

# DV HOUSING FIRST: A STATEWIDE EVALUATION IN CALIFORNIA

OCTOBER, 2019

## PREPARED FOR:

Blue Shield of California Foundation  
California Office of Emergency Services  
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence  
And all participating agencies

## PREPARED BY:

Gabriela López-Zerón, PhD  
Kathryn Clements, PhD  
Stephanie Martinez, MA  
Jennifer Strom, MA  
Cris Sullivan, PhD

Michigan State University  
Research Consortium on Gender-based Violence

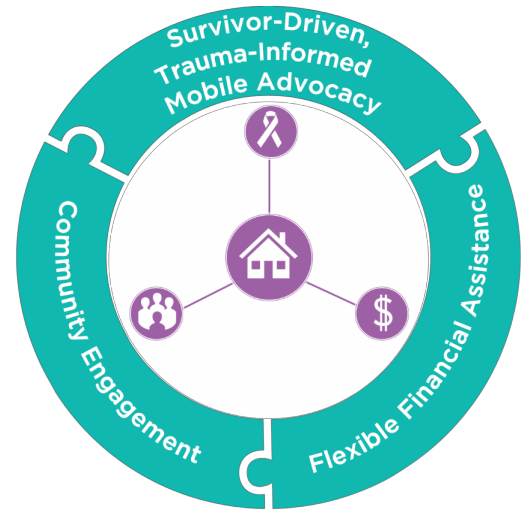


## BACKGROUND

---

The Domestic Violence (DV) Housing First model is designed to promote housing stability, safety, and well-being for survivors and their families. The three main pillars of the model include:

- (1) survivor-driven, trauma-informed, mobile advocacy
- (2) flexible financial assistance
- (3) community engagement



## OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION PROCESS

---

By 2017, the Victim Services and Public Safety Branch of the California Governor's Office for Emergency Services (Cal OES) had funded a total of 33 non-profit agencies across the state to implement the DV Housing First model. All of the agencies had worked with homeless or unstably housed domestic violence survivors; however, some programs had never offered or only partially offered the DV Housing First model in the past, while others had been implementing the model for at least one year.

Although agencies had varying experience with the model, and implemented it somewhat differently, they all used flexible financial assistance to support survivors' housing stability and safety. This statewide evaluation, then, focused on agencies' use of flexible funding to examine how these funds impacted survivors' ability to obtain and sustain stable housing. In addition, because it is important to hear directly from survivors when examining program services and outcomes, the evaluation team distributed a *Client Feedback Survey* that all participating agencies agreed to use to capture survivors' experiences and measure the immediate outcomes of the DV Housing First Program.

This statewide evaluation report covers findings from 19 of the 33 agencies implementing the DV Housing First program who were participating in the:

- (1) systematic tracking of their use **flexible financial assistance**, and
- (2) Use of identical ***Client Feedback Surveys***

# DV HOUSING FIRST STATEWIDE EVALUATION: FLEXIBLE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

In 2017, the Victim Services and Public Safety Branch of the California Governor’s Office for Emergency Services (Cal OES) funded a total of 33 non-profit agencies across the state to implement the DV Housing First model. Of those, 19 agencies participated in a statewide evaluation funded by Blue Shield of California Foundation. Five of these participating agencies were part of the initial eight programs funded to pilot the DV Housing First model in 2016. All of the programs had worked with homeless or unstably housed domestic violence survivors in the past; however, they had not offered this model or had only partially offered it prior to receiving funding from Cal OES.

1. Family Crisis Center – Los Angeles, CA
2. Catalyst DV Services – Chico, CA
3. Community Solutions for Children, Family, and Individuals – Gilroy, CA
4. Contra Costa Family Justice Alliance – Concord, CA
5. Downtown Women’s Center – Los Angeles, CA
6. East Los Angeles Women’s Center – Los Angeles, CA
7. House of Ruth – Pomona, CA
8. Human Services Association – Bell Gardens, CA
9. Korean American Family Services – Los Angeles, CA
10. Lake Family Resource Center – Kelseyville, CA
11. NEWS – Napa, CA
12. Next Door Solutions – San Jose, CA
13. Rainbow Services – San Pedro, CA
14. Ruby’s Place – Hayward, CA
15. SAVE – Fremont, CA
16. South Bay Community Services – Chula Vista, CA
17. WEAVE – Sacramento, CA
18. Wild Iris – Lone Pine, CA
19. WTLC – Fullerton, CA

