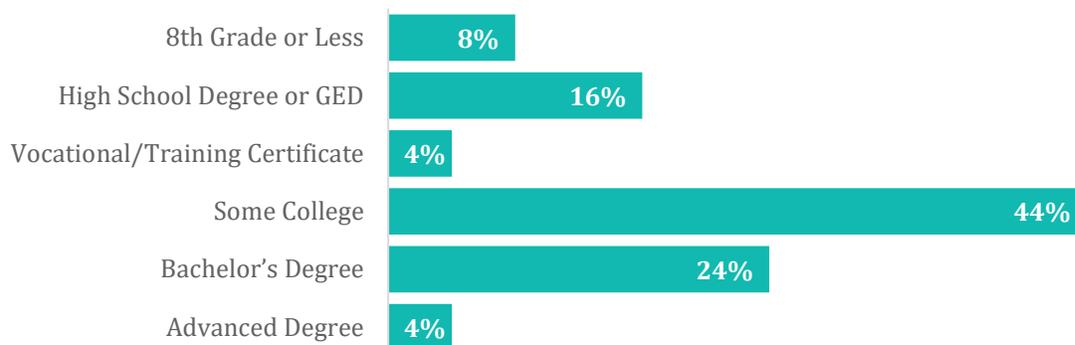


Figure 3. Education of survivors in evaluation, at enrollment (n=25)

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Mental health issues of survivors

Participants were asked about their primary mental health issue. Over half (56%) of the sample had **some form of mental health disorder**, most suffering from depression, PTSD, or anxiety. PTSD was the most common **primary** mental health issue, with over one-quarter (28%) of survivors in the evaluation dealing with symptoms. All (100%) of those who had a mental health disorder said that it interfered in their daily lives.

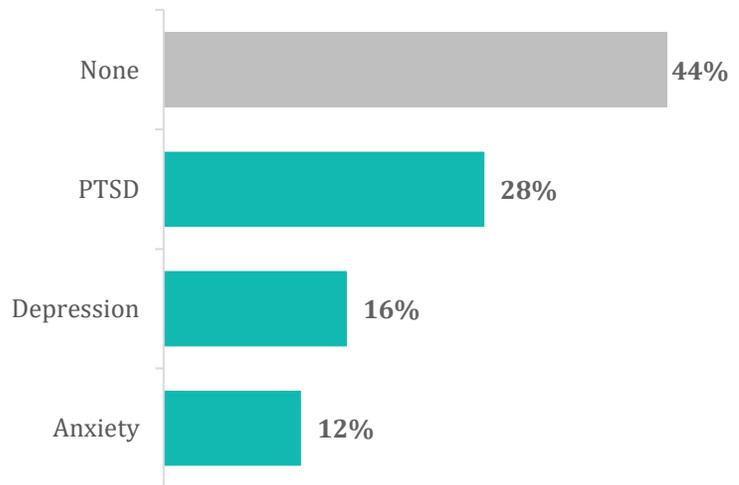


Figure 4. Primary mental health issues, at enrollment (n=25)

Physical disabilities of survivors

Participants were asked about their primary physical disability. Almost one-third (32%) of the participants had a **physical disability**. The most common type of physical disability was a physical or mobility issue (16%). All (100%) of those who had a physical disability said that it interfered in their daily lives.

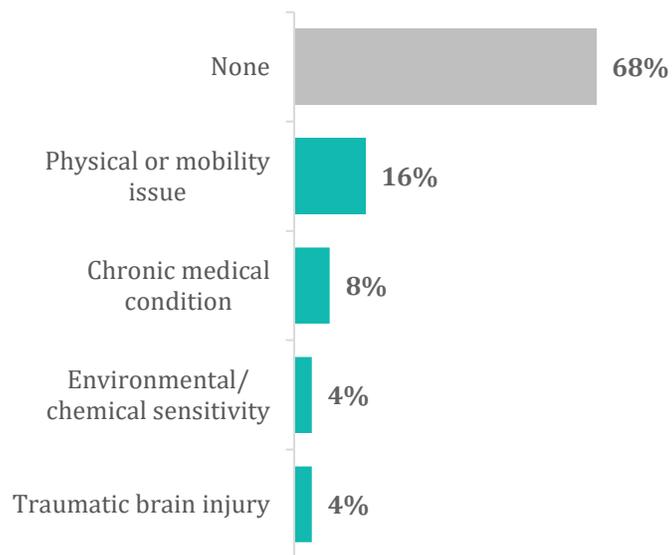


Figure 5. Primary physical disability, at enrollment (n=25)

Services and Funding Received

Survivors of domestic violence face many challenges that can get in the way of locating safe, stable housing, and becoming financially stable. LifeWire’s DV Rapid Re-Housing program was designed to provide the advocacy services and flexible funding needed to face these challenges. This section presents details about the financial assistance and advocacy services that were provided to clients after they entered the DV RR Project, when they were initially seeking housing assistance. All of the data presented in this section about services and funding received is from the initial baseline time point, when the financial assistance through this program had recently ended.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE RECEIVED BY SURVIVORS

LifeWire used the KCHA Rapid Re-Housing funds to provide survivors with financial help in several key categories, including: first month’s rent, rent arrears, monthly rent, security deposits, utilities, application fees, and “flexible assistance.” “Flexible assistance” payments were generally used for three main reasons: storage fees, moving fees, and required renter’s insurance. Table 1 illustrates how many times each form of assistance was provided, how much was provided, and the total spent across each category during the project period. A total of \$131,566.36 from the KCHA funding was dispersed among the 25 clients participating in the longitudinal evaluation, with individual single payments ranging from \$10 to \$5,000, and total cumulative payments to any one survivor ranging from \$100 to \$7,000. The table includes only financial assistance provided to the 25 participants in the evaluation.

