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RESEARCH CONSORTIUM
ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Flexible Funding:

Assessing the impact of DASH's Survivor Resilience Fund on survivor well-being

Presenters:

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Inception of DASH in 2006

- Incidence of domestic violence was on the rise
- Affordable housing crisis in Washington, D.C.
- Survivors were being denied access to safe housing programs
- Overwhelming need for a comprehensive response to safe housing that included a variety of new strategies and approaches



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DASH Mission

DASH is an innovator in providing access to safe housing and services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence and their families as they rebuild their lives on their own terms.



Core Belief #1: Housing is a Human Right

BELIEF

DASH believes that all survivors of abuse, regardless of their circumstances, should have access to safe housing

This includes survivors of: intimate partner violence, sexual assault, sex trafficking, same-sex DV, stalking and homelessness

As well as survivors with: physical and mental disabilities, chemical addictions, mental illnesses, undocumented citizens and those with differing family configurations

PRACTICE

**Low
Barrier
Access**



Core Belief #2: Self-Determination

BELIEF

DASH believes:

- One's housing stability should never hinge on their engagement in services
- Survivors are far more likely to make meaningful change when program engagement is voluntary
- The critical work of program staff (especially Advocates) is to establish trusting relationships with survivors built on mutual respect, transparency and honesty

PRACTICE

**Voluntary
Services**

Core Belief #3: DV is a Trauma Experience

BELIEF

DASH believes experiencing DV/SA:

- Psychologically changes a person's belief in themselves
- Diminishes a person's ability to trust
- Hinders a person's ability to make decisions for themselves, organize and mobilize to accomplish goals
- Decreases a person's sense of safety and intense fear

PRACTICE

**Trauma-
Informed
Services**



DASH works to provide a range of safe housing options for survivors:

- **Cornerstone**: A 43-unit emergency-to-transitional site-based, apartment-style safe housing program
- **Empowerment Project**: A transitional-to-permanent scattered site safe housing program
- **Housing Resource Center**: A variety of homeless prevention services through:
 - Advocacy throughout the housing system
 - Housing counseling and support
 - The **Survivor Resilience Fund** (a flexible funds program), where grants are given to help survivors maintain housing



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The Genesis of the Survivor Resilience Fund at DASH

Through DASH's Housing Resource Center, we were seeing a number of survivors who could potentially avoid homelessness altogether if they had access to immediate funds, coupled with housing advocacy and support.

Existing emergency funding programs in DC lacked DASH's low-barrier, trauma-informed approach - making them particularly difficult for survivors to access.

More and more data from international aid studies revealed that direct funds to those in need (bypassing an overly bureaucratic service system) made immediate and long term impact.



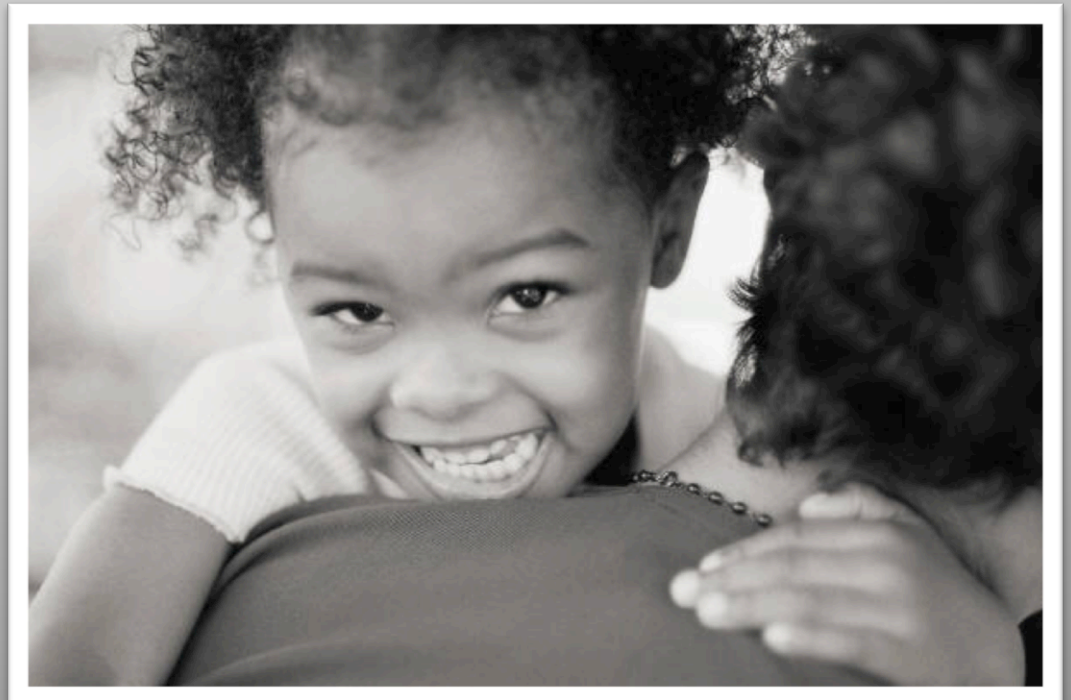
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Survivor Resilience Fund basics:

- Funded by an innovative public-private partnership
 - Public funds used for staff
 - Private funds used for grants to survivors
- Three-year pilot program launched in 2014
- Goal: assist survivors in achieving housing stability





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Guiding principles in grant decisions

- “Can any other organization provide this resource?”
- “Will this grant help this person to retain housing, not just today, but ideally over time?”
- Process is designed to be survivor-centered, accessible, caring and respectful
- Process is designed to be **quick** and responsive in urgent situations



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Research Plan

- Survivors invited to participate in study when they apply for grant
- Interviewed at 30-days, three-months and six-months post-grant
- 55 survivors enrolled in the study; have completed final interviews with 42





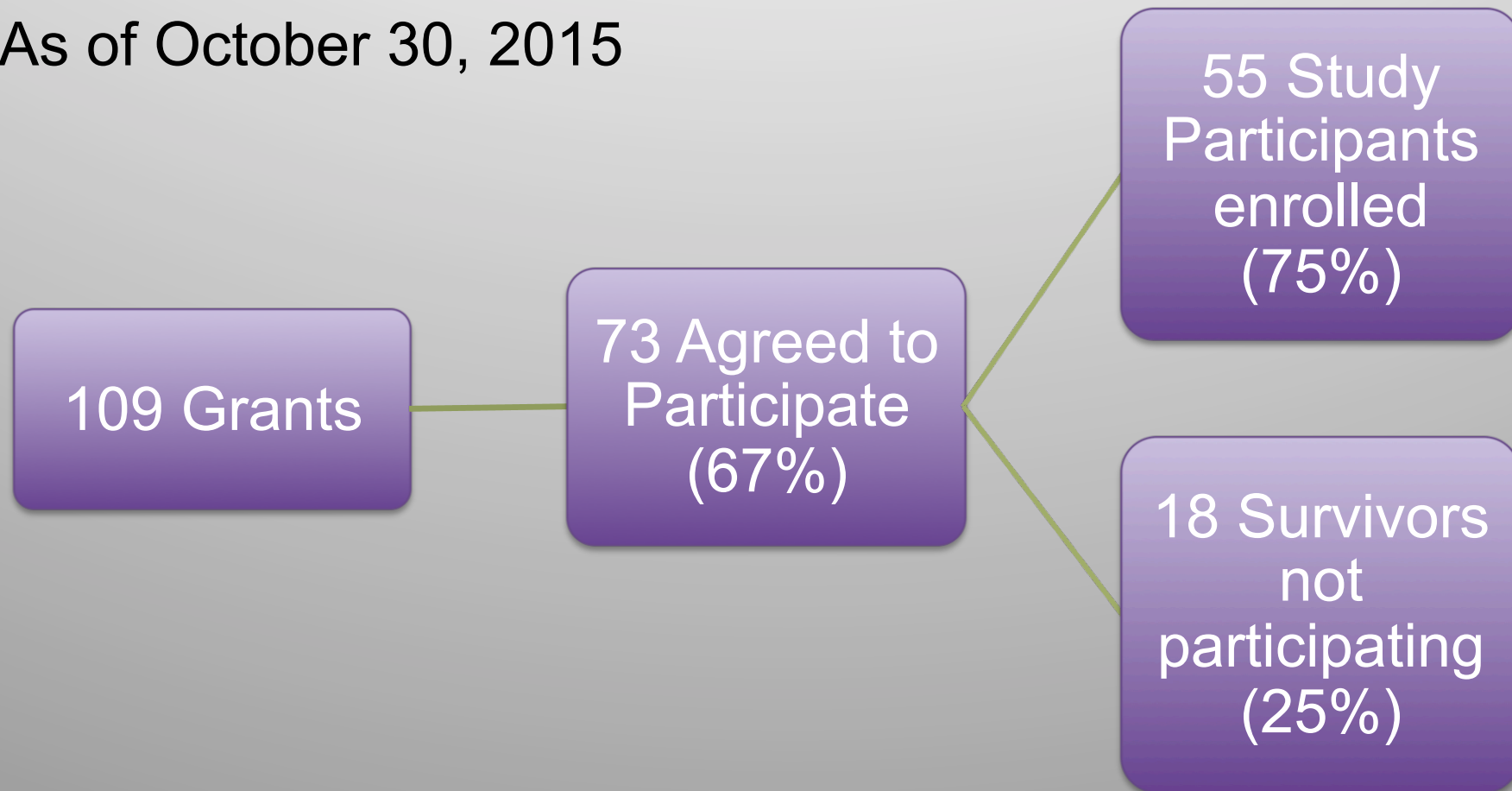