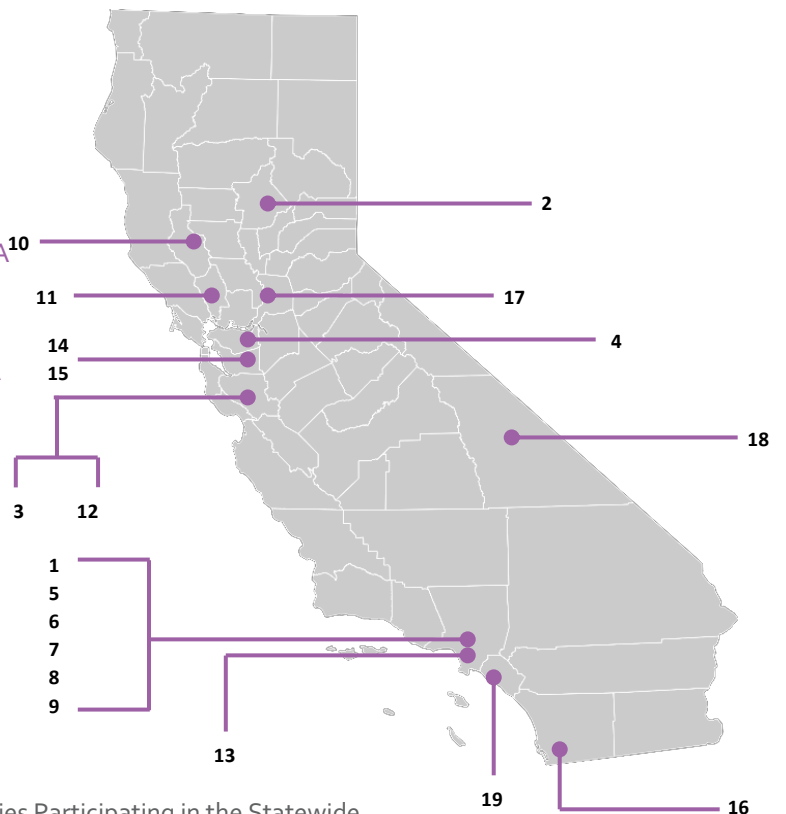
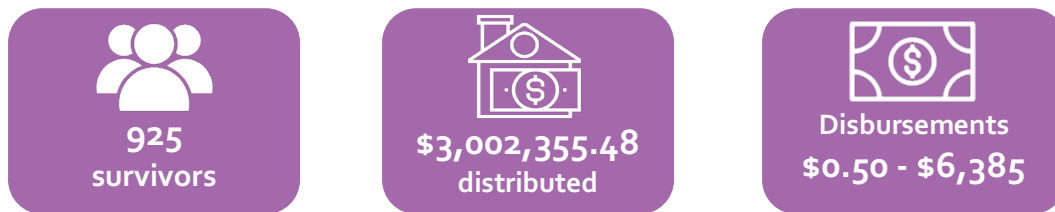


Figure 1. Agencies Participating in the Statewide Evaluation of the DVHF Model

Agencies tracked the distribution of funds to clients through an online spreadsheet provided by the evaluation team. The spreadsheet systematically tracked how much money each client received, what the funds were used for, and how the funds impacted survivors' ability to obtain or maintain stable housing.

Information was recorded between July 2017 and April 2019. As of April 2019, **\$3,002,355.48** in flexible financial assistance had been distributed to **925 survivors and their families**.



Funds disbursed **ranged from \$0.50 to \$6,385**. There were several payments under \$10.00. These smaller payments supported survivors in paying for a wide array of things: food, court parking fees, safety measures (e.g., a post office box and mail forwarding service designed to support survivors' safety), processing fees for utility payments, and bike licensing and registration fees. These payments, while small, can be key to meeting survivors' safety and stability needs. On the other hand, larger amounts are often needed to meet survivors' needs. For example, the payment of \$6,385 supported a survivor in paying for legal fees related to an eviction.

As shown by the variability of payments, the flexibility component of the DV Housing First model is critical to meet survivors' unique needs. A previous evaluation of the DV Housing First model focused on the flexible financial assistance offered through private funding (Mbilyi, 2015). Therefore, a better understanding of California's use of federal VOCA dollars to fund a statewide implementation of the DV Housing First model, where funding was not as flexible as funding provided through private foundations, was essential.

As governmental funding will always be less flexible than private funding, this can have a direct impact on agencies' ability to support survivors' housing stability and well-being. Although California's DV Housing First funded agencies are encouraged to reach out to their contract monitor for inquiries regarding allowable VOCA expenses, there are some clear restrictions on what expenses are not allowed. For instance, mortgage and insurance (rental, car, or other) payments continue to be unallowable expenses. Understanding these restrictions is important as organizations braid private and public funding to best meet the needs of survivors in their communities.

# PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

In addition to tracking how flexible funding was used, agencies also documented basic demographic information about the survivors receiving funds. Almost all survivors who received flexible financial assistance identified as female (97%) and ranged in age from 18 to 65 years old or older, with the majority aged 25-44 years.

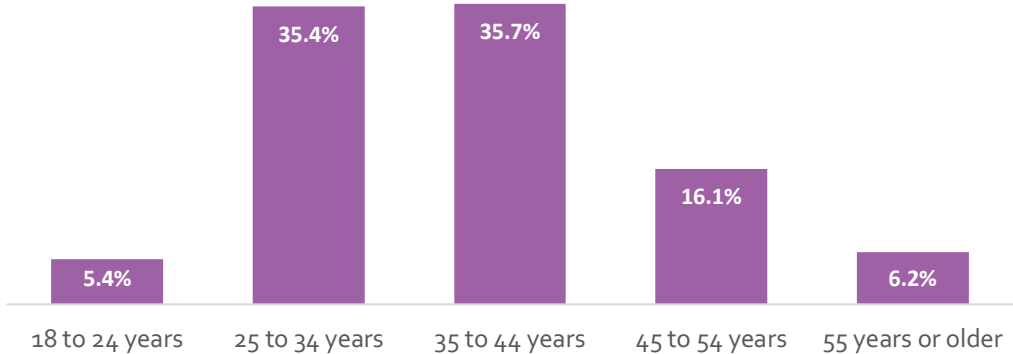


Figure 2. Participants' Age

Half of the survivors identified as Latinx/Hispanic, 21% identified as White, 17% identified as Black/African American, 6.9% as Asian, and fewer than 2% of survivors identified as Native American, Alaskan Native, or Pacific Islander. About 22% of survivors in this sample identified as non- US citizens. <sup>1</sup>