Payment Category	# Times Provided	Average Payment	Payment Range	Total Spent
Monthly Rent	65	\$938.05	\$58 - \$1,599	\$60,972.95
Rent Arrears	13	\$2,337.62	\$755 - \$5,000	\$30,389.03
Security Deposits	22	\$756.60	\$50 - \$2,495	\$16,645.25
First Month Rent	17	\$572.25	\$10 - \$1,485	\$9,728.29
Utility Arrears	12	\$491.43	\$158.66 - \$1,846.84	\$5,897.19
Flexible Assistance	20	\$275.01	\$53.55 - \$865.20	\$5,500.24
Utility Payments	13	\$127.81	\$8.23 - \$350.86	\$1,661.49
Application Fees	12	\$64.33	\$35 - \$295	\$771.92
Total				\$131,566.36

Table 1. Financial assistance provided to survivors, by category

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NON- KCHA RAPID RE-HOUSING ASSISTANCE RECEIVED BY SURVIVORS

For a few of the participants, other funding was necessary to assist them in maintaining their housing and safety. Most of these participants had reached the cap of their allotted funding with Rapid Re-Housing before their program end date and needed to secure other funding in order to remain safely housed. Four participants were given a total of \$4,013.26 from non-KCHA RRH Assistance funding, which was used to cover rental arrears, eviction prevention, household items, and utility payments. Of these four participants, three were near or reached their funding cap when they were given the funding.

Payment Category	Payments Made	Total Spent
Rent Arrears	1	\$1,730.48
Eviction Prevention	2	\$2,065.05
Household Items	1	\$10.25
Utility Payments	2	\$207.48
Total		\$4,013.26

Table 2. Non-KCHA financial assistance provided to survivors, by category

Many participants shared that LifeWire DV RR funding was not quite long enough for them to feel completely financially stable. One fifth of the sample required assistance with funding outside of the KCHA RR funds, and one participant required two payments for eviction prevention. It is possible that it may be necessary to offer longer/more financial assistance to help participants become completely stable on their own.

“I would say extend the help for longer than just 3 months. I’m just now getting on my feet again, so if you could extend the help financially, you never know what is going to come up.”

-Survivor, DV RR Program

“I think the only thing, and to me it sounds kind of selfish saying it, because I am so blessed. If you have section 8 like we did, you can only be on it for 3 months. It would have been great to have those services a little bit longer. If the services would have been 6 months, it would help transition us more easily..”

-Survivor, DV RR Program

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ADVOCACY SERVICES RECEIVED BY SURVIVORS

Many things can become barriers for survivors of domestic violence when trying to find safe, stable housing, beyond finding the housing. Barriers commonly identified by participants included: being stuck in previous leases with rent arrears, overdue rent, overdue or high utility bills, or past debt; being unemployed or underemployed; having children; personal issues with mental health; having a physical disability; and experiencing continued domestic violence. LifeWire advocates worked closely with participants to help eliminate or work around these barriers so that they could secure safe, stable housing. They also worked on numerous other concerns that survivors were contending with in addition to finding stable housing. LifeWire advocates individualized their services to clients' needs, and offered help in the following areas: employment, education, financial, legal, child care, counseling, transportation, health care, assistance with issues for children outside of child care, food, clothing, services or material goods, and increasing social support.

Figure 6 illustrates the percent of the 25 survivors in the evaluation who received each form of assistance from advocates during the time they were also receiving financial help through KCHA funds. All survivors received housing assistance (100%), and the majority (88%) also received counseling services. All of these supports were reported by the survivors. **Types of advocacy support and services received by survivors** are shown below.

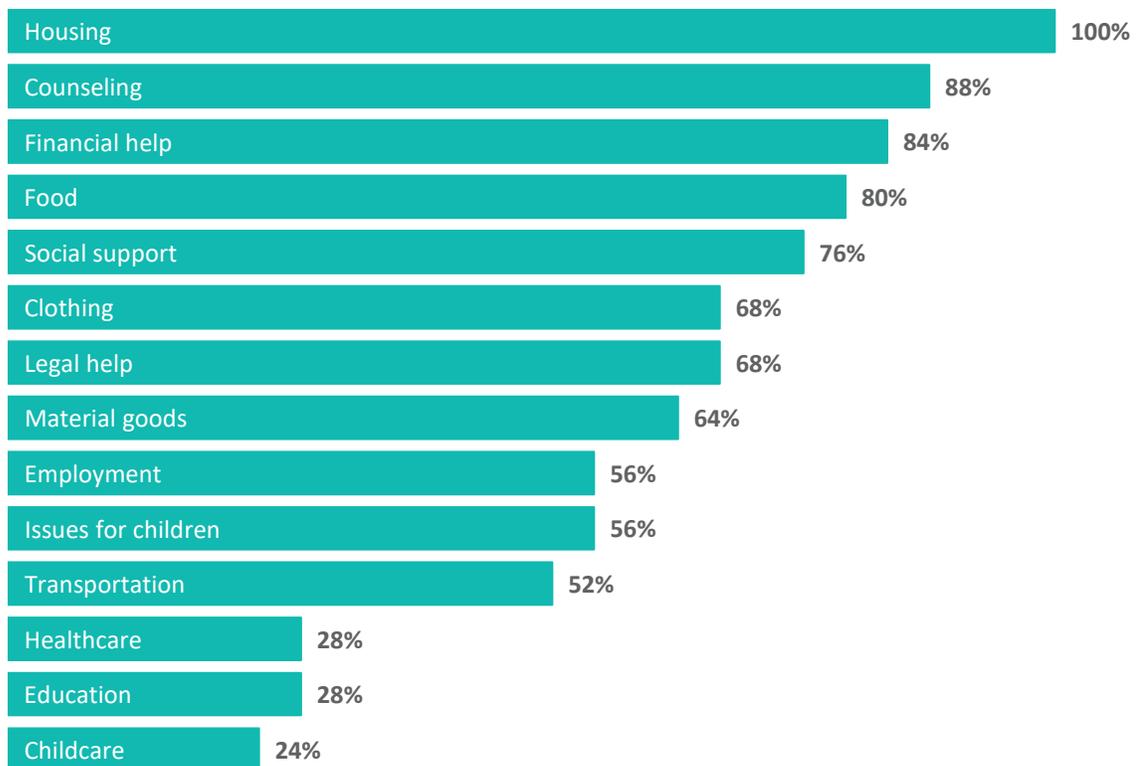


Figure 6. Types of advocacy support received by survivors (n=25)

