



# The Intersection of Domestic & Sexual Violence and Homelessness

Presented by

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# National Alliance for Safe Housing (NASH)

- A project of the District Alliance for Safe Housing (DASH – a local safe housing program in D.C.)
- A national Technical Assistance and Training project (launched October 2015)
- Project Partners: Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- Part of the federal Domestic Violence and Housing Technical Assistance Consortium (DVHTAC)



# NASH

NASH provides programs and communities with the tools, strategies and support necessary to improve coordination between domestic and sexual violence services and homeless and housing providers, so that survivors and their children can ultimately avoid homelessness as the only means of living free from abuse.



# NASH

System and Program Level Technical Assistance issues include but not limited to:

- Coordinated Entry
- Building collaborative relationships
- Trauma-informed practice
- Rapid Re-housing, Housing First, Flexible Funds
- Federal, state and local housing protections



# DVHTAC

- Launched in 2015, the Consortium provides training, technical assistance, and resource development at the critical intersection between domestic violence/sexual assault services and homeless services/housing
- Funded and supported by a partnership between the Department of Justice (OVC and OVC), the Department of Housing and Urban Development (SNAPS) and the Department of Health and Human Services (FVPSA) it also brings together four national organizations
- Consortium TA Team: the National Alliance for Safe Housing (project of DASH), the National Network to End Domestic Violence, the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, and Collaborative Solutions, Inc.
- The Consortium TA Team builds and provides technical assistance to both housing/homelessness providers and domestic violence/sexual assault service providers.



# Webinar Series to Support DV/SA Safe Housing Options for FY17 CoC Program Competition

<p>Developing Well-Designed Safe Housing Projects: A Review of the Continuum of Care and Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) Process  <b>May 30 ~ 12:00pm ET</b></p>	<p>A Primer on the NOFA Application: Review of the FY17 Application, HUD Priorities, and Funding Opportunities for DV/SA Projects  <b>TBA (1 week after NOFA release)</b></p>
<p>Rapid Re-Housing/Housing First: Innovative Practices  <b>June 2 ~ 3:00pm ET</b></p>	<p>Survivor Safety and Coordinated Entry Systems  <b>June 5 ~ 2:30pm ET</b></p>
<p>DV, Housing and Homelessness 101: An Overview  <b>June 7 ~ 3:00pm ET</b></p>	
<p><b>Accompanying Webinars from NAEH:</b></p>	
<p>Preparing for the 2017 CoC Program NOFA  <b>May 31 ~ 2:00pm ET</b></p>	<p>What is the Transitional Housing-Rapid Re-Housing Joint Component?  <b>June 15 ~ 2:00pm ET</b></p>

*Webinars to be recorded and made available online. A link will be circulated once the recordings are posted.*

# SAFE HOUSING PARTNERSHIPS

The new website for the Domestic Violence and Housing Technical Assistance Consortium

UNDERSTANDING THE INTERSECTIONS

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

EMPLOYING KEY APPROACHES

PUBLIC POLICIES

- Data, infographics, literature reviews, and reports that describe the intersections between domestic violence, sexual assault, homelessness, and housing
- Strategies for building effective and sustainable partnerships across systems and case studies of successful collaborations
- In-depth resource collections organized around four key approaches to addressing and preventing housing instability among survivors
- Access to relevant federal laws, regulations, and policies

Have questions? Need TA? Want training?  
Contact the Consortium directly through the site!  
[Safehousingpartnerships.org](https://Safehousingpartnerships.org)



SAFE HOUSING  
PARTNERSHIPS

# The Intersection of Domestic & Sexual Violence and Homelessness Webinar

## Learning Objectives

- Understand the specific barriers survivors face to accessing and maintaining safe housing
- Explore the myriad responses to survivors' safe housing needs ranging from legal protections, innovative housing program models, and partnerships across the homeless and victim service sectors
- Understand the role of the homeless service system and opportunities for partnerships between victim service providers and homeless service providers
- Share capacity building tools, trainings and resources for homeless/housing and victim advocates available through NASH and the DVHTAC





