

A Promising Approach to Prevent Homelessness for Domestic Violence Survivors

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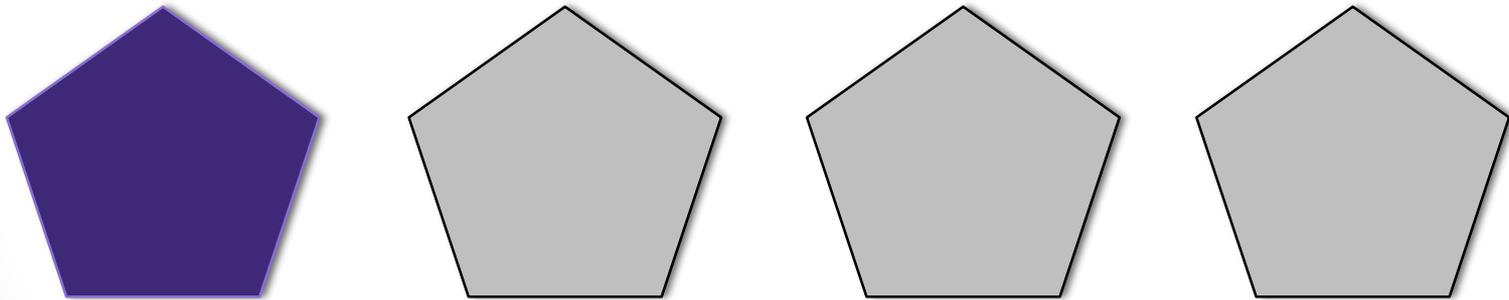
The Problem

Housing instability is 4x more likely for women who have experienced domestic violence



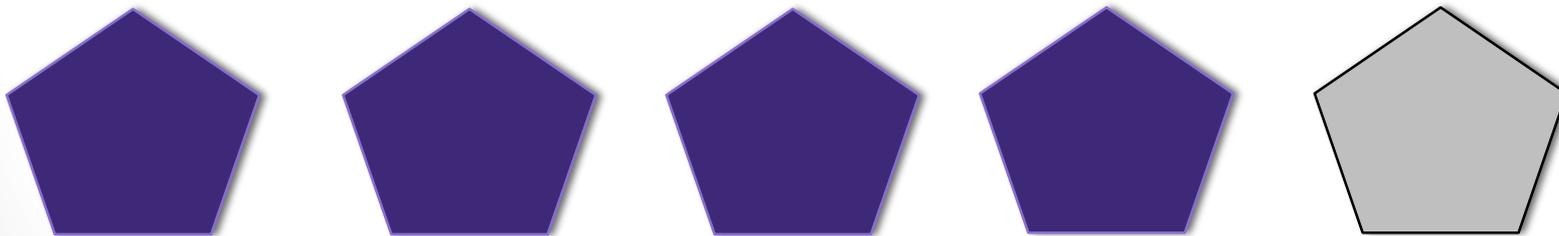
The Problem

One in four homeless women cite domestic violence as a major contributor to their homelessness



The Problem

Of homeless women with children,
over 80% have experienced domestic
violence



The Problem

- Pathways from DV to homelessness are both direct and indirect:
 - Many abusers intentionally destroy victims' financial stability by ruining their credit, harassing them at their jobs, preventing them from working or going to school, stealing from them...

The Problem

- Indirect pathways include:
 - DV often leads to injuries, PTSD, depression, all of which can lead to job instability and housing instability
 - Many women leave their homes to protect their children, but then can not afford to support them

Innovative Responses

- “Domestic Violence Housing First” is a model using **intensive, mobile advocacy** and **flexible funding** to help survivors obtain safe and stable housing
- “Flexible funding” with brief advocacy is being examined as a way to **prevent** homeless from occurring



Why Flexible Funding?

Some survivors *can avoid homelessness* if they have *access to immediate funds*, coupled with housing advocacy and support.

International aid studies have shown that *direct funds* to those in need have *immediate* and *long term positive impacts*.

Does Flexible Funding Work?