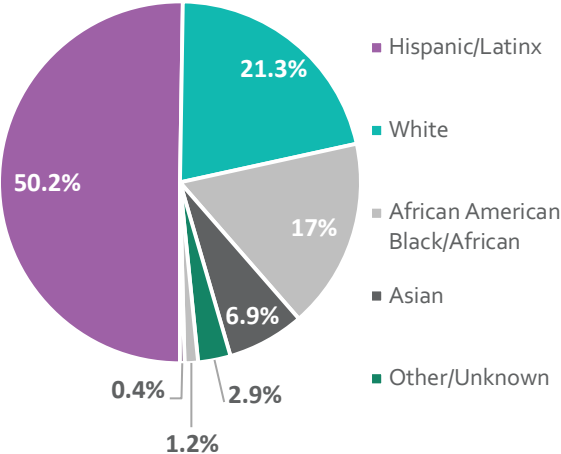


Figure 3. Participants' Race/Ethnicity

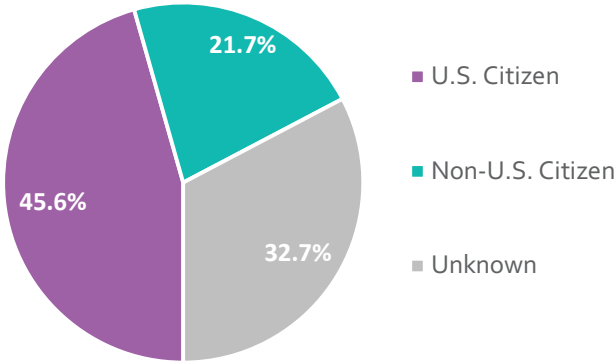


Figure 4. Participants' Immigration Status

<sup>1</sup> Some agencies did not collect immigration status information given potential threat to participants' confidentiality, and some participants did not want to report immigration status information to agencies.

## FLEXIBLE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Advocates across the 19 agencies used flexible funding to meet the unique needs of survivors – from rental assistance and move-in costs to children’s needs and employment assistance. Since July 2017, advocates made **4,010 individual payments** disbursed to **925 survivors and their families**. Table 1 presents how funds were distributed.

Payment Type	Percent of Total	Funds	Number of Payments
Rental Assistance	61.7%	\$1,853,069.27	1856
Move-in Costs	17.1%	\$514,394.51	315
Essential Furnishings	5%	\$151,527.54	200
Transportation	3.5%	\$104,710.51	388
Debt Assistance	2.8%	\$84,624.33	98
Basic Needs	2%	\$59,347.77	389
Utility Assistance	1.7%	\$51,396.84	317
Children’s Needs	1.2%	\$37,513.39	62
Other	1%	\$30,349.57	60
Employment Assistance	0.9%	\$26,350.04	72
Moving Costs	0.8%	\$23,630.47	94
Physical/Mental Health Needs	0.7%	\$20,317.03	55
Relocation Services	0.7%	\$20,216.63	26
Legal Assistance	0.4%	\$12,734.00	19
Documentation Fees	0.3%	\$7,633.11	32
Safety Enhancement Services	0.2%	\$4,540.47	27
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$3,002,355.48</b>	<b>4,010</b>

Table 1. Agency Financial Tracker Use of Funds



DV Housing First funds were used for a **variety of needs** including non-traditional housing costs, such as transportation, basic needs, employment assistance, and legal assistance. **Rental assistance accounted for the largest percentage of payments** (62%) made to survivors, with move-in costs (17%) and essential furnishings (5%) following. Additionally, 3.5% of payments were used for transportation assistance, which included paying for things like gas cards, repairs, and bus/cab rides, while basic needs payments included things like food and home necessities.

*"[Agency] gave me support to cover relocation costs, start budgeting and saving money for emergency, and furnish our living area and manage the rent."*

*– DV Housing First participant*



As of April 2019, of the 925 survivors who received DVHF funds, the majority (71%) received **flexible financial assistance more than once**. Of those, individual survivors received disbursements that ranged from 2 to 36 payments. However, on average, survivors received 4 payments, about **\$3,000 in total**.

*"[Agency] helped me stay in my home, so I could focus on finding employment."*

*– DV Housing First participant*



Among those survivors receiving a one-time disbursement, almost half (46%, 123 survivors) used the financial assistance to **stay in their own home** and likely prevented undesired moves and/or homelessness. 34% of survivors (91) obtained new housing and 20% (54) were still working to get housed. Those considered 'still working to get housed' could be homeless, living in shelter, or transitional housing and may have received additional funding after the completion of the evaluation period.