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ADVOCATE SUPPORT ON BEHALF OF THE SURVIVORS

Immediately after a survivor exited the DV RR Program, advocates completed brief phone interviews with a member of the evaluation team about their work with the survivor, since advocates sometimes engaged in activities to help the survivor about which the survivor was unaware. Advocates helped the survivors with a variety of things throughout the program that directly and indirectly affected their ability to find safe and stable housing. The most common areas in which advocates helped survivors were: negotiating with landlords (89%), searching for housing (81%), and helping with basic necessities (73%). Advocates also assisted with negotiations to terminate old lease agreements, negotiated new lease agreements and move-in costs with the new landlords, explained the LifeWire DV RR Program, and assisted with negotiations when the participant did not speak English well.

Advocates assisted in cleaning up past debt for 68% of the participants. In many cases, the debt (such as utility and rental arrears) was directly interfering with the participant obtaining housing. By helping with this, advocates removed barriers participants were experiencing when trying to get into safe, stable housing.

All **advocate activities on behalf of survivors** are shown below.

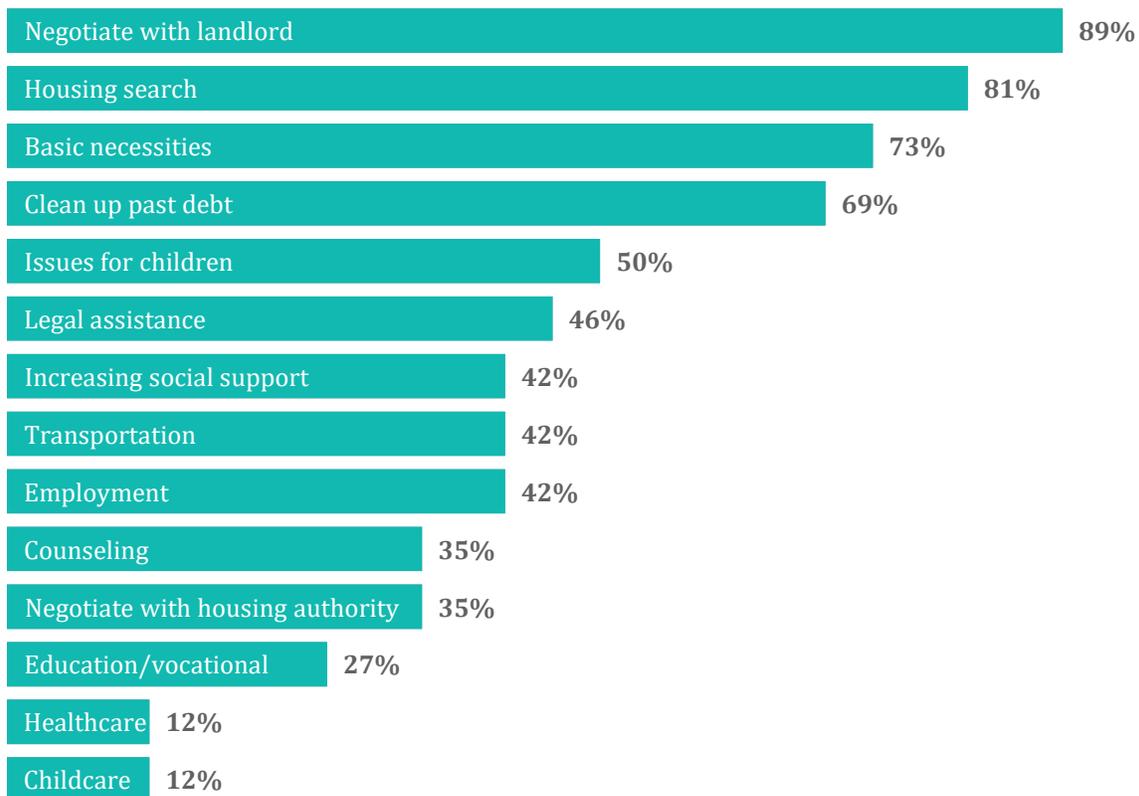


Figure 7. Activities of advocates done on behalf of the survivors (n=25)

Interactions with Advocates

Advocacy was a critical component of the LifeWire DV RR Program. Each advocate’s role was to provide individualized, strengths-based, trauma-informed advocacy to clients in order to remove housing barriers and enhance their safety and well-being. Advocacy was intended to be community-based (mobile), not facility-based, and flexible funding was designed to be available quickly to meet individual needs.

Weekly Contact with Advocates

This section includes data from the evaluation participants about their interactions with their advocates over time. As a reminder, ‘baseline’ interviews focused on the time frame during which clients were receiving DV RR funding as well as advocacy. During that time, almost three-quarters (72%) of participants had weekly contact with their advocate. As shown in Figure 8, over time, **participants’ weekly contact** (which includes participants who said they had contact ‘today’ or ‘sometime this week’ with their advocate) with their advocate decreased. By the 12 month follow-up, only 22% of participants were still having weekly contact with their advocate. This suggests that clients may need less and less advocacy contact over time.