# Agenda

- I. The intersection of domestic & sexual violence and homelessness
- II. Barriers to accessing housing for survivors
- III. Barriers to maintaining housing for survivors
- IV. Evolving advocacy responses
- V. Innovative models to safe housing

\*There will be an opportunity for questions via chat box after each section\*



# POLL

## Who is our audience?

- A. Homeless organization
- B. Domestic Violence organization
- C. Sexual Assault organization
- D. Federal agency
- E. National organization



# POLL

**Is your organization part of the  
Continuum of Care (CoC)?**

**Yes/No**



# Common Language

**Homelessness** is the extreme end of a continuum of housing instability. The Federal government considers individuals and families experiencing homelessness to be those who are literally homeless or living somewhere not meant for human habitation; those at imminent risk of homelessness, including those fleeing domestic violence; those who are living in emergency shelters and transitional housing; and, to an extent, those who are living in doubled up situations.

**Sexual Violence (SV)** is any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient. Falling under the definition of sexual assault are sexual activities as forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, child molestation, incest, fondling, and attempted rape.

**Domestic Violence (DV)** is a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person.

**Safe Housing** is housing which ensures survivors access to the means to be safe and self-determining.

**Continuum of Care (CoC)** is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals.



# **I. The Intersection of Domestic and Sexual Violence & Homelessness**



# A Complex Entanglement: DV, SV & Homelessness

- For survivors, housing is a huge consideration in decision-making
- Escaping DV may mean losing housing and income, or inability to sustain housing if abuser leaves
- 50% of sexual assaults take place within a mile of the victim's home, leaving survivors in danger of re-encountering their assailants
- Sexual violence can severely disrupt survivors' lives and increase likelihood of job loss and homelessness
- Many survivors stay in abusive situations in order to remain housed – especially when there are children



# The Intersection of DV, SV & Homelessness

- Past experience with DV and/or SV can significantly contribute to chronic homelessness
- 92% of homeless women have experienced severe physical or sexual abuse in their lives
- DV is a leading cause of homelessness for women and children (over 40% of family homelessness)
- Homeless women may seek the perceived safety of a new partner and become the victim of coercive control



# Understanding Homeless Service Systems

While experiences of domestic violence are pervasive among those who have are experiencing homelessness, homeless service systems are not designed to meet all of the needs of survivors of domestic violence, but instead designed to offer immediate shelter and, ideally, swift connections to permanent housing.





# Understanding Homeless Service Systems

- Federal partners have outlined a vision of a systemic response to homelessness in the *Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness*:

***No one should experience homelessness—no one should be without a safe, stable place to call home.***

- Themes of the Federal Strategic Plan:
  - Increase leadership, collaboration, and civic engagement
  - Increase access to stable and affordable housing
  - Increase economic security
  - Improve health and stability
  - Retool the homeless crisis response system



# Understanding Homeless Service Systems

- Key elements and points of emphasis:
  - Housing First
  - Collaboration
  - Leveraging "mainstream" systems
  - Using data to drive performance
  - Investments in affordable housing
  - Using coordinated entry systems



# Understanding Homeless Service Systems

- Key points of intersection between the homeless service system and the needs of survivors of domestic violence include:
  - Diversion resources
  - Vulnerability assessments
  - Coordinated entry processes
  - Connecting to "mainstream" resources and community-based services and supports
  - Providing tailored services
  - Access to permanent housing



# More on the Intersection

- Survivors who can't maintain their housing are highly vulnerable to re-abuse
- DV/SV interferes with access to housing and with success in maintaining it
- Abuse may be ongoing; abusers often persist in attempt to sabotage success



# Economic Abuse Is Often Part of DV

- Preventing resource acquisition
  - *Forbidding her/him to work, job sabotage, interfering in education/skill-building, tampering with childcare, etc.*
- Preventing resource use
  - *Withholding bank account information, denying access to money, disabling the car, etc.*
- Exploiting resources
  - *Generating debt in survivor's name, deliberate failure to pay bills to ruin survivor's credit, damaging housing unit, using household income for drugs/alcohol/gambling*



