

# DVHTAC Special Series on Coordinated Entry:

## Determining Housing Needs for DV/SV Survivors: A Decision Tree as an Alternative to a Score Sheet

**August 20, 2020**

### Presenters

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# DV & Housing TA Consortium (DVHTAC)

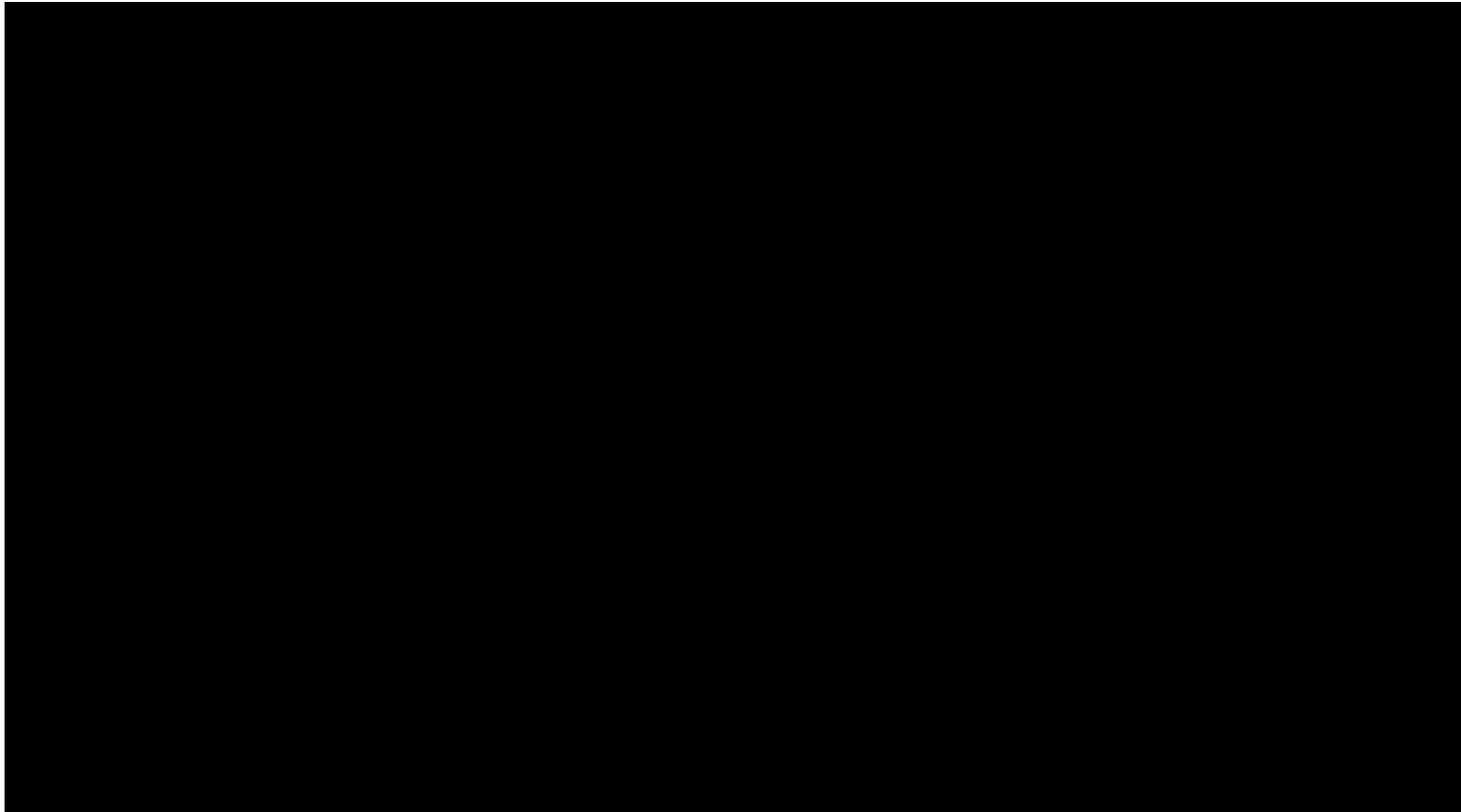
## Federal Partners

- 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

## Technical Assistance Providers

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

# The Intersections Between Domestic & Sexual Violence, Racism and Homelessness



# Making an Intentional Shift

- HUD: Advancing Racial Equity through Assessments & Prioritization (8/11/20)
  - Communities should review prioritization policies & modify coordinated entry (CE) systems
  - Disparities experienced by BIPOC & LGBTQ populations
  - Intended goal of CE: Ensuring the most vulnerable are prioritized
- Convergence & disparate impact of numerous public health crises
  - COVID-19, systemic racism, domestic & sexual violence, poverty & homelessness
  - CE processes exacerbate inequities & fail to prioritize survivors
  - Many communities dissatisfied with VI-SPDAT, want new scoring tool
- Bold moves toward increasing equity
  - Part of a larger, deliberate shift in policies, practices & approach to CE

