

RESEARCH BRIEF

IPV Survivors' Perceptions of How a Flexible Funding Housing Intervention Impacted their Children

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Domestic violence (DV) broadly affects women and children in the U.S. and has many negative impacts on them, one of the primary of which is housing instability. Accessing safe housing for families escaping DV is challenging as survivors face numerous barriers to finding and securing either temporary shelter or other supportive housing programs, or permanent, affordable housing for themselves and their families. This can be especially disruptive to children's health and well-being. Children exposed to DV can suffer from poor mental and physical health, delayed educational and developmental milestones, and negative social or emotional attachments. The impact of housing instability may compound these effects. Despite this, there is evidence that maternal parenting can help shore up children's resilience and mitigate these negative impacts on their children's lives. This study looks at survivors' perceptions of how a brief intervention designed to enhance their safety and housing stability also impacted their children's well-being.

- **SAMPLE:** 42 mothers, with minor children, who received flexible funding and brief advocacy
- Survivors interviewed by phone 3x: 30 days, 3 months and 6 months after receiving financial assistance
- Mothers were primarily African American, mean age 34, with an average of 2 children
- Children's ages: 34% were 5 years-old or younger, 33% were between age 6 and 10, 22% were between 11 and 15, and 8% were between 15 and 18 years-old

Of the 39 survivors interviewed 6 months after receiving flexible funds, 95% (37 of 39 survivors and 81 of their 85 children) were housed. Forty-one percent (n = 16) of these mother-led families remained in their original homes – with their children able to stay in their schools, near established friends and in known neighborhoods.

Mothers were often quick to note the positive impact of this stability on their children's moods, behaviors, and academics, and they further stressed the reciprocal relationship between their moods and their children's moods:

"It's given my children a sense of security because they never even knew what was going on, but the fact is they always had something to call home versus me having to expose them to going to live with somebody else or having to go to a shelter or something like that to get some type of help."

Mothers of younger children often spoke about how their children reflected their stress and how these reflections changed after families received their flexible funds:

"She's seen me, you know, when I had the domestic violence situation. And she used to be kinda violent with her doll babies and, you know, having temper tantrums, slamming doors... And now it's more relaxed and she's more calm with her doll babies – she's not ripping doll babies heads off."

While this type of brief intervention is not appropriate for all IPV survivors and their children, it may be a lifeline for those who are one crisis away from homelessness or who need immediate but brief assistance to avoid spiraling into chaos.



To find this research brief and related resources, visit SafeHousingPartnerships.org, an online resource for domestic and sexual violence advocates as well as homeless and housing partners.