



Domestic Violence Housing First (DVHF) Frequently Asked Questions:

The world we live in has changed dramatically since the domestic violence movement began. And so we ask ourselves: Do the services we constructed decades ago respond to the needs that survivors have today?

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What is Housing First?

Housing First is a proven approach that is focused on rapidly getting people who are homeless into permanent housing. The evidence shows that issues that may have contributed to an individual or family becoming homeless, can best be addressed after they are in a stable housing situation. Emphasis is on the shortest timeline possible to permanent housing.

What services does Housing First include?

Housing First programs generally include rental assistance to get people into permanent housing quickly. Participants are then offered a range of tailored services, such as job training, to help them be self-sufficient and stay in that housing. Housing First programs can include rapid rehousing (financial assistance is temporary; services may or may not continue) or permanent supportive housing (long-term financial assistance and services).

What is Domestic Violence Housing First (DVHF)?

DVHF is a program that WSCADV, in collaboration with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has piloted with diverse populations across Washington State for five years. With a focus on placing and keeping survivors and their children in permanent housing, domestic violence advocates provide the tailored services and mobile advocacy needed for families to safely stay in stable housing.

How is DVHF different than Housing First?

DVHF prioritizes the unique safety needs of domestic violence survivors and their children. Safety, self-determination, and healing from trauma are the driving factors, rather than the shortest possible timeline to permanent housing.

Does DVHF replace domestic violence shelters?

No. Emergency housing solutions for domestic violence victims and their children are critical and life-saving. DVHF strategies have been used both to help survivors in emergency shelter access permanent housing and to help survivors bypass shelter altogether.

What about transitional housing?

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is prioritizing permanent housing. As a result, many communities are shifting from transitional housing to more permanent solutions.

Does DVHF work?

Yes. Five years of evaluative data with a highly diverse population has shown it to effectively improve the safety, stability, and well-being of survivors and their children ([see evaluation findings](#)). 96% of survivors retained their housing 18 months after entering the DVHF program.

Can DVHF help people whose income is too low to ever maintain permanent housing?

Very low-income people usually need rent vouchers or other housing subsidies to maintain permanent housing. Some agencies implementing DVHF are able to provide this and some are not. There continues to be a need for more low-income, affordable housing options in our communities.

Have a question we didn't answer here? We'd love to hear from you!

Email wscadv@wscadv.org.