

The Decision Tree: Using Conversation-Based Strategies to Assess Survivors' Housing Needs

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Learning Objectives

After participating in this workshop, you will:

- Increase your understanding of the homeless/housing system and how it aligns and interacts with victim service providers
- Be able to name 2 ways in which conversation-based approaches may be more effective when assessing the housing needs of survivors and others experiencing homelessness
- Take away 2 ideas for how to engage with survivors around their housing needs

Domestic Violence & Housing Technical Assistance Consortium (DVHTAC)

FEDERAL PARTNERS

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

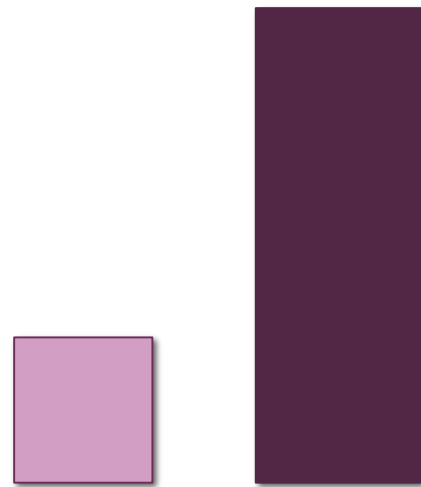
TA PROVIDERS

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

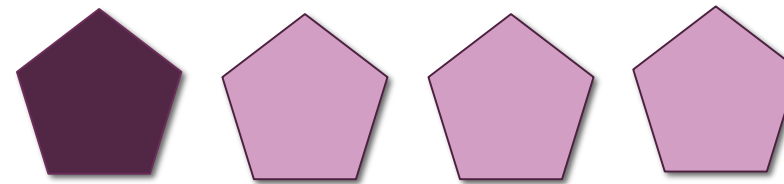
The Issue

Intersection of Domestic/Sexual Violence and Housing Instability in the US

Housing instability is 4x more likely for women who have experienced domestic violence



One in four homeless women cite domestic violence as a major contributor to their homelessness

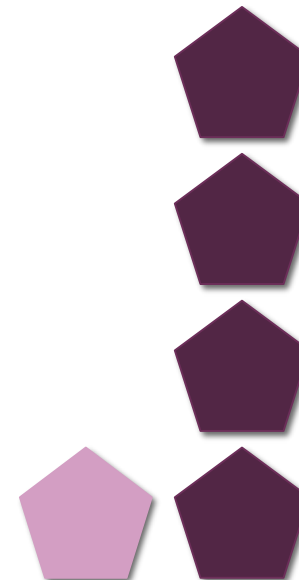


Intersection of Domestic/Sexual Violence and Housing Instability in the US

Almost two-thirds of trafficking survivors report being homeless or experiencing unstable housing at the time they were recruited



A majority of homeless youth report leaving home due to sexual abuse



Barriers to Safety: Understanding the Intersection

As a direct result of the power and control dynamics related to their abuse, survivors often face unique barriers to accessing shelter and affordable housing.

Poor Credit & Ruined Rental Histories



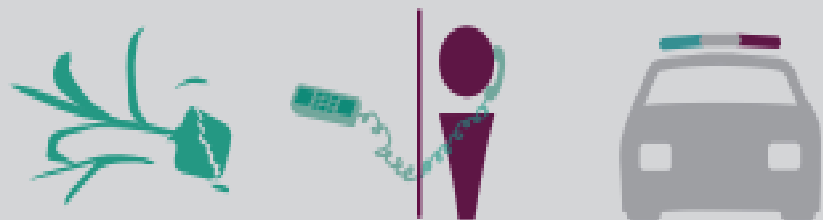
Often caused by abusers running up credit card bills or lying about paying rent, utilities, childcare and other bills. This affects a survivors' ability to pass a landlord background check.

Lack of Steady Employment



Caused when victims are forced to miss work as a result of violence, or are fired as a result of stalking and harassment that occurs at the workplace.

Housing Discrimination



The most common cases of this occur when landlords evict victims from housing due to repeated calls to the police or property damage caused by the abuser.

Loss of Subsidized or Other Affordable Housing



Caused by lease or voucher policy violations committed by the abuser.



SAFE HOUSING
PARTNERSHIPS

The Intersections Between Domestic and Sexual Violence, Race and Housing Insecurity



“As an advocate, I’ve seen...”

How have you seen this play out for survivors you’ve worked with?