“We worked on finding daycare for my son, me looking for a job, you know, stable income, school, helping me find resources for the things I need.”
-Survivor, DV RR Program

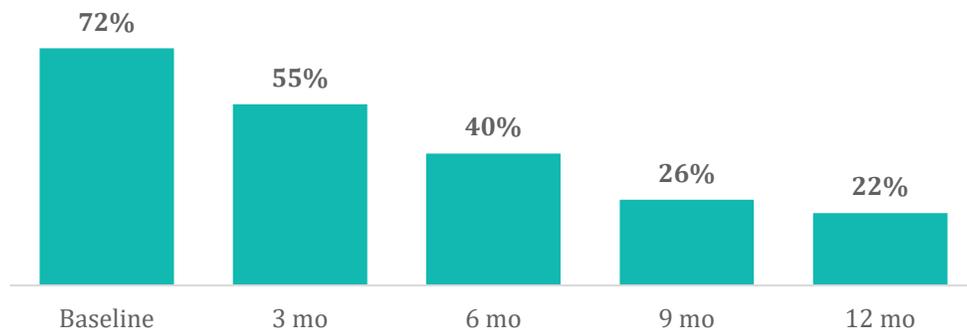


Figure 8. Weekly contact with advocates

“We don’t rush through things, sometimes we spend more than an hour together. We usually have a list of things to work on while we are together.”
-Survivor, DV RR Program

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Hours of Contact with Advocates

As shown in Figure 9, the amount of time per week spent with a LifeWire advocate also went down over time. During the baseline, when financial assistance and advocacy were offered more intensively, most clients (68%) **received at least 1 hour per week of their advocates' time**. By the 12 month follow-up period, most clients were seeing advocates less than an hour per week, with only 41% seeing their advocate over an hour a week (See Figure 9).

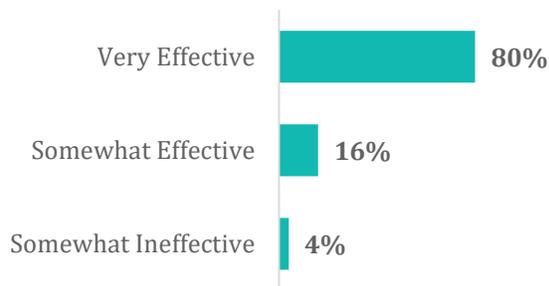


Figure 10. Effectiveness of advocate, at baseline

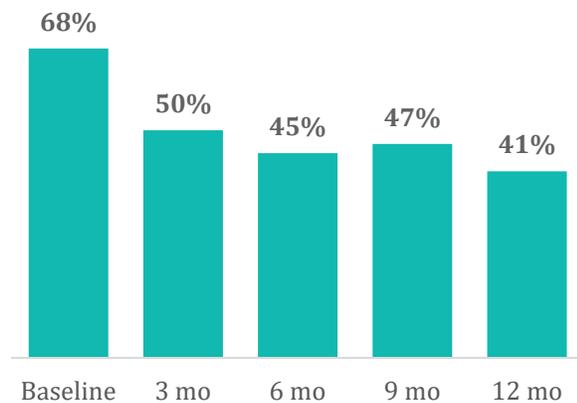


Figure 9. Client-advocate time, greater than one hour a week

Effectiveness of Advocate, At Baseline

At baseline, when asked how effective their advocate had been at helping them reach their goals, 80% of clients said their advocate was very effective. This measure was only asked at baseline, however the results highlight initial **effectiveness of advocates** in their work with clients. See Figure 10.

“At least a month or two in advance, help clients find other resources and other ways to be able to pay rent and take care of themselves beyond the length of the program. Things still come up and we need to be able to work it out after the program... workers can communicate more about the different places available to help. They only gave me help with one thing, paying rent. There should be a little more help along the way. I don't talk to too many people, so when you aren't communicating with the people helping run the program, it is hard to understand what steps to take to move forward with the program.”

-Survivor, DV RR Program

DV RAPID RE-HOUSING PROJECT EVALUATION

Satisfaction with Time Spent with Advocate

Although the amount of time spent with a LifeWire advocate went down over time, clients' **satisfaction with the amount of time spent with their advocate** remained high overall across all follow-up interviews, as shown in Figure 11. This suggests that spending less time with their advocate was a mutual decision between advocate and client; however, when asked about satisfaction, many participants hesitated during the interviews to answer because they were satisfied with what had been done but needed/wanted more help, yet they felt uneasy complaining about the help decreasing as time went on. One participant stated, "[My advocate] doesn't call anymore. When the program ended for me, she just started fading away. I did like her though." Another participant shared that, "[We need] regular check-ins like once a month. It doesn't have to be detailed, just a phone call. For me, I'm so focused on trying to make sure I make rent, my time is divided between working to make rent and dealing with behavior issues with my kids. I want to participate in LifeWire, but it never crosses my mind."

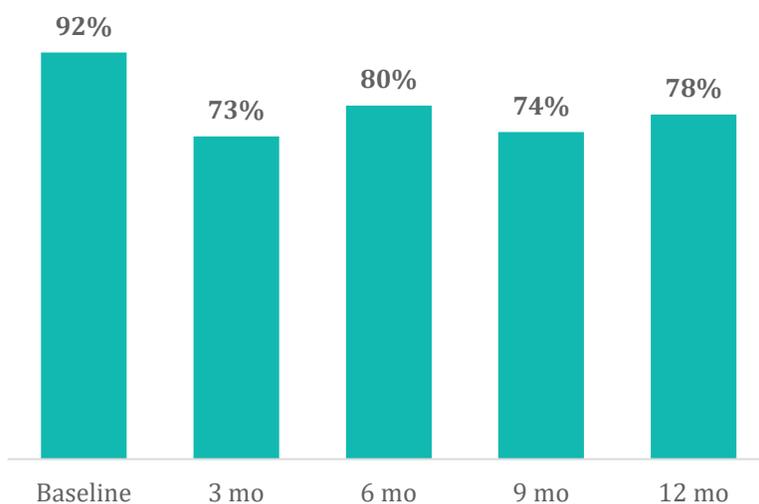


Figure 11. Satisfaction with time spent with advocate

"I think the world of [LifeWire], I don't know what my life would be without having them exist. Someday I hope to give back to that organization."

-Survivor, DV RR Program

ADVOCATE ASSISTANCE: SUCCESS STORY

An advocate worked with her client on concrete issues, such as obtaining bus passes and getting car repairs, but also worked a lot on her confidence and how to interact with people in a positive way (parenting, negotiating externships, etc.). In the interview, the advocate shared her client finished with RR and is working two part jobs and has one class left in her studies. She turned her externship into a part time job and is doing really well, due in part to her assistance in the program.