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**RESEARCH CONSORTIUM**  
ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

**Assessing for and  
Appropriately Responding to  
the Housing Needs of  
Domestic Violence and  
Sexual Assault Survivors:**

**A Decision Tree as an  
Alternative to a Scoresheet**

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August 2020

# Acknowledgments & Disclaimer



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## Prioritizing People into Housing

- HUD requires CoCs to utilize a Coordinated Entry (CE) system in order to **prioritize homeless** people into limited housing options
- The system is intended to provide people with **fair and equal access to housing**, while also prioritizing the needs of the most vulnerable individuals and families
- While the idea behind prioritizing is laudable and was designed to minimize practices based on favoritism or prejudice, communities continue to struggle with how to **equitably and fairly implement CE**
- The most frequently used screening tool is the VI-SPDAT or one of its iterations



## Critiques of the VI-SPDAT

- ▶ The VI-SPDAT was created to assess the vulnerabilities of chronically homeless individuals who are experiencing severe mental illness and/or substance abuse, and **does not tend to prioritize domestic violence (DV) survivors into housing options other than DV shelters**
- ▶ An empirical study has now found that the VI-SPDAT lacks validity and reliability (McCauley & Reid, 2020)
- ▶ It also may result in racial bias in prioritization (Building Changes, 2019)



## Prioritizing People into Housing

- ▶ People want a brief and easy-to-use scoring tool that reliably ranks people's vulnerabilities and documents their preferences and needs
- ▶ Overly simple solutions, however, are rarely the answer to complicated problems
- ▶ We propose that the most promising solution lies in having **brief but focused conversations** with survivors that cover the topics most relevant to choosing strategies likely to lead to safe and stable housing



## Prioritizing Survivors with Similar Housing Needs and Preferences

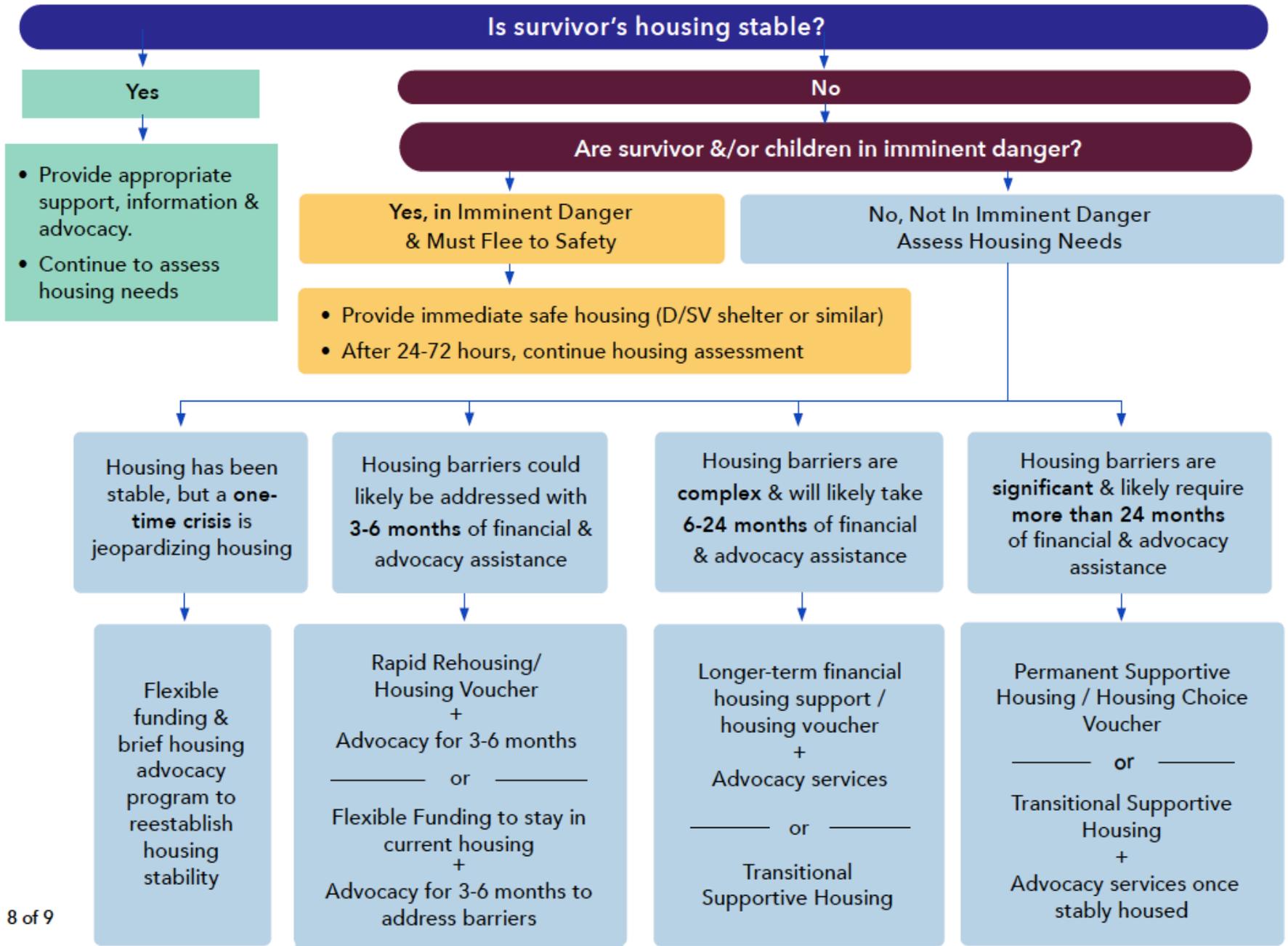
- ▶ In many communities across the country, the need for housing (including DV shelters and transitional housing) far exceeds the supply
- ▶ Agencies are faced with the difficult decision of deciding who to give one housing unit or one housing voucher to among multiple, similarly disadvantaged individuals and families
- ▶ How to fairly do this is controversial
- ▶ We suggest that the fairest way to make this decision is “first come, first served.”