- Evaluated an innovative program in Washington, DC
- DASH – District Alliance for Safe Housing



DASH Provides a Range of Services:

- A 43-unit apartment-style “shelter”
- A transitional-to-permanent scattered site safe housing program
- **Housing Resource Center**: A variety of homeless prevention services through:
 - Advocacy
 - The **Survivor Resilience Fund (a flexible funding program)**, where grants are given to help survivors attain stable, safe housing

Guiding Principles in Flexible Funding Decisions

- “Can **any other organization** provide this resource?”
- “Will this grant help this person to retain housing, not just today, but **over time**?”
- Process is **survivor-centered, accessible, and respectful**
- Process is **quick** to respond to urgent situations

Research Plan

- Survivors invited to participate when applying for grant
- Interviewed at 30-days, 3-months and 6-months post-grant
- 55 survivors in study
 - 95% retention rate at three months
 - 87% retention at six months



Demographics

- 53 women, 2 men
- Average age 34 (range 21-57 years old)
- Primarily African American
- 82% have children
 - (range 0-4)



Amount of Flex Funding Awarded

- Average grant: \$2,078
- Grant range: \$275 - \$8,508

Grants were used for:

Moving expenses
Utilities
Car repair
Back rent
Credit card debt
Storage unit fees
Out-of-state travel to court for custody hearing
Other needs

Housing at Six Months Follow-up

94% housed

| Up-to-date on rent | Somewhat behind on rent | No way to pay next month's rent | Homeless |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|----------|
| 37 (76%) | 6 (12%) | 3 (6%) | 3 (6%) |

The Process of Receiving the Grant was Important to Survivors



- Process was:
 - Low barrier
 - FAST
 - Caring and non-judgmental

Low Barrier

"When I went to DASH they were more willing to listen to my story, ask some questions, 'OK, we can help you.' And that was it. It wasn't like 'OK, we need you to join our program. We need you to sit down. We need you to come in everyday. We need you to come in...' It wasn't like that. I didn't feel like ... ***I didn't feel like somebody put a gun to my head – I mean to, you know, receive help.***"

FAST

“I expected to be there for hours. I had brought as much information that I could possibly find because I just assumed that it would be a long day there and it would be a million and one questions, but it was totally the opposite. It was totally the opposite and it was very refreshing.”

Caring & Non-judgmental

“Usually you talk to someone like that [a service provider] and it’s more like, ‘oh, I would’ve did this’ or ‘I would’ve did that.’ And, you know, it wasn’t like that. It was more like they understood. ...I didn’t have to hear, ‘oh, well, why didn’t you leave?’ or – you know. I didn’t get that from them.”

Children's Well-being

“[My daughter] used to be kind of violent with her doll babies and, you know, having tantrums, slamming doors. And now it's more relaxed so she's more calm with her doll babies.



She's not ripping doll babies' heads off.”



Impact on Well-being

- Midway through the evaluation, we started asking at 6 months (n=31):
 - Thinking back over the last 6 months, when you went to DASH for funds... would you say that, overall your life is better off, worse off, or no different:
 - ☑ Better off ➡ **100% felt “better off”**
 - And would you say you are more hopeful about the future than you were then? Less hopeful? Or no change?
 - ☑ More hopeful ➡ **90% felt “more hopeful”**

Impact on Safety

- We later began asking survivors in 6 month interviews if they had experienced any domestic violence since receiving their flexible funding
- Of the 23 survivors asked the question:
 - 20 (91%) reported no further DV
 - 1 reported receiving harassing phone calls
 - 2 experienced further DV

The Promise of Flexible Funding

- Flex funding with **brief** advocacy is promising option for *some* survivors
 - Those who were relatively stable, and are now experiencing a crisis
- Flex funding with **longer-term advocacy** (DV Housing First, DV Rapid Re-housing) is also promising, needs further research

Next Steps

- Identify where else this is happening; replicate
- Some government agencies looking at how to provide more of this type of funding and service, as it appears effective *and* cost-effective