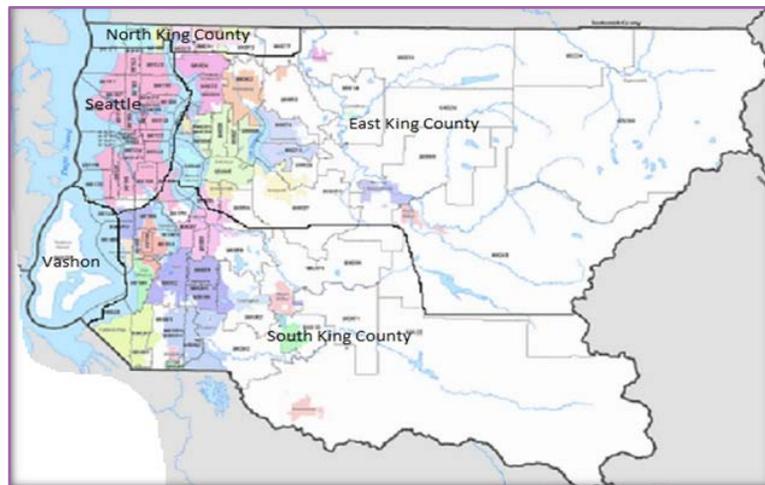
Participants’ Moves Across Counties

King County Housing Authority is committed to distributing resources to South King County, based on disparities in income and resources available. The LifeWire DV RR Program was especially interested in the resources distributed in South King County and East King County, and if this changed where participants were able to relocate to and find stable housing. This section presents the moves across counties, for participants that were able to be reached at each interview time point.

When a participant signed up for LifeWire’ DV RR services, advocates recorded the area of King County where each participant was or had been living. At the beginning of their funding, the majority of participants were located in East King County.

Immediately after participants received the last of the KCHA funding attached to the DV RR Program (Program Exit), the majority were still living in East King County. One person moved out of state to secure Transitional Housing.

At the 12 month follow-up, one participant had moved to California due to lack of income and the end of financial assistance from LifeWire. Overall, 7 participants were unable to be reached at the final time point. See Table 2 for information on participants’ moves across King County at all time points.



Area of King County	Program Entry (n=25)	Program Exit (n=25)	6 Month Follow-Up (n=20)	9 Month Follow-Up (n=19)	12 Month Follow-Up (n=18)
South King County	9	10	7	7	6
East King County	11	9	7	7	7
Other areas	5	6	6	5	5

Table 3. Participants’ moves across King County

Housing Stability and Safety Over Time

HOUSING STABILITY OVER TIME

Before participating in LifeWire’s Rapid Re-Housing Program, only 10 out of the 25 (40%) participants were stably housed, and those 10 needed to move in order to become or remain safe. After participating in DV RR, 92% of participants were living in their own safe, stable housing. At the 3 month follow-up after their funding ended with LifeWire, 95% of participants were stably housed, and 1 survivor was staying in transitional housing. At the 6 month follow-up, 94% of participants were stably housed, and 1 person was living with friends/family. The one participant who was homeless when exiting the program was able to secure transitional housing by the 3 month follow-up, and she was able to obtain housing in her own name 6 months after the program ended. This participant had to flee out of state, so she did not receive funding; however, she worked with her advocate to find transitional housing. The participant who was living with friends/family at the 6 month follow-up had lost her housing due to insufficient income. Nine months after exiting the program, 95% of participants were still stably housed, and the final 12 month follow-up revealed most participants (89%) remained stably housed. Two participants were staying with friends/family at the time of the 12 month follow-up interview. See Figure 12 for **participants in stable housing over time**.

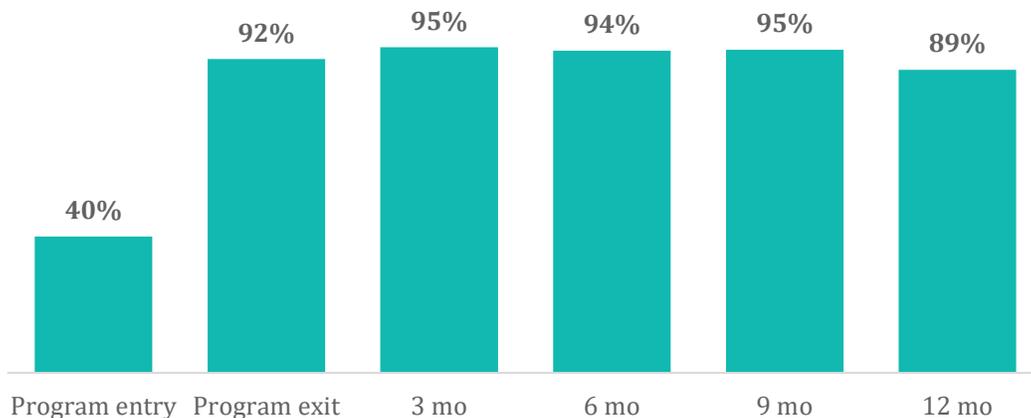


Figure 12. Participants with stable housing after exiting the program

“Just that I am so grateful [LifeWire advocates] are there for us. They have been the strongest support I’ve had... they went with me to get a protection order. I’m so grateful they are still there. I just can’t thank them enough.”

-Survivor, DV RR Program

DV RAPID RE-HOUSING PROJECT EVALUATION

HOUSING STABILITY RISK

Housing instability decreased over time after the RR program ended. Three months after exiting the program, 36% of participants indicated their housing was at risk. This went down to 20% at 6-month follow-up and 24% at 9-month follow-up. By the final check-in 12 months after the program ended, only 12% of participants felt at risk for losing their stable housing. See Figure 13 for the decrease over time in proportion of participants who felt their **housing was at risk**.