Click Mentimeter link in the chat

Complete this sentence:

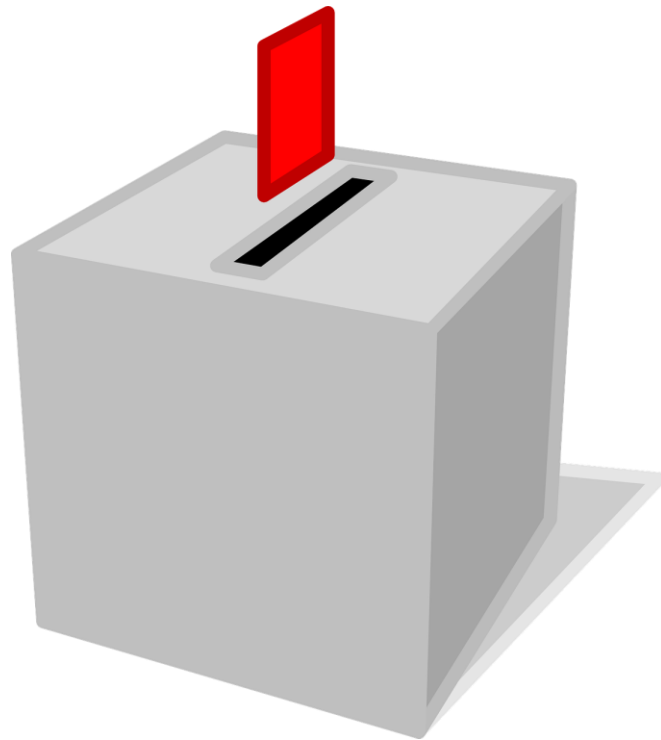
“I worked with a survivor who couldn’t access housing or other resources because...”

The Response

Housing Opportunities During COVID-19

- **New funding**
 - CARES Act
 - HUD ESG-CV Homelessness Funds (experiencing homelessness)
- **American Recovery Act**
 - Treasury Resources Rental Assistance (currently housed)
 - <https://dehap.applyforhope.com/delaware#/>
- **Increases**
 - VOCA and FVPSA resources for housing related flexible funding resources
- HUD Continuum of Care ongoing housing resources via Coordinated Entry

Poll



What does “Coordinated Entry” mean to you?

- Not a thing! Have little to no info about it
- I understand the basics, but rarely refer survivors
- I know a lot about how it works in my community and sometimes refer survivors
- Someone else in my agency knows about this, but my advocacy role doesn’t focus on housing

Coordinated Entry (CE)

Is meant to improve the collaborative efforts of Continuums of Care (CoC) to house persons experiencing homelessness. The primary goal of CE is to make sure that wherever a person enters the homeless system —

- They are given fair and equal access to resources and services offered by the homeless system
- In ways that are culturally competent (responsive to individual cultural identities & reflecting an understanding of cultural differences), and
- Person-centered (based on the needs and desires of the person in need of housing support)

Common Assessment Tools

- Standardized assessment instruments (e.g., Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool)
 - Attempts to quantify system-defined vulnerabilities into a single score
 - Survivors may not tell their whole story
 - Intimate traumas in particular can be extremely hard to disclose to a stranger, even when help is on the line
 - When assessment tools or processes are not trauma-informed, the likelihood of disclosure shrinks considerably, thus resulting in inaccurate measurement of acuity
 - Lack of sensitivity to survivor-specific vulnerabilities can cause survivors to score low
 - Racial bias may be “baked in”
- CE should be a matching process, not a “pass/fail” test...

Survivors Need All the Options

Establishing Safety & Addressing Immediate Crisis

Temporary / Emergency Housing

- Shelter
- Hotel vouchers
- Safe homes
- Relocation assistance
- Installing security devices in current housing
- Staying with friends or family
- Protection orders
- Shallow subsidy/ financial assistance
- Safety planning, advocacy and access to trauma-informed services

Addressing Barriers to Becoming / Staying Safely Housed

Bridge Housing

- Facility-based/scattered-site transitional housing
- Joint component program
- Temporary rental subsidy
- Master leasing/transition in place
- Economic/employment support and advocacy
- Mental health/addictions support
- Rapid Rehousing
- Safety planning, advocacy and access to trauma-informed services

Embedding Safety and Lasting Stabilization

Permanent Housing

- Return to own housing
- Shared housing
- Self-sustaining following RRH subsidy
- Housing Voucher
- Public housing
- Home purchase assistance
- Permanent supportive housing
- Safety planning, advocacy and access to trauma-informed services

What Would a DV- and RE-informed Tool/Process Look Like?

- Considers survivor's unique circumstances (avoids using a score to determine best housing option)
- Relational (a conversation, not a check-list)
- Trauma-informed (avoids intrusiveness and other trauma triggers)
- Grounded in assessor's consideration of racism and other intersecting issues
- Honors survivor's choices about what will lead to safety

Safe vs. Safer



Survivor's Risk Analysis (Jill Davies)

Abuser-Generated Risks

- What is life like with the person causing harm?
- What is it like for the children?
- Who handles the money?
- Does the survivor have access to a car?
- Is the survivor's name on the lease/house?
- Does the abuser know how to use systems against the survivor?
- Is the abuser the source for drugs?

