

## PRESS RELEASE



October 27, 2016

Contact:  
Reed Forrester  
Communications Coordinator  
206-389-2515 x 201  
[reed@wscadv.org](mailto:reed@wscadv.org)

### **A Promising Approach to Preventing Homelessness Among Survivors of Domestic Violence**

#### ***The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services invests \$2,000,000 in Domestic Violence Housing First research***

The Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV) will receive \$2,000,000 from a partnership between the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services and the U.S. Department of Justice to conduct research on Domestic Violence Housing First, an approach to preventing homelessness for survivors of abuse and their children. Domestic Violence Housing First has shown promising results in a pilot program with urban, rural, and Tribal domestic violence programs across Washington state.

Recognizing that domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and their children, WSCADV began to investigate the possibilities of Domestic Violence Housing First starting in 2009 with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. With a focus on placing and keeping survivors and their children in stable housing, advocates provided the tailored services, temporary financial assistance, and mobile support families needed to safely stay in housing, often bypassing emergency shelter. Years of piloting this approach with a racially diverse population has shown that survivors and their children are safer, more stable, and more self-sufficient after participating in Domestic Violence Housing First.

“No one should become homeless because they are fleeing domestic violence,” said MaryLouise Kelley, director of the Family Violence Prevention and Services Program within the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration on Children and Families, “Domestic Violence Housing First offers a new and sustainable pathway to preventing homelessness.”

Dr. Cris Sullivan, Director of Michigan State University's Research Consortium on Gender-based Violence, will conduct the research study with four participating agencies: LifeWire and New Beginnings (based in King County, WA) and Lower Valley Crisis & Support Services and the YWCA of Yakima (based in Yakima County, WA). Survivors seeking services will be invited to participate in four interviews across 18 months. Researchers will collect detailed information about their backgrounds, economic status, and housing and safety obstacles, and examine the match between their needs and the services provided to them. Looking at the changes in housing stability, safety, health, and wellbeing of survivors and their children, researchers will document the impact the Domestic Violence Housing First approach has on their lives.

"The Domestic Violence Housing First pilot program shows great promise," said Charles Homer, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Services Policy. "This type of research is essential for program and policy leaders in order to make better decisions about aligning services with the complex needs of domestic violence survivors and their children in times of crisis."

The Domestic Violence Housing First pilot program found that permanent housing provided the stability survivors needed to get a job, keep a job, enroll in school, or complete their education. It enabled them to more quickly become self-sufficient. Housing stability also had a profound impact on children. Being able to stay at one school, having their own space to do homework, and being able to invite their friends over without fear, were all identified as key benefits. As one survivor stated, "Kids are finally being kids again."

"We are very grateful for the investment in this important research," said Nan Stoops, Executive Director of the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence. "Every person deserves a safe and stable home. This research will advance our knowledge of what it takes to get us there."

### **About the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

Founded in 1990 by survivors of domestic violence and their allies, the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence is a non-profit network of over 70 domestic violence advocacy programs across the state of Washington. We improve how communities respond to domestic violence and work to create a social intolerance for abuse. Our work includes research, training and technical assistance, producing educational tools, promoting domestic violence awareness, and public policy advocacy. To learn more, or to view the complete Washington State Domestic Violence Housing First Final Evaluation Report, please visit [wscadv.org](http://wscadv.org).

###