Figure 13. Fear of housing at risk, over time

FINANCIAL SECURITY PAYING BILLS

At the 3 month follow-up, the majority (80%) of the participants were up to date on their rent, and more than two-thirds (68%) were up to date on their utility bills. One year after exiting the program, all (100%) of the participants reported they were up to date on their rent; however, after 12 months only half (50%) of participants felt up to date on utility bill payments. Many participants indicated this was because they learned from their advocates to pay their rent first and let other bills be paid late if they were short on money, in order to maintain stable housing. Only about one-third (32%) of participants were up to date on other bills at the 3 month follow-up, but by the 12 month follow-up, the amount nearly doubled to 61%. See Figure 14 for the percentage of **participants up to date on their bills** at different follow-up times.

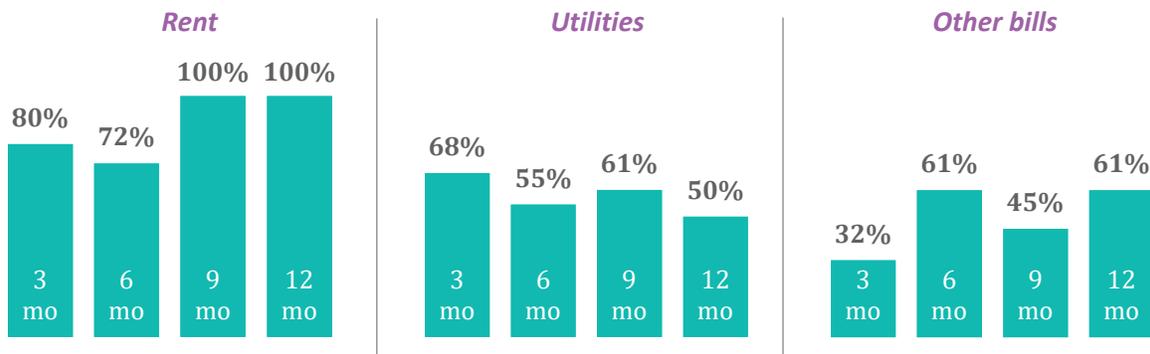


Figure 14. Financial security with rent, utilities, and other bills, over time

DV RAPID RE-HOUSING PROJECT EVALUATION

EMPLOYMENT OVER TIME

Employment among survivors in the evaluation varied by follow-up time point. While 36% were employed at the 3 month follow-up, 53% were employed at the 9-month follow-up. At the final follow-up, only one-third (33%) of participants were employed. See Figure 15. Some participants shared that they had temporary work or were in the process of finding work. Others were getting help from their advocates with applying for unemployment. This variance in employment did not seem to affect or correlate with participants' fear of housing at risk, which could be at least partially explained by some participants having income-based housing vouchers.

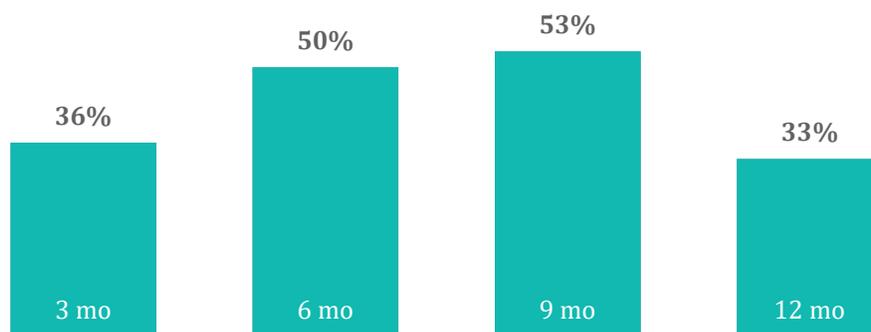


Figure 15. Employment rate among participants

"We are working on finding me employment again. She took me last week to an employment specialist. I've been on the program for over a year now, and it was only supposed to be a year, and I was doing good and then I happened to lose my job. It was a temporary contract position, so I wasn't eligible for unemployment."

-Survivor, DV RR Program

ADVOCATE ASSISTANCE: SUCCESS STORY

One survivor was in need of financial help because the person who was abusing her had talked her into getting a high interest car loan. She was working to refinance the loan, but in the meantime, was having a hard time meeting basic needs. The advocate helped negotiate with the Housing Authority for an extension of funding and helped her with the situation, easing her financial stress.

DV RAPID RE-HOUSING PROJECT EVALUATION

CONTINUED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS A BARRIER TO HOUSING STABILITY

Many of the participants indicated that they were still struggling with some form of domestic violence after exiting the DV RR Program. See Figure 16 for the change in abuse reported at each time point. From the 3 month follow-up to 12 months after exiting the program, all forms of abuse decreased. The largest change in abuse behaviors was seen in the emotional or physical abuse reported, which decreased by nearly half of the original amount reported (43% to 22%). Threats of violence continued to be high. Stalking behavior and financial abuse gradually decreased over time for participants, although there was an increase in these abuse types at 6 month follow-up.

