It is understandable, given the high rates of homelessness as well as domestic and sexual violence in this country, that agencies and communities would welcome a brief and easy to use scoring tool that reliably ranks people’s vulnerabilities and documents their preferences and needs. Overly simple solutions, however, are rarely the answer to complicated problems.

Part of a Special Series on Coordinated Entry & Domestic/Sexual Violence published by the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRCDV) as part of the Domestic Violence & Housing Technical Assistance Consortium (DVHTAC), Michigan State University authors Cris Sullivan, Ph.D. and Gabriela López-Zerón, Ph.D. recommend an alternative approach to assessing vulnerabilities and matching to housing resources (see Assessing for & Appropriately Responding to the Housing Needs of Domestic & Sexual Violence Survivors: A Decision Tree as an Alternative to a Scoresheet).

In this paper, Sullivan & López-Zerón suggest that focused conversations that get at issues directly related to housing stability and safety are a more effective and nuanced way to assess the complexities of each person’s situation and needs. A conversation focused specifically on housing needs must cover the following topics: (i) Safety concerns as they relate to housing; (ii) How stably or unstably housed the person has been in the last 6-12 months; and (iii) What issues they have going on that could prevent them from accessing/maintaining safe and stable housing now and into the future.

The next page provides a flow chart that illustrates the process of Assessing for and Appropriately Responding to the Housing Needs of Survivors. This depicts a recommended approach to assessment, which is not intended to be a rigid model. Communities employing this approach should not attempt to apply numerical scoring to this tool, as that would be contrary to the approach proffered in this paper. Those who are interested in learning more or adopting this approach should refer to the original paper (Assessing for & Appropriately Responding to the Housing Needs of Domestic & Sexual Violence Survivors: A Decision Tree as an Alternative to a Scoresheet).

You may also contact the Domestic Violence & Housing Technical Assistance Consortium (DVHTAC) for further information, training or technical assistance on coordinated entry assessments.

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**Decision Tree as an Alternative to a Score Sheet**

**Is survivor’s housing stable?**

- **Yes**
  - Provide appropriate support, information & advocacy.
  - Continue to assess housing needs

- **No**
  - Continue to assess housing needs

**Are survivor &/or children in imminent danger?**

- **Yes, in Imminent Danger & Must Flee to Safety**
  - Provide immediate safe housing (D/SV shelter or similar)
  - After 24-72 hours, continue housing assessment

- **No, Not In Imminent Danger**
  - Assess Housing Needs

**Housing has been stable, but a one-time crisis is jeopardizing housing**

- Flexible funding & brief housing advocacy program to reestablish housing stability

**Housing barriers could likely be addressed with 3-6 months of financial & advocacy assistance**

- Rapid Rehousing/Housing Voucher + Advocacy for 3-6 months
  - or
  - Flexible Funding to stay in current housing + Advocacy for 3-6 months to address barriers

**Housing barriers are complex & will likely take 6-24 months of financial & advocacy assistance**

- Longer-term financial housing support / housing voucher + Advocacy services
  - or
  - Transitional Supportive Housing

**Housing barriers are significant & likely require more than 24 months of financial & advocacy assistance**

- Permanent Supportive Housing / Housing Choice Voucher
  - or
  - Transitional Supportive Housing + Advocacy services once stably housed

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Yes

No

Is survivor’s housing stable?

Are survivor &/or children in imminent danger?

Yes, in Imminent Danger & Must Flee to Safety

No, Not In Imminent Danger Assess Housing Needs

Housing has been stable, but a one-time crisis is jeopardizing housing

Housing barriers could likely be addressed with 3-6 months of financial & advocacy assistance

Housing barriers are complex & will likely take 6-24 months of financial & advocacy assistance

Housing barriers are significant & likely require more than 24 months of financial & advocacy assistance

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