The **flexibility component** in receiving and distributing DV Housing First flexible funding continues to be instrumental in meeting the diversity of survivors' needs, as illustrated by the following survivor experiences:

#### **Flexible Financial Assistance: Homeless to Housed**

Mariela (not her real name) was homeless when she started working with a non-profit agency in Los Angeles. The agency supported her with DV Housing First flexible financial assistance to pay for move-in costs and first month's rent of her new housing. The following month, she needed financial support for furniture assistance and rental assistance in order to stay in her new home. Due to changing circumstances and need, three months later, Mariela received help with move-in costs for a new home. Due to the flexibility and immediate disbursement of the funds, Mariela and her family avoided moving back into homelessness and were able to move into another home. In total, Mariela received about \$5,000 in five separate payments to support her in her journey toward housing stability.

#### **Flexible Financial Assistance: Stay in Own Home**

Ana (not her real name) was housed and wished to stay in her home. She worked with a non-profit agency in the greater San Francisco area to receive advocacy and financial support to help her stay in her home. Her first four payments were across four months and helped her with utility and rental debt, as well as basic needs for food and gas. This debt assistance helped her catch up with rent. The following month, she received funds to help with her current month's rent. Due to changing circumstances, she received help with rent two months later; and in another two months, she received help with her utilities. She received about \$3,000 over eight separate payments to cover these costs. Due to this support, she was able to avoid any unwanted moves and stay in her home.

*"Housing First purchased my home a security system and put in motion- triggered floodlights on the side, back, and the car port of my home. I felt safer going home after these were installed."*

*– DV Housing First participant*



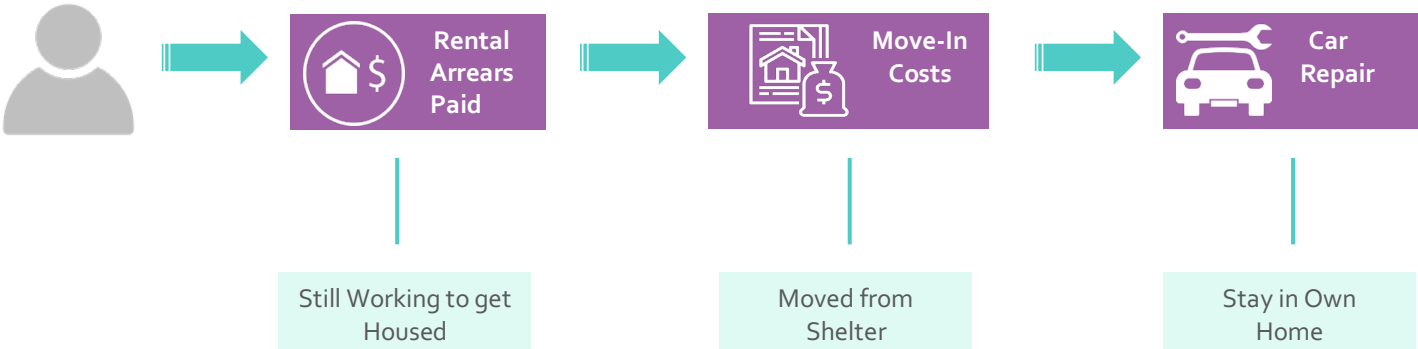
# HOUSING IMPACT

Each of the 19 participating agencies recorded the 'immediate impact' of flexible funding on survivors' housing stability on an online spreadsheet provided by the evaluation team. Agencies could record a housing impact as one of the following:

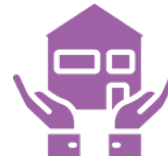


- still working to get housed
- stay in own home
- moved from homelessness to housed
- moved from one home to another
- moved from shelter to housed
- moved from transitional housing to permanent housing

While some funding resulted in a survivor immediately obtaining new housing or staying housed, in other situations, the funding was used to remove a housing barrier (coded as 'still working to get housed'). For example, a survivor living in shelter and looking for a new home for their family might need to pay previous rental debt before being able to secure new housing. An agency might pay rental arrears that were preventing them from renting a new home. This specific disbursement would be recorded as 'still working to get housed,' since paying rental debt is critical to attaining new housing and because the survivor has not moved into new housing yet. Once the survivor applies for housing, she might need financial support to cover application fees and move-in costs. The outcome of these payments would then be recorded as 'moved from shelter to housed'. A few months later, if the survivor's car broke down, the agency might pay for car repairs, so the survivor does not lose her job. This payment would be tracked as helping the survivor and their family 'stay in their own home.'



As a direct result of receiving flexible financial assistance, **540 (58%) survivors used funds to prevent homelessness.** The vast majority of these payments were used to help survivors stay in their own home or move from one home to another, so survivors never became homeless at any time. Survivors used their flexible financial assistance for a wide range of expenses, including rental and utility arrears, transportation needs, and rental assistance. Homelessness prevention not only allows families to avoid entering into the homelessness system, but survivors and their children are able to secure housing stability and focus on their overall safety, well-being, and their journey forward.



**58%**  
Prevented  
Homelessness



**46%**  
Stayed in Their  
Homes

Of the 540 survivors who avoided homelessness, DV Housing First flexible funding helped **425 survivors stay in their own homes.** These survivors and their children were able to remain stably housed and avoid homelessness or any other unwanted moves with use of these funds. Given California's housing crisis, including a severe shortage of affordable housing and increasing housing costs, financial assistance that gives survivors the option to stay in their current home while minimizing the risk of becoming homeless is critical (Taylor, 2015).