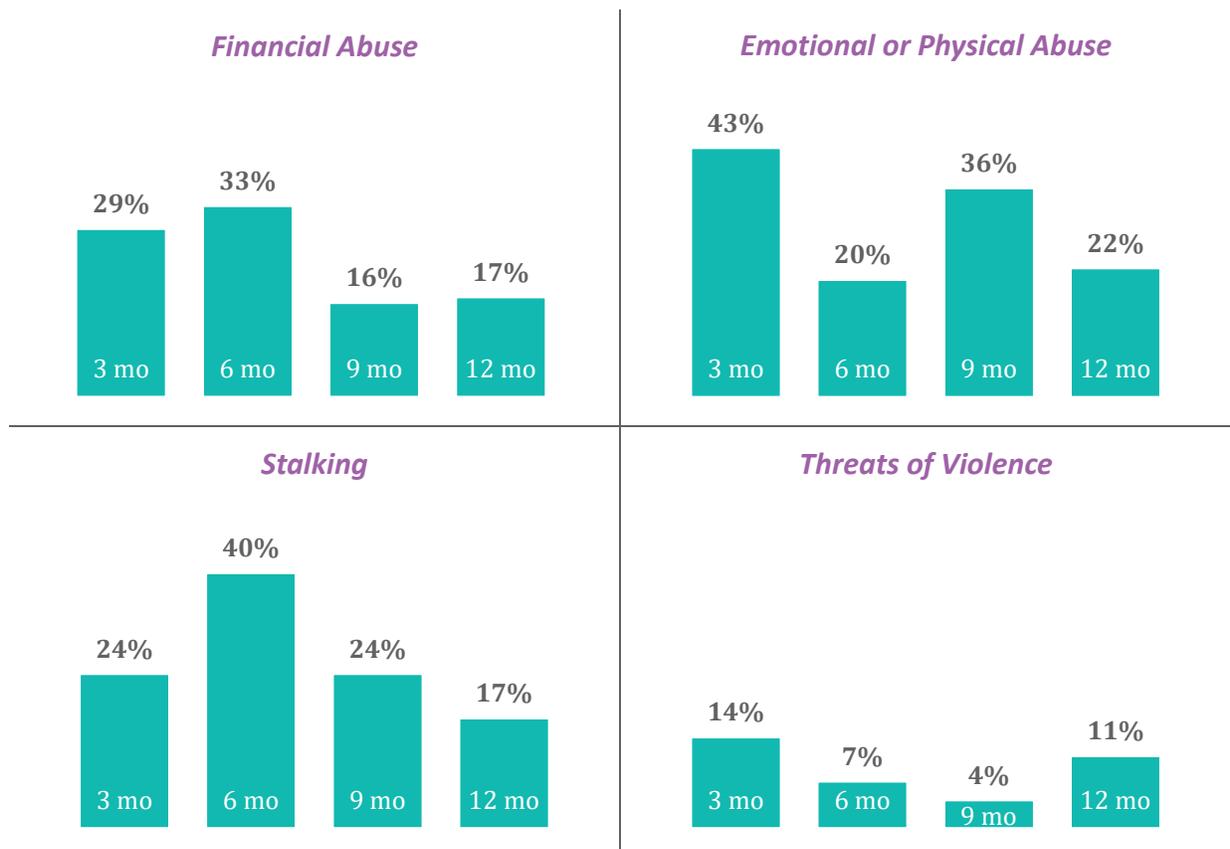


Figure 16. Abuse types reported by participants, over follow-up times

“My ex is being released from jail, he got bail, the jail forgot to look into his record to see there is a protection order against him until 2023. I am now on a hit list. His nephew told me. If it weren't for [advocate], she has been calling different police stations to make sure they know. They gave me the confidence to move on.”

-Survivor, DV RR Program

DV RAPID RE-HOUSING PROJECT EVALUATION

Advocates frequently worked to help participants deal with continuing domestic violence issues that jeopardized their safety. Some participants needed support with notifying police stations of abusers being released from prison, and some had ongoing issues with abusers finding out their location and having to relocate quickly. Advocates also helped navigate difficult past financial abuse that acted as a barrier to getting into stable housing. All types of abuse came up in interviews as barriers interfering with long-term safe and stable housing for survivors.

ADVOCATE ASSISTANCE: SUCCESS STORY

One survivor had to move out of her newly acquired stable housing because of a potentially lethal situation. Her abuser was put into prison for attempted murder and was being released early. When she realized he was being released early, she knew she needed to move for safety reasons and didn't have the financial support to cover the costs. She had a Section 8 voucher and wanted to move into King County and needed to port the voucher. She needed help negotiating the Housing Authority and moving costs. Her advocate supported her with these specific needs and helped her get into safe housing.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOUSING STABILITY AND HAVING A SECTION 8 VOUCHER

Early in the interviewing process it became clear that some DV RR clients had permanent housing (Section 8) vouchers either before entering the program or as a result of the program. This had not been anticipated and the evaluation team had not included questions about these vouchers. Given what we know about how this type of voucher positively impacts housing stability (e.g., Gubits et al., 2015), questions about these vouchers were added to the interviews midway through the first year of the evaluation in order to understand the impact on participants. Table 3 reflects the information retroactively collected from advocates about participants.

	Baseline (n=25)	3 Month Follow-Up (n=22)	6 Month Follow-Up (n=20)	9 Month Follow-Up (n=19)	12 Month Follow-Up (n=18)
Participants with vouchers	32%	32%	35%	58%	72%
Participants without vouchers	68%	68%	65%	42%	28%

Table 4.. Housing vouchers among participants

At program exit, 32% of participants had housing vouchers. No new individuals had housing vouchers three or six months later. At the final 12 month follow-up 72% of participants were confirmed as having housing vouchers, double the initial amount of participants with vouchers at baseline.

DV RAPID RE-HOUSING PROJECT EVALUATION

Relationship Between Having a Housing Voucher and Housing Instability

To assess whether survivors with permanent housing vouchers had greater housing stability than other survivors over time, we compared the two groups on their scores from the Housing Instability Index (Rollins, et al., 2012). The Housing Stability Index is comprised of 10 items with answers recoded into dichotomous values to indicate ‘at risk’ or ‘not at risk’ in categories related to housing instability. Scores on the Housing Instability Index range from 1-10, with higher scores indicating greater housing instability. An independent t-test determined the groups were not significantly different across any of the time points. However, the Housing Instability Index was always higher among the group of participants without vouchers after the 3 month follow-up. Over time, the score difference between voucher and non-voucher participant groups grew larger. See Figure 17 for score differences across each follow-up time point.

