

# The Domestic Violence Housing First Approach



## Overview

Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and children.

The Domestic Violence Housing First 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.



## Survivor-Driven, Trauma-Informed Mobile Advocacy

Working in partnership with survivors. Advocacy is focused on safety and supporting survivors to rebuild control over their lives. Survivors lead the process, choose their own goals, and define what is going to be safer for themselves.

- Advocates respect survivors' decisions, offer options—not opinions or mandates, and build off the strengths of each survivor and their children.
- Advocates ask “what do you need?” instead of saying “these are the services we can offer you.”
- Advocates are mobile. They meet in a survivor’s home, out in the community, at coffee shops, etc.
- Advocates have skills, supervision, and technology to support working safely out in the community.
- Advocates look at the strengths of a survivor’s culture and community that can help them become safer and rebuild connections.
- Advocates understand the impacts of trauma and are aware of potential triggers, and engage in trauma informed practices.

**Flexible Financial Assistance** Unrestricted funds used to support survivors to become stably housed.

- Funds are used to support housing, employment, and survivor safety. This can include rent and utilities, children’s needs, transportation, work uniforms, etc.
- Advocates work with survivors collaboratively to determine the level and amount of financial assistance needed to meet a survivor’s immediate needs.
- Funds may be dispersed directly to survivors or as a payment on their behalf to a landlord, child care provider, car mechanic, etc.
- There is no cap. Additional financial assistance is provided based on survivors’ changing needs.
- Advocates don’t require survivors to meet goals or participate in services to receive funding.
- Financial assistance is available to survivors regardless of their income.

**Community engagement** Advocates working in the community to build lasting connections with the goal of engaging community members in supporting survivors' safety, independence, and housing stability.

- Advocates proactively cultivate relationships with community members such as car mechanics, small businesses, community colleges, law enforcement, employers.
- Advocates are encouraged to spend work time connecting with people and organizations in the community and help them find ways to support survivors.
- Because advocates are out in the community doing mobile advocacy, it is easier for them to connect with community members.
- Advocates attend community events in order to represent survivors' interests in community conversations.
- People in the community become aware that there are more services for survivors than just emergency shelters.
- Have strong relationships with housing authorities and landlords who have different housing options for survivors.
- Advocates have the knowledge and skills to assist survivors in navigating other community support systems
- Advocates have access to a spectrum of housing options\* that meet a survivor's unique needs.
- Advocates are active, proactive, and flexible. They accompany survivors to housing appointments, negotiate lease agreements, and act as a liaison between survivors and landlords.

### Housing Options

**Homelessness prevention** Survivors remain in their current housing or get assistance to move into new housing.

**Rapid Re-housing** Rapidly connects homeless survivors to permanent, market rate housing, often accompanied by financial assistance and services.

**Subsidized Housing** Section 8 vouchers or public housing that subsidizes rent for survivors with low incomes.

**Permanent Supportive Housing** Housing designed for survivors with very low incomes and chronic, disabling health conditions. There are no limits on length of tenancy.

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