Further, **367 (40%) survivors were able to obtain new housing.** Most survivors and their families moved out of homelessness, while others moved from one home to another, or from transitional housing into a new, safe, stable home. Survivors often needed further assistance after moving to a new home in order to maintain their new housing. Of the 367 families who moved to a new home, 75% needed at least one more disbursement of financial assistance to maintain their housing stability.



**40%**  
Obtained  
New Housing

Over the course of the evaluation period, 1.5% (14 survivors) became homeless at some point during their journey towards housing stability, and as of April 2019, 138 survivors and their families (15%) were still looking for safe and stable housing.

*"I was on the verge of becoming homeless. Thanks to the [DVHF] program, I am able to keep a roof over my children's heads."*

– DV Housing First participant

## CONCLUSION

---

A critical component of the DV Housing First model is being able to provide flexible financial assistance to support survivors and their unique and diverse needs in order to help them obtain or maintain housing. These findings demonstrate that the use of flexible funding can have a profound impact on survivors' immediate and long-term housing stability.

While California's use of VOCA funding to implement the DV Housing First is innovative, governmental funding remains less flexible than private funding, and this proved difficult for some agencies. Further, since the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime had only recently begun allowing VOCA funds to be used for housing needs, there was uncertainty at the local and state level about which costs would be reimbursable. Over time, organizations implementing DV Housing First in California have gained increasing clarity regarding what expenses are permitted. This has allowed advocates to use funding more flexibly and creatively toward essential, yet non-traditional housing costs.

To illustrate, the importance of knowing how funds can and cannot be spent, the DV Housing First agencies that participated in a recent process evaluation reported not having a guide to help determine what were allowable expenses. Therefore, agencies used the vast majority of their funding (85%) on rental assistance. In contrast, agencies in the current evaluation received a guide of allowable expenses that helped clarify how DV Housing First funding could be used. Although rental assistance continued to be an important way of supporting survivors' housing stability, agencies dedicated only 62% of the total funding toward rental assistance, using the rest of the funding on a wide range of expenses, including employment assistance, furniture, and car repairs.

The flexibility and clarity of this funding is key because it allows advocates to remain survivor-centered in their advocacy approach and provide as much funding and as many times as needed. This is an important approach to meeting survivors' unique and individual needs in their journey toward housing stability, safety, and healing.

*"They helped me with my deposit, furniture, and beds, living room set, dinner set, and dressers. They help me with diapers and clothing for my 1-year old. We have not had any of these items in years."*

*– DV Housing First participant*

# DV HOUSING FIRST STATEWIDE EVALUATION: CLIENT FEEDBACK ABOUT THE MODEL

---

As part of the statewide evaluation of the DV Housing First model, the 19 non-profit agencies participating in the systematic tracking of their use of flexible financial assistance also used identical anonymous *Client Feedback Surveys* to capture survivors' experiences and measure the immediate outcomes of the DV Housing First Program.

The *Client Feedback Survey* was developed during the 2017 DV Housing First Process Evaluation. The evaluation team asked participating agencies to share with them any surveys that had been used to gather feedback from clients. A draft survey was created using questions from these surveys and presented at a roundtable with all agencies. At that time, one of the programs participating in the process evaluation shared a feedback survey they had been successfully using in English and Spanish. The survey included most of the items needed to evaluate whether the core components of the DV Housing First model had been met and captured the experiences of survivors as a result of their participation in the program. Therefore, the evaluation team made minor changes to the survey and all agencies agreed to pilot the survey for a few months. The data was analyzed and presented to representatives from each agency. The findings suggested that these surveys captured meaningful, useful information about the DV Housing First program, so they were used during the statewide evaluation.

Since the *Client Feedback Survey* had been successfully piloted in Spanish and English, the evaluation team provided the survey in both languages to all organizations participating in the current evaluation. Additionally, Korean Family Services, an organization that predominately serves Korean survivors, led the translation of the survey into Korean to ensure that Korean-speaking clients had the opportunity to provide feedback in their preferred language.

# EVALUATION PROCESS

---

The evaluation team offered a training webinar to introduce staff to the *Client Feedback Surveys*, after which the evaluators scheduled individual phone or video calls with each agency to have a more in-depth discussion on how agencies were planning to distribute, collect, and return the surveys. Most agencies decided to have one staff member, who did not provide direct services (e.g., administrative assistant, intern, or volunteer), distribute and collect the surveys. Some agencies provided the survey with a pre-addressed envelope to the agency. Other agencies offered their clients a quiet, private space to fill out the surveys and had a sealed envelope or locked box near the front desk for clients to return the survey. Once collected, the designated staff member at each agency either mailed the completed surveys or periodically scanned and sent the surveys to the evaluation team via a password protected cloud-based storage folder.

# PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

---

Between July 2018 and March 2019, **273 Client Feedback Surveys** were completed by 19 participating agencies and returned to the evaluation team. The majority of the participants (97%) identified as female. 51% of participants were between the ages of 30 and 44, 22% were between 18 and 29 years old, and 27% were 45 years old or older.