Interview Topics

- Process of obtaining SRF grant
- Immediate impact of grant
- Current living & financial situation
- Housing and education plans for future
- Impact on survivor's health and well-being, impact on their children
- Whether grant resulted in survivor feeling better off and more hopeful (asked at T3 interview)
- Whether survivor has experienced further domestic violence (asked at T3 interview)



Study Enrollment

As of October 30, 2015





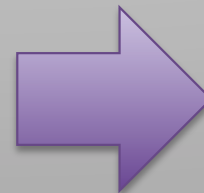
Demographics of Study Participants

53 Women (96%)

2 Men (4%)

Age

- Youngest – 21 years-old
- Oldest – 57 years-old



Average age: 34



Demographics (continued)

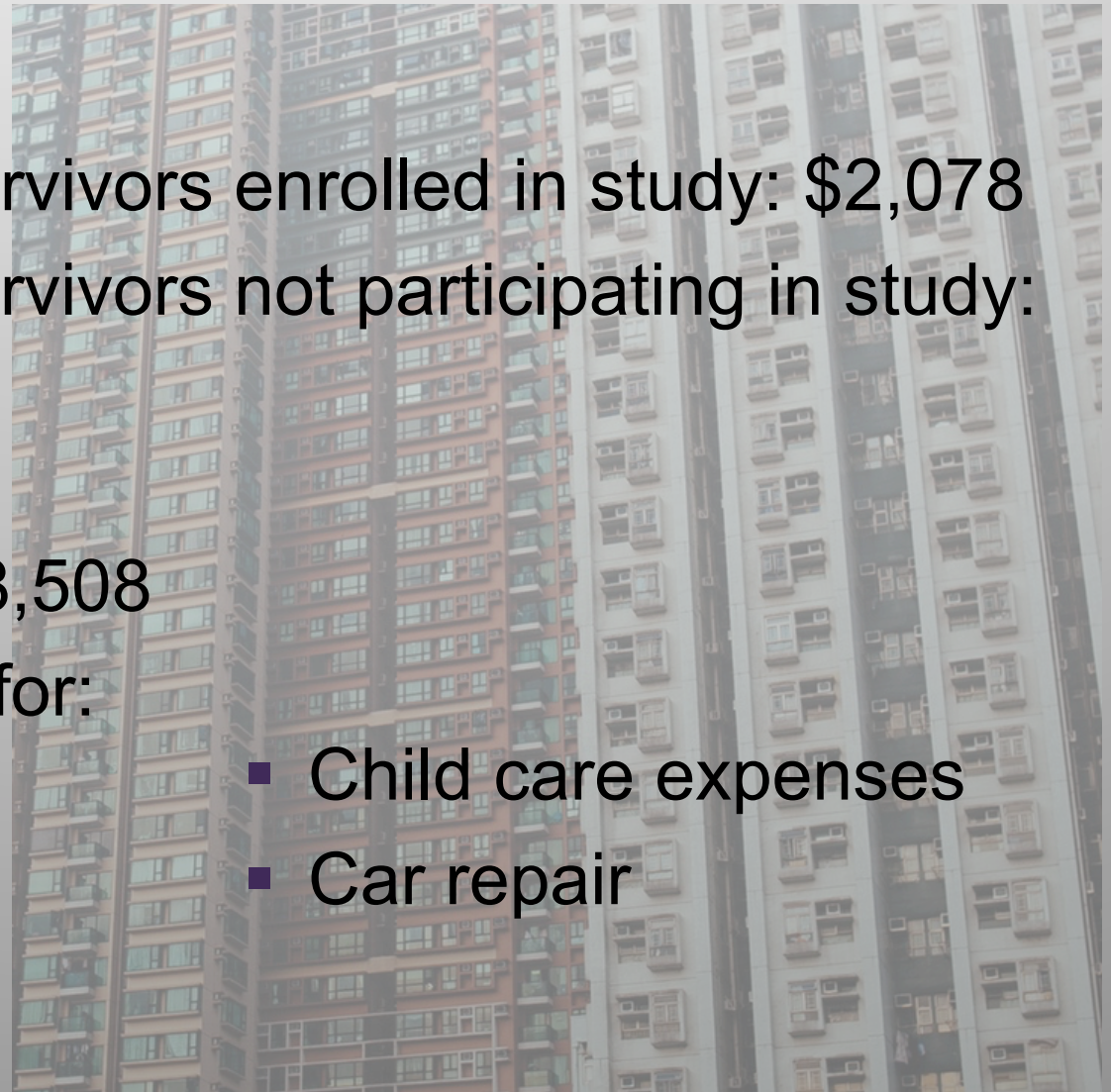
- 45 of 55 participating survivors have children (82%)
 - Total of 95 children living with survivors (may not include grown children or children living outside their home)
- Number of kids ranges from 0-4
- Average number of children: 1.75





