

Assessing for and Appropriately Responding to the Housing Needs of Survivors (Sullivan & López-Zerón, 2020)



It is understandable, given the high rates of homelessness as well as domestic and sexual violence in this country, that agencies and communities would welcome 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.

Part of a Special Series on Coordinated Entry & Domestic/Sexual Violence published by the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRCDV) as part of the Domestic Violence & Housing Technical Assistance Consortium (DVHTAC), **Michigan State University authors Cris Sullivan, Ph.D. and Gabriela López-Zerón, Ph.D. recommend an alternative approach to assessing vulnerabilities and matching to housing resources** (see [Assessing for & Appropriately Responding to the Housing Needs of Domestic & Sexual Violence Survivors: A Decision Tree as an Alternative to a Scoresheet](#)).

In this paper, Sullivan & López-Zerón suggest that focused conversations that get at issues directly related to housing stability and safety are a more effective and nuanced way to assess the complexities of each person's situation and needs. A conversation focused specifically on housing needs must cover the following topics: (i) Safety concerns as they relate to housing; (ii) How stably or unstably housed the person has been in the last 6-12 months; and (iii) What issues they have going on that could prevent them from accessing/maintaining safe and stable housing now and into the future.

The next page provides a flow chart that illustrates the process of Assessing for and Appropriately Responding to the Housing Needs of Survivors. This depicts a recommended approach to assessment, which is not intended to be a rigid model. Communities employing this approach should not attempt to apply numerical scoring to this tool, as that would be contrary to the approach proffered in this paper. **Those who are interested in learning more or adopting this approach should refer to the original paper** ([Assessing for & Appropriately Responding to the Housing Needs of Domestic & Sexual Violence Survivors: A Decision Tree as an Alternative to a Scoresheet](#)).

You may also contact the [Domestic Violence & Housing Technical Assistance Consortium \(DVHTAC\)](#) for further information, training or technical assistance on coordinated entry assessments.

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