

# Domestic Violence for Homeless/Housing Programs: The Relationship is the Intervention

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WASHINGTON  
STATE COALITION  
AGAINST DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE

WSCADV is the leading voice to end domestic violence in Washington State. We improve how communities respond to domestic violence and work to create a social intolerance for abuse through:

- Visionary work
- Engaging the public
- Supporting our members

Founded in 1990 by survivors and their allies, WSCADV is a non-profit 501(c)3 network of domestic violence programs. Our member programs work tirelessly across the state to help survivors towards safety and freedom.

NASH's mission is to ensure that survivors of domestic and sexual violence have a full range of survivor-defined safe housing options, through improved access, increased resources, and innovative solutions, ultimately catalyzing a safe housing movement.

Our vision is to create a world where safe housing is a right shared by everyone.



N A S H  
NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR  
SAFE HOUSING

# DV & Housing TA Consortium

## Five Federal Agencies

- Family Violence Prevention & Services Program/HHS
- Office on Violence Against Women/DOJ
- Office for Victims of Crime/DOJ
- Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs/HUD
- US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)

## Six Technical Assistance Providers

- National Alliance for Safe Housing (NASH)
- National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRCDV)
- National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV)
- Collaborative Solutions, Inc. (CS)
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC)
- Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)



# What We'll Be Covering Today



DV in the current context



Recognizing and responding to DV



Safety Planning: Safety vs SafeR



How to “have the conversation,” modifications during the pandemic



Working with DV Advocates and Agencies

# DV in the Current Context

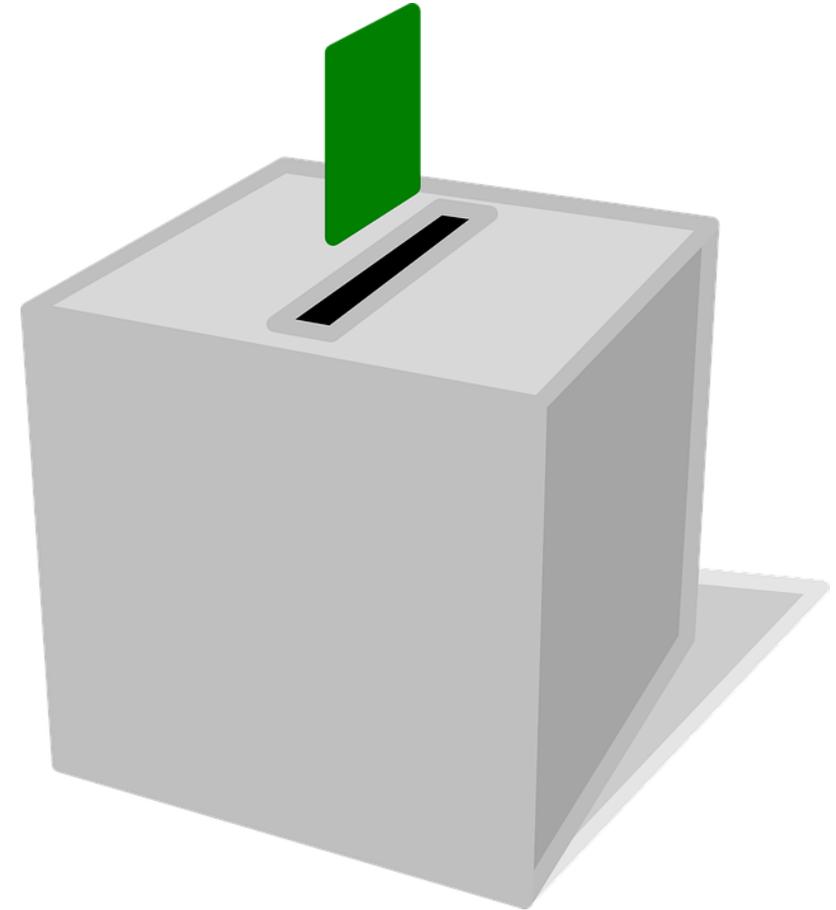


- Many indications that DV is increasing in context of “stay at home” orders
- Same phenomenon occurred during Great Recession, Hurricane Sandy and similar stressful periods
- Tendency to use power and control + increased stressors + increased opportunity + reduced options = elevated danger