Grant Statistics

- Average grant: \$2,392
 - Average grant of survivors enrolled in study: \$2,078
 - Average grant of survivors not participating in study: \$2,720
- Grant range: \$275 - \$8,508
- What grants are used for:
 - Rental assistance
 - Utility assistance
 - Child care expenses
 - Car repair





Interviews to Date

Since March 19, 2014 through October 30, 2015

	Time 1 (30 days post-grant)	Time 2 (three months post grant)	Time 3 (six months post grant)
Total interviews	53*	51	42
Retention rate	N/A	94%	89%

* Two survivors were reached after the T1 period had passed and enrolled in the study at T2.



Interview Themes

- Outstanding staff that go above & beyond
- Fast process
- Non-judgmental
- Stress relief
- Hope
- Children's well-being



“It just makes me make them... like, I play and laugh with them more. I just smile so much better. Everything is just better. I'm not sad all the time.”



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Survivors Feel Well-treated

“I was treated like family. I love DASH, they make you feel welcome and they... no judgment, so... very sympathetic. I owe them, I owe them everything.”

“[DASH] showed me that everybody ... aren't bad and there are people actually have a job that they like and they don't pass you on to the next person.”

“I wasn't able to go in and because I had just told them that I wasn't able to take off from my job so she kinda... she came to me. They really worked with me.”



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Impact of the Grants...

“It means a lot, it means stability, it means... Happiness. It means... Oh, it means everything.”

“Yeah, I probably would’ve ended up in a shelter, like somewhere like DC General, somewhere that I really really, really didn’t really want to go, you know?”

“When I left there I was like, I get to start off fresh. I got him out of my life, I’m able to keep my place, he wasn’t able to break me down, he wasn’t able to take nothing away from me, you know? So, I was just like, ‘Yes.’”



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Survivors Describe Grants as “Life Saving”

“Basically, I can say it saved my life. It saved my life. That’s all I can say, it saved my life. If DASH wouldn’t have put their funds in, I woulda got put out, and my job woulda found out and basically, I would have probably been in the streets. And probably living in the shelter and - not knowing like the street smarts of that part of the streets - I’d probably been dead from that, like, or who knows.”





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Children's Well-being

“[My daughter] used to be kind of violent with her doll babies and, you know, having tantrums, slamming doors. I can tell that she had some type of anger in her – or she was probably mimicking what she was seeing. And now it’s more relaxed so she’s more calm with her doll babies. She’s not ripping doll babies’ heads off.”