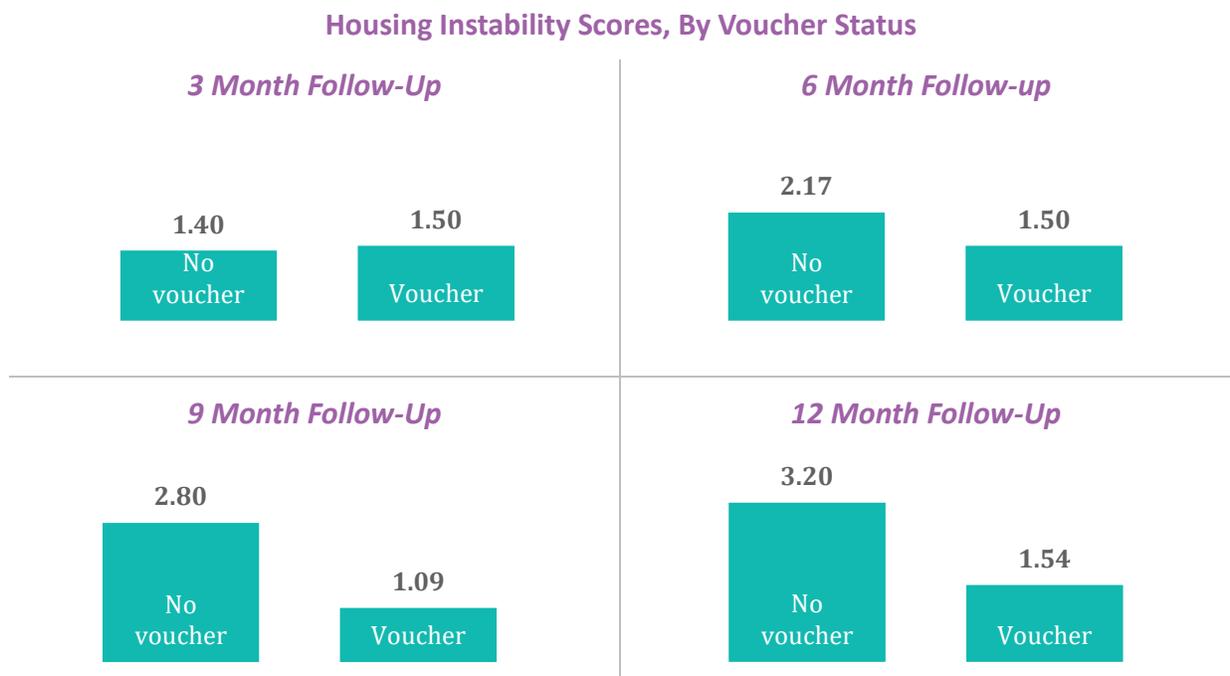


Figure 17. Housing Instability Index Scores by voucher status over time; higher score = greater instability

ADVOCATE ASSISTANCE: SUCCESS STORY

One advocate shared that her client had a section 8 voucher and she had had it for some time. Due to the domestic violence, she had moved out of her home and was couch surfing. She was having a hard time keeping her sons at school because she was staying very far away from their school. She expressed the need to do a housing search with her voucher and needed financial assistance for move-in costs. The advocate assisted her with finding housing and becoming financially stable.

Key Findings



Housing stability increased, and 89% of participants were stably housed a year after the financial program ended. Over time, more participants had received Section 8 housing vouchers, which likely explains the increase in housing stability despite how employment status. Participants also mentioned learning from their advocates how to prioritize paying their rent first before paying other bills.



From the 3 month follow-up to 12 months after exiting the program, all forms of abuse decreased. The largest change in abuse behaviors was seen in the emotional or physical abuse reported, which decreased by nearly half of the original amount reported (43% to 22%).



Over time, participants spent less time with advocates, in both intensity (hours) and frequency (times per week). This suggests that spending less time with their advocate was a mutual decision between advocate and client because of the clients needing less help as time went on.



Over time, more participants acquired housing vouchers. This may be related to their work with their advocate; however, further study in future evaluations to link obtaining housing vouchers with advocacy work is needed.



Over time, there were greater differences in housing instability for voucher and non-voucher participants. Voucher participants generally had the same levels of low instability, while non-voucher participants had increased levels over time. None of these results were statistically significant, however, which may be due to the small sample size.



Overall, participants were satisfied with the help they had received from advocates, although many needed or wanted more help. Those who wanted more help felt uneasy complaining about the help decreasing as time went on. Resources should be allocated for advocates to have time to check in with clients regularly after programs end, and for clients and advocates to agree on what communication patterns are expected from each other.

Summary

Although caution must be used in interpreting findings from the small sample of participants, it is heartening that 92% of survivors were living in safe, stable housing by the time the flexible funding provided through KCHA had been spent. One year after exiting the DV RR Program, 89% of participants were stably housed.

Advocates can help survivors of domestic violence in many crucial ways, and many of these can improve their chances for maintaining housing stability and safety over time. Advocacy has been shown to improve participants' decision making and coping skills (Bennett, Riger, Schewe, Howard, & Wasco, 2004). Advocates also provide referrals to or provide counseling for clients, which can improve mental health issues, such as anxiety (Bennett, Riger, Schewe, Howard, & Wasco, 2004). Advocates at LifeWire helped participants with many other things outside of housing, such as transportation, financial help and food. Advocates also helped with several areas related either directly or indirectly to finding and sustaining safe and secure housing.

Domestic violence has been shown to be one of the major contributors to housing instability. Domestic violence can negatively impact finances, including not being able to afford rent, not being able to afford utilities and other bills, numerous moves, problems with landlords, and credit issues (Pavao, Alvarez, Baumrind, Induni, & Kimerling, 2007). This is true for many of the participants, and advocates have, in many of these cases, helped to clear up issues that arise because of continued domestic violence.

While the DV RR program offered by LifeWire was successful for many clients, a number of staff expressed concern that the program was tailored to, and therefore often offered to, survivors who had some level of stability in their lives already. The cap on funding often meant that rental and other financial assistance was brief, and the staff as well as many survivors shared that a longer time frame, with increased funding, would have led to greater success. In some cases, advocates sought additional funding for their clients, either through other LifeWire funding sources or other community based organizations. Too little is known about the effectiveness of Rapid Re-housing for domestic violence survivors, especially in comparison to other housing models. More evaluations are needed that examine which housing and advocacy programs work best for whom, under what circumstances.

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