# Poll

**During the pandemic, staff interacting with families we're housing have noticed:**

- More situations where DV seems to be - or definitely is - a factor
- Fewer survivors wanting to separate from the person causing harm
- No change
- Hard to know; interaction is difficult and infrequent right now



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# RECOGNIZING AND RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

# HAVE THE CONVERSATION!

WASHINGTON STATE COALITION

**WSCADV**

AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

# AWARENESS OF DISPARITIES IS ESSENTIAL PART OF EQUITABLE RESPONSE

- Disproportionate number of people experiencing homelessness are people of color
- COVID -19 death rates much higher among communities of color
- Structural racism deep and embedded, limits options and access to resources
- LGBT youth disproportionately likely to remain homeless due to overt discrimination



# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: THE DYNAMICS

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### What is Domestic Violence?

A pattern of power and coercive control used by one person over another person—including more behaviors than physical or sexual abuse – with consequences or harm experienced by the person who resists.

This means ... A survivor's autonomy and safety is influenced by their experience and knowledge of the person causing harm. A survivor's planning and choices have to anticipate an abusive person's reaction and potential actions.

A survivor's community becomes smaller ... Partners who cause harm typically isolate a survivor from their network of support and undermine their options.

# 9 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT DV/SA

Coercion  
and abuse is  
about power  
and control

- Coercion and abuse is purposeful and intentional!
- It can sometimes be difficult to figure out who is causing harm and who is the target of harm.
- **The fundamental harm of abuse is a loss of autonomy.**

# 9 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT DV/SA

Survivors  
are the  
**EXPERTS**

Survivors are your best resource for figuring out what works and what doesn't.

# 9 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT DV/SA

Abusers  
only use the  
amount of  
force  
necessary

- They just use the amount needed to gain compliance in the relationship.
- Any time we question a survivor's story, it gives the abusive person even more power.

# 9 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT DV/SA

Past  
abuse  
**MATTERS**

Impacts current  
decision-making of the  
survivor

# 9 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT DV/SA

Forced  
sex may be  
the only  
**ABUSE**

May be the only physical abuse  
that someone experiences

# 9 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT DV/SA

**NOT** telling  
is not the  
same as  
**LYING**

What is the benefit  
of telling you?

# 9 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT DV/SA

Survivors  
have been  
surviving

Before we met  
them; after they  
leave us

# 9 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT DV/SA

The best way  
to **SUPPORT  
CHILDREN** is  
to **SUPPORT  
PARENTS**

Building resilience  
by supporting the  
parent and child  
together — to see  
them as linked.

# 9 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT DV/SA

Leaving  
doesn't  
equal  
safety

Is having no option  
to leave making a  
decision to stay?

# HOW DO YOU ASK ABOUT ABUSE?

## Things to consider

## How to have a conversation about relationships

- Establish rapport—foster trust
- Interview individuals separately—even if they show up as a couple “It’s standard practice!”
- Be mindful of safety dynamics
- Be mindful of culture and language
- Ask if they have recently been physically hurt by someone?
  - Give examples of abuse
- Ask if there is anyone they are afraid of?
- If it sounds like there has been domestic violence, ask if they would like to speak to a DV advocate?

# UNDERSTANDING THE SURVIVOR'S CONTACT WITH THE PERSON CAUSING HARM

## The survivor may have no choice

- Child visitation
- Primary childcare
- Transportation
- Access to money
- Health care or disability needs
- Uncertain legal status
- Facing homelessness

## The survivor wants contact

- Hope for change
- Wants the relationship
- Parent of the children
- Emotional support
- Health care or disability needs
- Has a home

## IN YOUR PROGRAM: BOTH PEOPLE ENGAGE IN PHYSICAL VIOLENCE ...?

Who is the survivor? Who is the person causing harm?

- You can't rely on gender or a list of behaviors.
- Consider **CONTEXT, INTENT, EFFECT** to see who is establishing power and control over another person.
- Who faces consequences or retaliation for resisting?
- Explore other strategies besides eviction

# LISTEN DIFFERENTLY & BUILD BRIDGES

Listen to the survivor and ask what they need and want

- If the person causing harm is present with the survivor - do not have decision-making or safety-related conversations
- Consider why a survivor may use violence—in self-defense, protect children or to regain control over their life

Help bridge the relationship between the survivor and the DV program

# CONFIDENTIALITY: HONOR IT!

## WHY?

- Survivors control over their information is key to autonomy and safety
- Legal Protections are in place at state and federal levels
- Look for potential breaches of confidentiality in your program
- When in doubt—ask the survivor!