T3 Interviews & Rent Payment Summary

- 89% completion rate (42 out of 47 possible)
- 41 of 42 survivors (98%) were still housed – though three reported not knowing how they would pay their rent next month and four reported being behind on their rent

Up-to-date on rent	Somewhat behind on rent	No source of income/way to pay next month's rent
34	4	3



T3 Interviews – Survivor Financial Situation Summary

Being ‘up-to-date’ on their rent did not mean that survivors felt financially healthy

Good	Somewhat behind, but managing	Really tight	Teetering
15 (36%)	12 (28.5%)	12 (28.5%)	3 (7%)



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Six Months Later, the DASH Experience is Still Important

- “They wasn’t judging me based on my situation. I felt like I was treated very fondly, like we were equals. ***Like they knew what I was going through***, instead of just judging what I was going through. I felt comfortable.”
- “In the city [government programs], emergencies can take up to a week, you know? But with DASH, I was seen that day and I was seen in a timely manner ... it was a very friendly environment, something that you don’t normally get.”



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Being Treated Well by DASH Can Bring Hope

“You know how you go down to social services and you ask for help and they, everyone thinks I have an attitude and nobody wants to help you and you know, you get frowned upon and looked down upon. DASH is so not like that. You go in there, you get smiling faces, you get conversations, you get listening ears... so it’s, you know, time that they give you. They give you their time... time’s worth more than money. You know, they give you help and they give you love - whether its genuine or not - but ***it gives you that piece of hope.***”



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At T3, Survivors Still Describe Grants as Life-changing

- “A new beginning”
- “A new chapter”
- “A starting point to new things”



“[The grant] changed my plans. Before it, it was... I didn't really look into the next day... but now I have a brighter, you know, look ahead. Short term goals, long term goals, and a positive future for me.”



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SRF's Impact on Children Continues to be a Strong Theme

Some survivors tie the grants to improvements in school performance and behavior:



“Basically [the grant] helped me provide them with a stable place to be comfortable enough to, you know, do well in school and I guess their life’s changed right now because they weren’t happy before and they were going through something that they shouldn’t have. So, you guys helped out.”



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SRF's Impact on Parenting is Cited by Some Survivors

Other survivors believe the grants impact their children by impacting their ability to parent their children:

“[The grant] gave them their mom back. ...Because living with other people... it was hard for me, and you know - you have to get yourself together before you can get anybody else together. I don't care if you have kids, married, whatever - if you not working on you, you can't work on nobody else. So I was in a bad place and I wasn't the best mom that I could be during that dark time.”



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Survivors Continue to Refer Other Survivors to DASH

- “Knowing about the program, I’ve also been able to refer another young woman at my [job] - who is in a situation who may need help - to the DASH program.”
- “It felt good [being able to refer someone to DASH] because I knew that I wasn’t passing her - giving her information to a place that would pass her to someone else, that would pass her to someone else.”



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Inspired to Pay it Forward

Women spoke of spreading the word about DASH, volunteering more at their children's schools, wanting to give back in various ways



“So it kinda like, can I say inspired? Like it kinda like just kinda like okay, I wanna get the word out here that it’s places out here that will really, really help you instead of just taking your name and just ‘hopefully we’ll get to you’ or ‘hopefully it’ll be funded for you.’ Like I just kinda - I want to help out, I want to be involved.”



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Housing and Financial Status Are Only Two Measures of Well-being

Many aspects of the grants are not easily quantifiable

- Stress relief
- Hope
- Impact on parenting and children
- Impact of families *not* entering the homeless system

“It saved me from losing my place. And being able to have somewhere stable for my kids... I’ve talked to them about it. The younger ones didn’t really understand, but, you know, my oldest daughter she did, and I think by me having a conversation with her is what allowed her to help make that turn around.”



How Can We Assess Well-being?

- Starting in February 2014, we started asking survivors in T3 interviews:
 - Thinking back over the last 6-7 months, since around [date of grant], when you went to DASH for funds for [reason for grant]... would you say that, overall your life is better off, worse off, or no different:
 - Better off → **100% felt “better off” (n=25)**
 - And would you say you are more hopeful about the future than you were then? Less hopeful? Or no change? **88% felt “more hopeful” (22 of 25)**



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Grants as a Protective Factor?

Some programs for survivors have been proven to reduce future victimization

- In April 2015 we began asking survivors in T3 interviews if they had experienced any domestic violence since receiving their grants
- To date we have asked 17 survivors – 16 (94%) reported no further DV, while one reported continuing to receive harassing phone calls



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Next Steps

- Finish current qualitative, longitudinal study
- Launch quantitative, mixed method study

