



Domestic Violence Housing First: Supporting Native American Survivors

Domestic Violence Housing First (DVHF) eliminates housing as a reason for survivors to stay in an abusive relationship. The program's flexible advocacy, temporary financial assistance, and housing assistance within a cultural context supports survivors in choosing how to best rebuild their lives.

From September 2011–September 2014, 681 survivors participated in the DVHF program. Of those, **31%** identified as Native American/Alaska Native and were served by Tribal programs.

Survivors in tribal communities faced higher barriers to finding safe and stable housing.

Limited economic opportunity: 45% of Native survivors participating in DVHF lived on a monthly income of \$800 or less. 76% of Native survivors had a high school diploma or less compared to 54% for non-Native survivors.

Fewer housing options: Survivors living on reservations faced scarce housing stock and a shortage of emergency housing options.

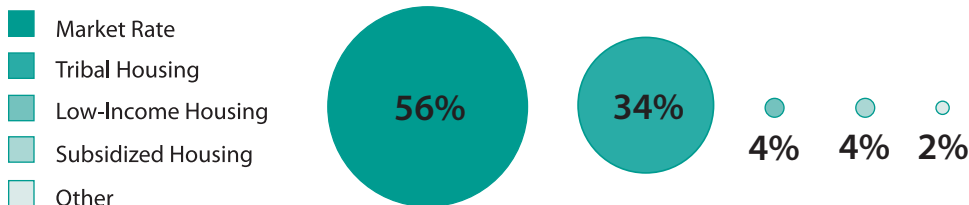
Greater housing insecurity: At time of program entry, Native survivors were more likely to be homeless (23% compared to 12% for non-Native survivors) and twice as likely to be living in a temporary arrangement (21% compared to 9% for non-Native survivors).

DVHF has proven effective in supporting Native American survivors to become safe, stable, and empowered to create lives free from violence.

Access to housing: 86% were housed after participating in DVHF. On average, Native survivors found housing after 6 months. Lack of available housing on reservations was one of the biggest barriers to finding housing.

Housing retention and stability: 80% of survivors who accessed housing were still housed after 6 months. 88% retained housing after 12 months.

Type of Housing:



Improved health and well-being: Survivors were able to shift their focus from getting their basic needs met to gaining employment, addressing chemical dependency and mental health issues, connecting to their community, and normalizing life for children who have experienced trauma.

“Because of the support I’ve been getting, I’ve been able to focus on what I need to do to take care of myself and my children.” – DVHF Program Participant

Due to the flexibility and adaptability of Domestic Violence Housing First, Tribal programs have been able to respond to specific cultural needs of survivors.

Culturally appropriate services: Native survivors reported that working with an advocate who understands their culture was an important component of healing from both recent and historical trauma. DVHF Tribal programs are responsive to survivors’ culturally specific needs. Advocates facilitate access to meaningful cultural practices for survivors, such as referrals to spiritual healers, and traditional cultural practices such as language and arts.

“I can talk to my advocate without having to explain where I’m coming from or go into detail. They get it, and it makes you able to open up about a traumatic situation.” – DVHF Program Participant

Connection to community: Advocates work with survivors on creating safe and strong connections to their Native community. Most Native survivors indicated that remaining in their tribal community was vital to their healing and essential to supporting housing stability and reducing isolation.

“A lot of survivors want to stay on the reservation—they have a sense of community and familiarity, they want a sense of connection.” – DVHF Advocate

Mobile advocacy: Mobile advocacy allows advocates to meet survivors where they are physically. Connecting with survivors in their homes and in the community reduces transportation barriers and eliminates the stigma survivors often experience when accessing services.

Flexible financial assistance: Advocates use flexible financial assistance to meet the financial needs of survivors that often get in the way of accessing and retaining housing. Funds cover deposits, utility costs, court filing fees, security systems, and car repairs.

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