# Housing Prioritization Decision Tree

- ▶ We have created a **Decision Tree** that involves asking about the following issues:
  1. Safety *as it relates to housing*
  2. How stably or unstably housed the person has been in the last 6-12 months
  3. The issues they have going on that could prevent them from accessing/maintaining safe and stable housing now and into the future

# Assessing for and Appropriately Responding to the Housing Needs of Survivors





## Key Questions and Phrases

**Accurately and effectively assessing needs through targeted conversations requires strong communication skills that involve:**

- ▶ Active listening
- ▶ Demonstrating empathy
- ▶ Redirecting conversation
- ▶ Providing options
- ▶ Negotiating options



# Key Questions and Phrases

## Active Listening:

- ▶ “What I’m hearing you say is...”
- ▶ “So, it sounds important to you that...”
- ▶ “It sounds like you’d like to prioritize...”



## Key Questions and Phrases

### Demonstrating Empathy:

- ▶ “I’m so sorry this is happening to you...”
- ▶ “I know this is extremely difficult for you...”
- ▶ “Everyone is different and has their own issues and concerns. Some people have criminal records, or are dealing with drugs or alcohol, or have family issues that impact their safety and housing...I want you to feel like you can talk to me and tell me what is going on for you that would help me help you get safely and stably housed.”



## Key Questions and Phrases

### Redirecting Conversation:

- ▶ “I know that’s a really important concern of yours and I’d like to come back to it, but right now I’d like to make sure we’re focused on getting you into housing. Is it okay if we go back to....?”
- ▶ “Mmhmm, okay....and can I now ask you about...?”



# Key Questions and Phrases

## Providing Options:

- ▶ “Let me tell you about the different options we may have to choose from and then we can figure out together what might be best.”
- ▶ “Many people assume they have to leave their homes in order to be safe, but we may be able to help pay for some things that would allow you to stay in your home, if you’d like to consider that...”



# Key Questions and Phrases

## Negotiating Options:

- ▶ “I really wish we had a housing voucher to give you. Since we don’t, what do you think about...?”
- ▶ “The shelter is full right now, but I might be able to locate a hotel voucher. Do you think that would be a good immediate option right now? Do you have a family member or friend that would be a better option?”



**Questions? Comments?**

# Presenters' Contact Information

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# Consortium COVID-19 Resources

- **Safe Housing Partnerships:**

<https://safehousingpartnerships.org/news/>

- **NASH:** [DV and Housing-Related Coronavirus Resources](#)

- **NNEDV:** [COVID-19: Coalition Guidance for Programs by the National Network to End Domestic Violence](#)

- **NRCDV:** [Preventing & Managing the Spread of COVID-19 Within Domestic Violence Programs](#)

- **NSVRC:** [Resources for COVID-19 Response](#)

- **CSI:** [HUD and DV Resources -COVID-19](#)

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