Life-Generated Risks

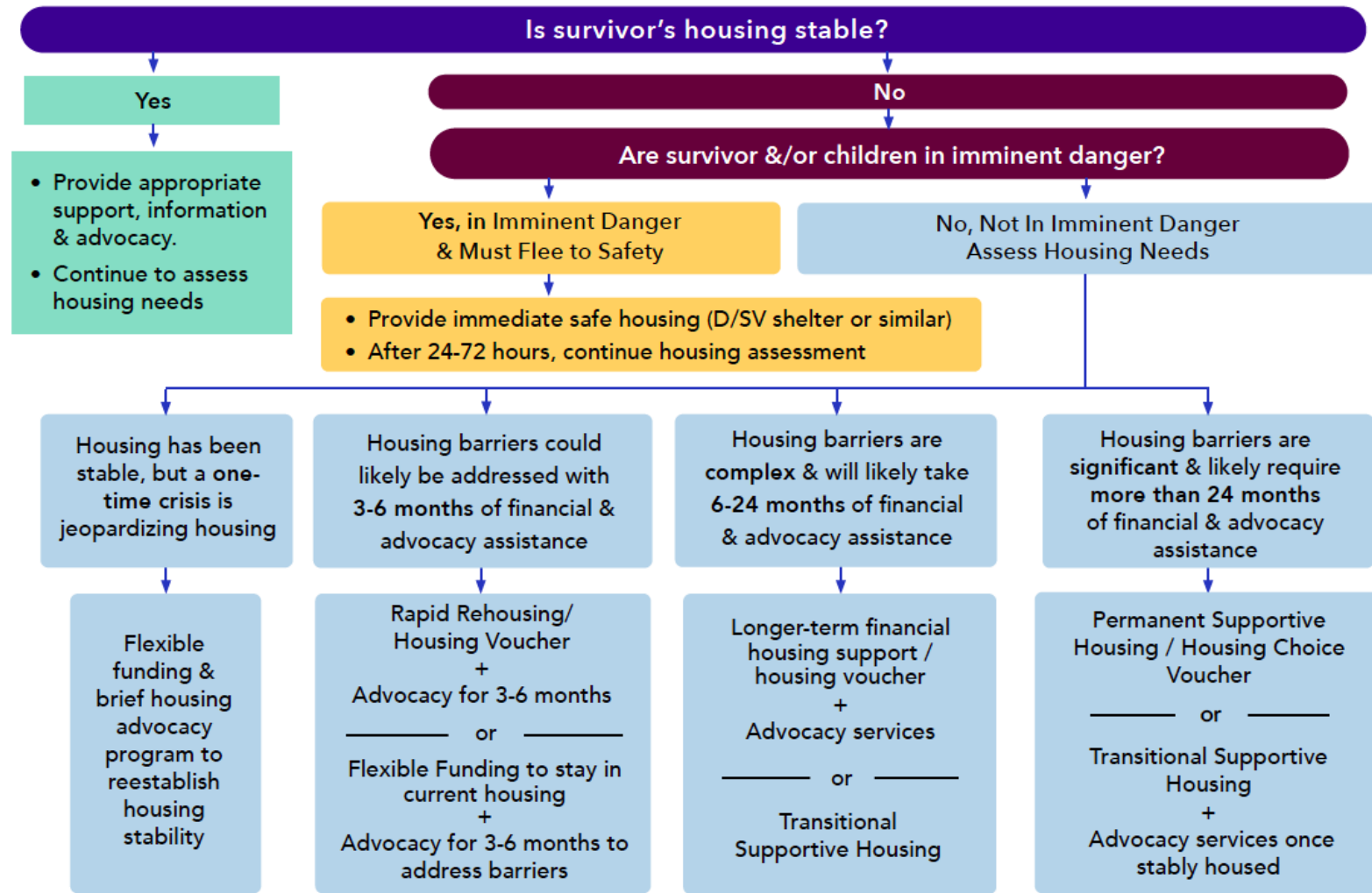
- What is life like in their neighborhood?
- Can they make ends meet?
- Do they have access to healthcare?
- What transportation options do they have?
- How much safe, affordable housing is available?
- Do they have community supports?

What is the Decision Tree All About?

This approach works to determine the best housing option through brief, focused conversation that gets at issues directly related to someone's housing stability and safety

- Covers the following topics:
 - Safety concerns as they relate to housing
 - How stably/unstably housed the person has been in the past 6-12 months
 - Issues they have going on that could prevent them from accessing/maintaining safe housing now and into the future
 - What does survivor want? What are they willing to accept?
- Not a miracle solution to affordable housing scarcity, but allows for problem-solving when resources aren't available

Brief & Focused Conversations to Determine Housing Needs



Cris Sullivan, PhD
& Gabriela López-Zerón, PhD

Breakouts

Scenarios

Small Group Mission

You're working with a survivor who has not specifically requested help with housing, but has the underlying story assigned to your group. Think about your scenario and discuss together:

- How can you incorporate attention to the survivor's housing needs into your advocacy contact?
- What kinds of questions might help this survivor open up about their housing situation?
- What should you be listening for to understand the challenges the survivor might face to safe and stable housing?
- What information could you share that might help the survivor determine the best pathway or next steps?

Instructions

Click link in the chat

Choose a **note taker** and someone willing to **report** out to the large group when we come back together

Debrief

Discussion / Questions



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