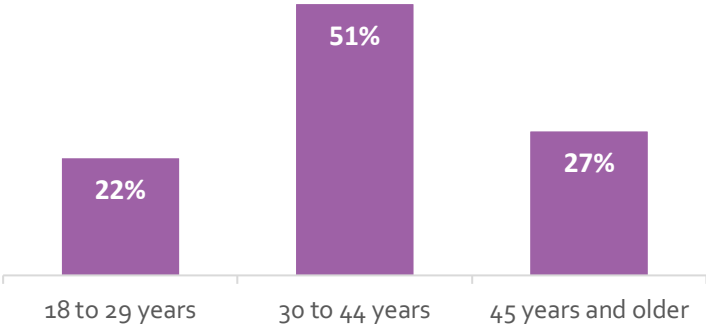
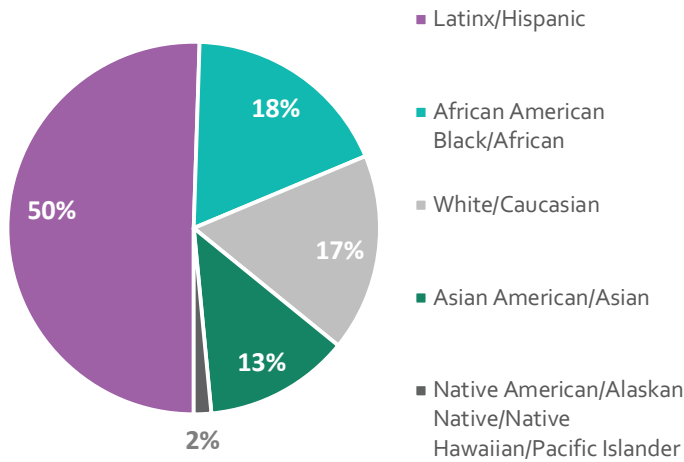


Figure 5. Participants' age



Exactly half the participants identified as Latinx/Hispanic, and most of the remaining participants identified either as African American (18%), White (17%), or Asian/Asian American (13%).

Figure 6. Participants' race/ethnicity

When the survey was administered, 51% of the participants had been working with a DV Housing First advocate for three to six months, 28% had been in the program for seven to twelve months, and the rest had been receiving services for less than three months.

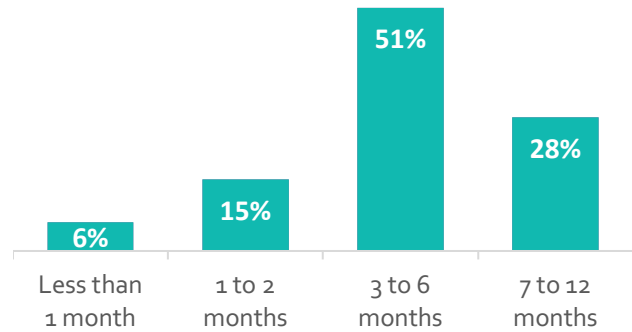


Figure 7. Length of time working with a DV Housing First advocate

Of the 273 surveys returned, 59% were in English, 29% in Spanish, and 12% in Korean. The number of surveys submitted varied widely between the agencies, likely due to the size of the organization and the number of clients available to participate. However, on average, each participating agency returned 14 *Client Feedback Surveys*.

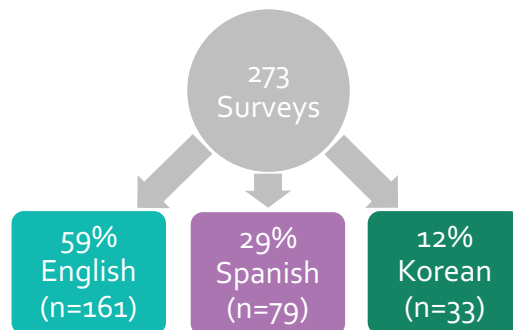


Figure 8. Percent and number of *Client Feedback Surveys* in each language

# SURVEY FINDINGS



## Support from Advocate

Clients were asked about the support they received from DV Housing First advocates while they were receiving services. On a four-point scale from 'not at all' to 'very much,' the vast majority of participants reported **feeling very supported** by their advocate and feeling that their advocate was very **focused on their strengths** (95%). The majority of participants also felt their advocate was **flexible about where they met** (92%) and helped them reach their short-term **housing goals** (90%).

Support from Advocate				
Question	Not at All	A Little	Somewhat	Very Much
I felt supported by my advocate n=273	0%	1%	4%	95%
My advocate focused on my strengths n=269	0%	1%	4%	95%
My advocate was flexible with meeting location (came to me): home, work, etc.... n= 269	1.5%	0.5%	6%	92%
My advocate helped me reach my short-term housing goals n=267	1%	2%	7%	90%
My advocate referred me to other community resources n=267	1%	2%	8%	89%
My advocate did safety planning with me n=267	2%	2%	9%	87%
My advocate went with me to other agencies or services n=255	13%	4%	12%	71%

Survivors overwhelmingly expressed their gratitude for being met with **compassion and dignity** when seeking services, as one English-speaking survivor described:

*"This is my first time in 51 years ever needing assistance and support of any kind. Topics such as any type of abuse can be humiliating to admit to oneself, let alone air the information to a total stranger. Both advocates were excellent listeners, resourceful, generous, and compassionate. I can't thank them or the program enough and I look forward to volunteering there 2 years after I am discharged!"*

– DV Housing First participant



## Personal Strengths and Skills

Survivors were also asked if they felt that their advocates helped them gain strengths and skills while receiving DV Housing First services. The majority of participants (85%) reported feeling they “very much” had more **ways to plan for their safety** because of their work with their advocate. Further, 83% felt they were very aware that the abuse and control their partner used was not their fault.

