



The Domestic Violence Housing First Approach

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

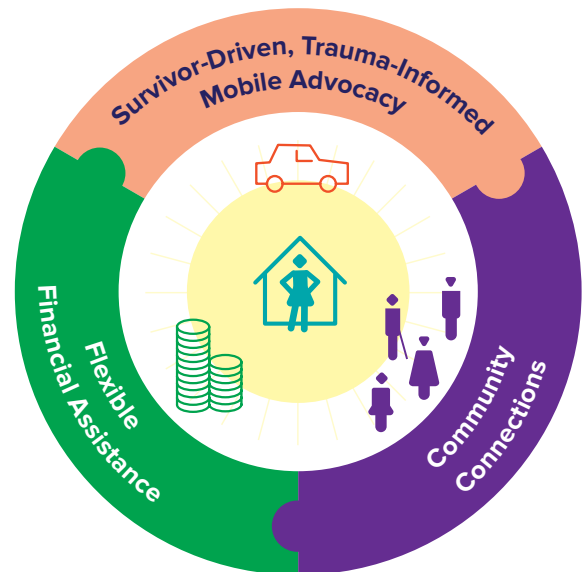
The Domestic Violence Housing First approach focuses on getting survivors of domestic violence into stable housing as quickly as possible and then providing the necessary support and safety as they rebuild their lives.

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

Support and Advocacy Workers are 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.



Support and Advocacy Workers:

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

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Flexible Financial Assistance

Funds are available and used to support women survivors to become stably housed by accessing flexible financial assistance.

- » Support and Advocacy Workers collaborate with women to determine the amount of financial assistance needed to meet the woman and her children's immediate needs.
- » Funds are used to support housing, employment, and survivor safety. This can include rent and utilities, children's needs, transportation, work uniforms, etc.
- » Funds may be dispersed directly to survivors or as a payment on their behalf to a landlord, childcare provider, car mechanic, etc.
- » Financial assistance is provided based on survivors' changing needs and available resources negotiated through support and safety plans.
- » Financial assistance can support self-identified solutions to an unmet need and is within brokerage guidelines.
- » Financial assistance is available to survivors regardless of their income.

Community Connections

Support and Advocacy Workers are mobile and working in the community on a routine basis. This means they are in a good position to build lasting connections to link women and children with entitlements, resources, and services within local and regional communities. This is an essential component of a Housing First approach and helps build formal and informal networks to support women to safety, independence, and housing stability.

Support and Advocacy Workers will:

- » connect women with local resources and opportunities to access formal and informal support, healthcare, employment, recreation, child/family services, childcare, and schools

- » continue to work with women and children in understanding their safety and protection needs and challenges through local integrated justice and community responses
- » attend and or link women with community events in order to represent survivors' interests in community conversations.
- » have strong relationships with housing authorities and landlords who have different housing options for survivors
- » promote different housing options
- » continue to advocate with women to navigate other community support systems
- » access a spectrum of **housing options*** that meet a survivor's unique needs
- » be active, proactive and flexible
- » 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 such as Rent Connect.

Transitional and permanent affordable housing complements access to refuges when required to ensure high levels of security and support.

Currently there are significant gaps in specialist housing options that are affordable and tailored to meet the individualised risks and needs of survivors.

Housing First is an approach that promotes housing options with tailored specialist services for those who need them to prevent and end homelessness. This work has been adapted from the Washington Coalition Against Domestic Violence.