# Other Intersecting Issues that Compromise Stable Housing

- Trauma impact on survivor and children
- Ongoing legal issues
- Fears about child custody and/or deportation
- Isolation from social supports
- Stalking-prone abuser
- Interrupted/sabotaged employment history
- Criminal record
- Chemical dependency
- Bad credit, inexperience with handling money
- Fear or abandoning household pets



## **II. Barriers to Accessing Housing**



# Barriers to Accessing Affordable Housing

- Scarce and hard to find for anybody
- Landlords can afford to be picky
- If the survivor discloses the abusive background, landlord may fear harm to property and threat to neighbors





# Barriers to Accessing Affordable Housing

Housing Providers Discriminate Based on First Impressions:

- The impact of trauma may hurt how a survivor presents
- Children accompanying parent may display trauma-related behavior
- Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, national identity, or religion



# Barriers to Accessing Affordable Housing

## Background Checks:

- Lack of, or bad, credit history—including outstanding debt
- Lack of or poor rental history—especially an eviction
- Lack of employment history
- Source of income (TANF, SSI, Housing Vouchers)
- Criminal history—often related to the abuse



# Barriers to Accessing Affordable Housing

## Pets Can Be Barriers

- Sometimes even therapy animals
- Increased damage deposits may be prohibitive



# Barriers to Accessing Victim-Specific Housing

(ex: DV/SA shelter and transitional housing programs)

- While these programs typically center on safety and confidentiality, many survivors may still feel unsafe or marginalized
- Program eligibility requirements can create barriers for survivors
- Limited, and decreasing, funding for victims-specific housing to meet the need



# III. Barriers to Maintaining Housing for Survivors



# Barriers to Maintaining Housing for Survivors

## Evictions as a Result of Discrimination:

- Landlords sometimes evict survivors
  - Landlords seeks to evict if survivors are abused in their home (includes contacting the police, 911)
  - Proliferation of nuisance laws: crime free ordinances that penalize landlords and tenants when the police are perceived as being called too many times to the premises.



# Barriers to Maintaining Housing for Survivors

## Ongoing Impact of Violence and Victimization:

- Stalking and the threat of violence can force survivors to frequently relocate
  - Shelter programs may require survivors to relocate if survivor confidentiality or safety is compromised by the abuser
- Isolation from community, friends and family can erode a survivor's safety net so that unexpected challenges with such things as child care, medical emergencies or car repair can impact housing stability



# Barriers to Maintaining Housing for Survivors

## Economic Abuse:

- Batterers commonly use violence or threats of violence and intimidation to keep the survivor from working/keeping employment (i.e. stalking at work) or having access to the family funds
- Can result in the inability to pay rent and/or inability to maintain steady employment due to the abuse





# **IV. The Advocacy Response to Survivors' Housing Needs is Evolving**



# **Advocacy for Safe Housing for Survivors: The Battered Women's Shelter Movement (late 1970s/80s)**

Established in the late 1970s by survivors as a response to the violence happening behind closed doors

The movement grew into a large and strong network of shelters across the U.S., and with that, increased funding and legal protections for survivors

A more multidimensional and intersectional understanding of DV/SV is forming, along with the understanding that DV/SV impacts a broad range a survivors and responses require nuanced approaches

The passage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994, and its continued reauthorization is testimony to the focused efforts of the movement over the last 40 years



# Federal Law Overview

## Violence Against Women Act 2013 (“VAWA”)

Under VAWA someone who is a survivor of domestic violence and a tenant in federal public housing, Section 8 voucher- or project-based housing, or in a program that receives McKinney Vento funds (funds homeless shelters/housing programs) (includes Continuum of Care) has rights.