Personal Strengths and Skills				
Question	Not at All	A Little	Somewhat	Very Much
I have more ways to plan for my safety n=268	0.5%	4.5%	10%	85%
I know the abuse and control my partner used was not my fault n=263	3%	3%	11%	83%
I was able to work on my well-being and overall health n=267	1%	3%	14%	82%
I have a greater understanding of the financial power and control my partner used/uses in our relationship n=259	4%	5%	10%	81%
I am aware of the other services the agency provides...support groups, hotline, legal, etc.... n=267	1%	5%	13%	81%
I feel more hopeful about the future n=272	1%	4%	15%	80%
I am better able to reach my goals n=271	1%	4%	18%	77%
I know more about community and/or social resources I may need n=268	1%	7%	16%	76%
I have more supports in my community n=265	2%	8%	19%	71%
I know about the community resources I might need n=227	1%	6%	22%	71%
I am financially more stable n=262	4%	13%	24%	59%

Participants also indicated that they felt **more connected to community resources** as a result of their involvement in the DV Housing First program.

*“The DV Housing First program] helped me have a solid financial housing plan to ensure I can save to be able to pay my rent on time every month for the remaining of my lease.”*

*– DV Housing First participant*



76% of participants indicated that they had a much better understanding of the **resources available** to them in their communities. Additionally, over half of participants (59%) felt very strongly that they were **more financially stable** than before receiving services. As one survivor mentioned, receiving tailored advocacy was essential to feeling more financially stable and maintaining her housing.



### Housing Stability and Safety

The central aim of the DV Housing First model is to support survivors in obtaining safe and stable housing. 88% of participants indicated they were able to **remain in their home or obtain safe housing**, and 85% shared that they felt they were much better able to **plan for their safety** as a result of their involvement in the DV Housing First program. As one participant mentioned:

*"Housing first helped me move into a new apartment. My ex continued to abuse me and break into my home demanding entry. Now, he has no knowledge of where I live. And my son and I are SAFE."*

*– DV Housing First participant*

Housing Stability				
Question	Not at All	A Little	Somewhat	Very Much
I was able to either remain in my home or secure safe housing (Other than shelter or transitional housing) n=260	1%	1%	10%	88%
I know more about how to budget to help me stay housed n=265	2%	4%	14%	80%

Similarly, 80% of participants shared that they are **better able to budget** to help maintain their housing. For participants, this can be a **life changing experience**, as one Spanish-speaking participant shared:

*"Gracias a este programa pude teniendo un lugar para vivir; yo y mis 2 hijos; Gracias a este programa pude solventar otros gastos que no estaban en mis planes. gracias a este programa pude sobrevivir a todo. Y me enseñaron a llevar y administrar más mi dinero."*

*(Thanks to this program I have a place to live for me and my two kids. Thanks to this program I have settled other costs that were not in my plans. Thanks to this program I have been able to survive everything. They have also taught me to carry and manage my money better.)*

*– Spanish-speaking DV Housing First participant*

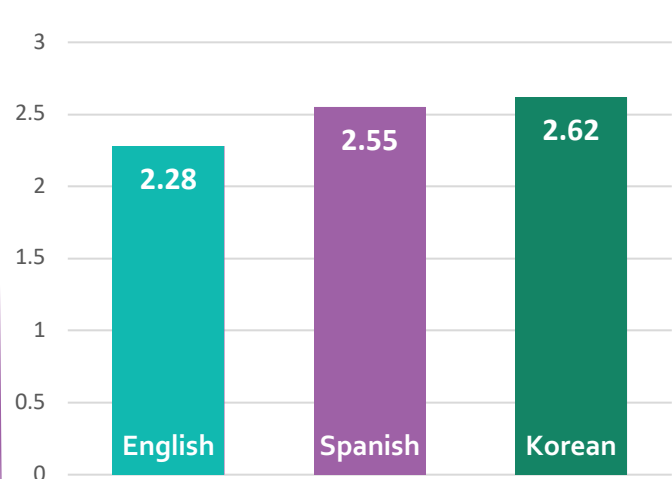


## Culturally Specific Results

Although the majority of survivors expressed feeling extremely satisfied with the services they received and the skills they gained as a result of their participation in the DV Housing First program, there was a noteworthy difference between English-speaking, Spanish-speaking, and Korean-speaking participants.

Spanish- and Korean-speaking participants indicated that their **advocate accompanied them to other agencies or services** at a higher rate than did English-speaking participants. It is clear that agencies working with survivors who have limited English proficiency were able to effectively help them navigate multiple systems.

This survivor-centered approach is critical when providing culturally and contextually relevant advocacy services to immigrant survivors, particularly in the current sociopolitical climate where anti-immigration rhetoric and policies are on the rise.



**Figure 9.** Average agreement with the statement “My advocate went with me to other agencies and services” by language. Responses could range from 0 (not at all) to 3 (very much).