SAFETY VS.  
SAFER

# GOAL IS TO BE SAFER

## Safety

No violence

Basic Human Needs Met

Social and Emotional Well-Being

## Safer

Less violence

Reduced level, less frequent, less control

Economic Stability Increased

Fewer gaps in meeting basic needs, more financial resources

Well-Being Strengthened

More resilience to effects of violence, emotional healing, increased social supports, reinforced cultural strengths

# SURVIVOR'S RISK ANALYSIS OF RELATIONSHIP

## Abuser-Generated Risks

- What is life like with them?
- What is it like for the children?
- Who handles the money?
- Do you have access to a car?
- Do you have your name on the lease/house?
- Do they know how to use systems against you?
- Are they the source for drugs?

## Life-Generated Risks

- What is life like in the neighborhood?
- Can you make ends meet?
- Do you have access to healthcare insurance?
- What is transportation like?
- How much safe, affordable housing is available?
- Are there supports in your community?

# WHAT MAKES CHILDREN SAFER?

Violence  
Prevention  
and  
Reduction

Economic  
Stability and  
Educational  
Opportunity

Well Being  
Strengthened

Capable Caretakers

- Parent survivor  
safer and  
supported
- Parent doing harm  
less harmful and  
more helpful

# SAFETY PLANNING FLOW (A PROCESS NOT A PRODUCT)



Access NASH's Safety Planning Toolkit [here](#).

Access NNEDV's Tech Safety site [here](#).

# HOW CAN YOUR PROGRAM HELP WITH SAFER PLANNING?

- Have agreements in place with your DV agency partner for emergent needs—build your relationships before you need them!
- You will face many complexities in relationships within your housing program: from complete separation to choosing to stay.
- Help the survivor with other safe housing resources within your program or another program when that's requested.
- Help the person causing harm with resources if they become homeless due to exclusion from the unit.
- Don't judge or restrict the level of contact they might need to have with each other.

# LISTEN DIFFERENTLY



- See the survivor's risks from their perspective
- Understand survivor's priorities
- Check back in – reflect, re-evaluate, try again
- Check your understanding with survivor

# IF SURVIVOR DOES WANT TO SEPARATE

- Know the state, federal, and local protections for survivors
- Offer lease bifurcation
- Enact your system's Emergency Transfer Plan
- If survivor chooses to stay in unit, help with safety planning
- Offer help with new locks, security camera, protection order, etc.
- If person causing harm leaves or is evicted, offer them help with a new housing placement





## WORKING WITH DV ADVOCATES AND AGENCIES

# WHAT DOES AN ADVOCATE DO?

- Provides survivor-driven, mobile, trauma-informed advocacy
- Accompanies, transports, supports in the community and builds bridges to community
- Navigates complicated systems for and with a survivor
- Walks with and speaks on behalf of survivor at their request

**ADVOCACY**

# VOLUNTARY SERVICES

- Based on a philosophy that emphasizes providing information and encouraging choice
- Shelter/housing eligibility is **NOT** contingent upon accessing support services
- Survivor-driven and relationship-based

VOLUNTARY



# HOW TO MAKE A SUPPORTED REFERRAL?

- Support the survivor in making informed decisions by exploring all of the options available
- Encourage rather than require participation with a DV/SA agency; let them know what that might look like
- Offer to facilitate making a connection
- Check in with survivor consistently about their experience
- Advocate for the survivor when needed
- Be proactive and reach out to our agencies. Actively seek information and ask questions.

# HOW TO WORK TOGETHER?

- Educate yourself about DV/SA and let survivors know that you can help them connect
  - Required for CoCs in providing safe access for DV/SA survivors to housing/homeless resources
  - Free trainings and webinars available in many counties and online
- Know your community resources & the various systems that impact DV survivors
- Understand confidentiality and information sharing constraints
- Release of Information (ROI)
  - Make sure your ROI is current. Know that a survivor can revoke a signed ROI at any time.
  - Keep in mind that the DV/SA Advocate might not have an ROI signed. In which case they can only speak in general terms.
- Build relationships before you need them...reach out today!

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# QUESTIONS?

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