# Federal Law Overview

## Violence Against Women Act (“VAWA”) Continued

- Applies to survivors regardless of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability or age
- Provides housing protections to survivors of dating violence, sexual assault, stalking and also applies to an affiliated individual of the survivor (including individuals who are not on the lease but are in the survivor’s immediate family or individual living in the household)



# Federal Law Overview

## Violence Against Women Act (“VAWA”) Continued

Survivors have the right to:

- be accepted into a shelter/housing program. For example, a housing provider cannot deny an applicant housing/assistance on the basis that s/he is or has been a survivor;
- remove the batterer from the public housing lease (or Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher) and stay in the unit;



# Federal Law Overview

## Violence Against Women Act (“VAWA”) Continued

Survivors have the right to:

- ensure that the Housing Authority and Section 8 landlords honor a civil protection order, specifically if it addresses the batterer’s access to where the survivor lives;
- Port (move to another location) if s/he has a Section 8 voucher, so long as it’s within the Housing Authority jurisdiction;
- seek an emergency transfer;



# Federal Law Overview

## Violence Against Women Act (“VAWA”) Continued

Survivors have the right to:

- stay in the unit, even if there is (or has been) criminal activity that is directly related to the domestic violence; and
- confidentiality of information about domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. This information can only be shared if requested by the survivor in writing, is required for use in an eviction proceeding or by law.



# Federal Law Overview

## Other Federal Protections Include:

- Fair Housing Act
- Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act
- Americans with Disabilities Act





# Local and State Housing Protections

Many jurisdictions have protections as well:

- Some cities/states have protections that extend to private landlords
- Some cities/states have eviction protections, early lease release, lock changes, reasonable accommodation in restoring or improving security and safety measures; anti-discrimination



# **V. Strategies and Approaches for Removing Barriers to Safe Housing**



# A Necessary Shift Toward Safe Housing

- Resources have largely focused on emergency shelter and temporary housing
- Shelters and transitional housing are only a temporary solution if no permanent housing options exist at exit
- Growing emphasis on expanding and broadening the movement's focus from crisis shelter to creating access for survivors throughout the housing continuum
- Growing focus on both immediate and lasting impacts of domestic and sexual violence – ***and of the need for a survivor-focused lens when addressing housing barriers***



# Providing Survivors with the Resources to Avoid Homelessness

## Advocating for survivors' housing rights under local and federal law

- Providing housing advocacy for survivors
- Training landlords and other housing providers on the laws
- Educating survivors about their housing rights

## Helping survivors to remain in their own homes if they choose

- Providing flexible funding to help survivors access safe permanent housing
- Offering mobile advocacy



# Creating A Range of Safe Housing Options

- Safe Rapid-ReHousing and flexible engagement models
  - DV Housing First (WSCADV's model)
- Safe emergency and transitional housing
- Safe permanent supportive housing
- Safe subsidized housing with services available



# Enhancing Safety and Access for Survivors Within the Housing and Homeless (HH) Systems

- Coordinating assessment and entry systems to include safety and confidentiality for survivors
- Making it safe for survivors to disclose; considering trauma informed assessment, physical space, privacy
- Creating access to DV/SV services throughout the HH systems



# Creating Confidentiality for Survivors in the Homeless Data System

- Providing survivors the option to opt-in rather than opt-out of central databases and other client systems
- Understanding what victim service providers can and can't disclose
- Developing comparable data bases for survivors



# Enhancing Partnerships Between DV/SV and HH Systems

- DV/SV experts determining which household needs the safety and privacy afforded by DV/SV providers
- Making accessible the full range of housing resources and tools within the homeless system to the DV/SV system
- DV/SV programs providing ongoing input as to how HH system is working for survivors





# Enhancing Partnerships

- There is federal funding available across HHS, DOJ, and HUD for housing programs targeted to individuals and families fleeing domestic violence.
- Unlike DOJ and HHS programs, HUD's funding is channeled through regional or local planning bodies that coordinate the local homeless service system (Continuums of Care or CoCs).
- HUD funding is allocated to projects *through* the local CoC; this is done through the annual CoC Program Competition.
- HUD's priorities for homeless service systems are communicated through the Competition's Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA).



# Enhancing Partnerships

- Federal partners encourage domestic violence service providers and CoCs to connect at the local level to explore opportunities for collaboration:
  - Cross-training
  - Intake and assessment
  - Funding opportunities
  - Sharing best practices
  - Understanding each other's goals and metrics
  - Navigating data limitations
  - Building a shared understanding of unmet housing needs in the community



# Resources/Contact Information

General TA/Training requests/inquiries:

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