*“[Me ayudaron] hablando por teléfono, acudiendo a citas, llenando formularios y aplicaciones...Realmente son muy buenos en lo que hacen. Dios les bendiga!”*

*(They helped me with talking on the phone, coming to meetings, filling out forms and applications...They are truly very good at what they do. God bless them!)*

*–Spanish speaking DV Housing First participant*

*“내가 진정으로 감사하는 직원들을 지원합니다. 그들이 그렇게 도움되는 법적,정서적,금융,산업 및육”*

*(I truly appreciate the staff and their support. They’ve been so helpful with legal, emotional, financial, occupational, and childcare.)*

*–Korean speaking DV Housing First participant*



### Participants' Continuing Goals

The majority of survey respondents were still receiving DV Housing First services when they completed the survey and reported they were hoping to continue receiving advocacy and financial assistance. Participants' reported needs that ranged from transportation issues (e.g., car payments, repairs) to housing stability concerns (e.g., rental and utility arrears, finding housing, move-in costs).



### Participant Suggestions

Although results from the *Client Feedback Survey* were quite positive, participants shared some thoughts on how agencies could improve the DV Housing First program.

The majority of survivors mentioned the need to find more affordable housing in their communities. Participants suggested increasing the number of advocates in each agency to better provide a wider range of services for clients. Participants also reported needing more help with employment, immigration, and legal issues.

#### Other Participant Suggestions

- ✓ Provide a full list of services offered by agency
- ✓ Offer more legal advocacy
- ✓ Create a housing list for seniors
- ✓ Offer counseling for children
- ✓ Provide childcare assistance for children with special needs

## CONCLUSION

---

The results from the *Client Feedback Survey* demonstrate overwhelmingly positive outcomes for the DV Housing First model. The majority of survivors reported that they were able to find or remain in safe housing and were able to gain and reinforce skills that promoted their housing stability and safety. Many survivors shared the multiple and unique challenges they faced as they engaged in their **healing journey**. Advocates' compassionate, unwavering support, and their use of flexible financial assistance was crucial for survivors to obtain safe and stable housing, improve their financial and employment situation, and promote the wellbeing of their whole family. As one participant shared:



*"I wanted to pursue my education from the university, which is very expensive. And I could not afford a car because I have a bad credit report as I have unpaid medical bill debt that my abusive partner refused to pay for me. I am a cancer survivor and I have a special needs adult son. It is very tough getting by financially, that I sometimes felt it may be better to tolerate the abuse than to suffer financially. But I am grateful to the workers in [agency] who helped me a lot. Particularly I would like to thank [advocate] who helped me a lot finding a safe house to live in for me and my children. She is an inspiration for me, and many other women like me. She is very kind and caring and understanding. She will make you feel that you did the right thing and she is always there for us. I also like to thank the donors who fund [agency] - **your every dollar counts to giving a new hope, safe place, and a second chance to grow up as a human with human dignity.** Imagine your dollar going to uplift the life of women who otherwise live in unsafe houses, where they lead [the] life of a caged bird."*

*– DV Housing First participant*

---

This report includes a review of DV Housing First funds used until the end of this evaluation tracking period (April 2019). Each agency participating in this statewide evaluation is continuing to receive flexible funding and technical assistance through the end of 2019.

## REFERENCES

---

- Black, D.S., Sussman, S., & Unger, J.B. (2010). A further look at the intergenerational transmission of violence: Witnessing interparental violence in emerging adulthood. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 25*(6), 1022 – 1042. doi:10.1177/0886260509340539
- Cutuli, J.J., Montgomery, A.E., Evans-Chase, M., & Culhane, D.P. (2017). Childhood adversity, adult homelessness and the intergenerational transmission of risk: A population-representative study of individuals in households with children. *Child and Family Social Work, 22*(1), 116 – 125. doi:10.1111/cfs.12207
- Mbilinyi, L. (2015). The Washington State Domestic Violence Housing First program: Cohort 2 final evaluation report. Seattle, WA: Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Retrieved May 20, 2016 from [http://wscadv.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/DVHF\\_FinalEvaluation.pdf](http://wscadv.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/DVHF_FinalEvaluation.pdf)
- Rollins, C., Glass, N.E., Perrin, N.A., Billhardt, K.A., Clough, A., Barnes, J., Hanson, G.C., & Bloom, T.L. (2012). Housing instability is a strong predictor of poor health outcomes as level of danger in an abusive relationship: Findings from the SHARE study. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 27*(4), 623-643. doi:10.1177/0886260511423241
- Sullivan, C.M., Bomsta, H.D., & HacsKaylo, M.A. (2019). Evidence that flexible funding is a promising strategy to prevent homelessness for survivors of intimate partner violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 34*(14), 3017 – 3033. doi:10.1177/0886260516664318
- Sullivan, C.M. & Bybee, D.I. (1999). Reducing violence using community-based advocacy for women with abusive partners. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 67*(1), 45-53. doi:10.1037/0022-006X.67.1.43
- Sullivan, C.M. & Olsen, L. (2016). Common ground, complementary approaches: Adapting the Housing First model for domestic violence survivors. *Housing and Society, 43*(3), 182-194.
- Taylor, M. (2015). *California's high housing costs: Causes and consequences*. Retrieved from Legislative Analyst Office website: <https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2015/finance/housing-costs/housing-costs.pdf>

## FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGMENT

---



Blue Shield of California Foundation is an independent licensee of the Blue Shield Association

This report was funded by Blue Shield of California Foundation. The Foundation is committed to building lasting and equitable solutions that make California the healthiest state and end domestic violence.