

# Domestic Violence Housing First Guidelines and Approach Standards

The [Domestic Violence Housing First \(DVHF\)](#) approach focuses on getting survivors of domestic violence into stable housing as quickly as possible and then providing the necessary support as they rebuild their lives.

This approach has [been shown](#) to promote long-term stability, safety and well-being for survivors and their children. Survivors have indicated that they felt safer, more stable, self-sufficient, and better able to create lives free from violence after working with domestic violence advocates using the DVHF approach.

With safe and stable housing at its core, the [key components of DVHF](#) include: survivor-driven, trauma-informed, mobile advocacy; flexible financial assistance; and community engagement.



[Learn more](#) about the DVHF approach and how it is defined.

## How to use this document:

This document provides detail on the characteristics that describe organizations and staff who have fully implemented the DVHF approach.

For more information on the DVHF approach and tools for implementation, please see the [DVHF toolkit](#).

**Programs** can use this document to:

- Understand key components of the DVHF approach
- Assess progress toward implementation of DVHF
- Identify areas for program improvement
- Develop and align practices and policies to optimize support for DVHF

**Funders, state leaders, coalitions** can use this document to:

- Understand the DVHF approach
- Provide technical assistance to programs aspiring to effectively implement
- Develop RFPs, grant applications, and performance measures

## Approach Values:

In order to meet DVHF standards, programs must be utilizing and offering all three components of DVHF: survivor-driven, trauma-informed, mobile advocacy; flexible financial assistance; and community engagement.

For organizations to achieve full implementation of DVHF, their mission and values must align with the following fundamentals:

- DVHF is not a separate program, but rather an advocacy approach that is woven into the fabric of all of the agency's work
- Housing is a right
- Housing is often the beginning of a survivor's path toward stability, not the end
- Survivors are the experts in their own lives and know what is best for themselves and their children
- Advocates and survivors are partners. Critical thinking, exploration of services, and problem solving is shared between the survivor and advocate
- Advocacy is free-flowing and flexible to address the changing and evolving needs of survivors and their children
- Advocacy is focused on a survivor, not on domestic violence

## Approach Standards Checklist:

[This checklist](#) lays out the elements tied to full implementation of the DVHF approach. Organizational and staff characteristics are identified as either required or recommended as best practice.

Organizations are encouraged to use this checklist to assess their progress toward implementation of the DVHF approach and to identify areas for improvement. The scale in the checklist is to help programs determine if they have completed, are in progress of completion or have not completed the item, with a Notes section for programs to use to identify next steps in implementation.

While self-assessment is important, it is strongly recommended that programs include feedback from the survivors using their services to best assess how closely they are aligning with the DVHF model. For example feedback forms, see the [DVHF toolkit](#).