




# HOUSING BARRIERS AND EMERGING PRACTICES TO CENTERING SURVIVORS


## FINDINGS FROM THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In 2022, NRCDV conducted a Needs Assessment project to document the current and emerging barriers to safe, stable, and accessible housing for BIPOC survivors, as well as the innovative practices implemented by grassroots organizations and community-based agencies to address survivors' housing needs. It included a desk review, listening sessions with service providers and survivor-advocates, and interviews with researchers.


### HOUSING BARRIERS IDENTIFIED:



**Lack of Affordable Housing Options**  
There is a national housing supply shortage leading to limited housing units available to meet the housing needs of survivors, particularly survivors with fewer economic opportunities and resources.




**Housing Discrimination**  
Survivors face various forms of discrimination (based on their race/ethnicity, immigration status, national origin, criminal record, low income, trans/queer identities, and domestic violence history to name a few) when attempting to secure housing.




**Substandard Housing Options**  
Due to housing discrimination and the lack of affordable housing options, survivors most often find themselves in substandard and/or unregulated housing in under-resourced neighborhoods.




**Inadequate Housing Services**  
Fewer DV agencies are appropriately equipped with the necessary skills, resources, and connections to assist survivors with obtaining and maintaining housing.




**Insufficient Housing Options for Survivors with Children**  
Survivors with multiple dependents, especially those with teenage children often wait longer to access housing because there are limited housing options for large families.




**Barriers to Home Ownership**  
Lack of access to capital and credit options, poor/low credit scores, unaffordable housing, continued housing discrimination, the lack of information and understanding about the home buying process, and the lack of access to financial resources and options creates barriers to home ownership for survivors.



**Lack of Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services**  
Inadequate cultural and linguistic assistance/services for survivors from communities of color, LGBTQ+ survivors, immigrants, survivors with disabilities and Deaf survivors, those living in poverty and geographic isolation, elders, and formerly incarcerated survivors.



**Limitations of Transitional Housing**  
Some restrictive program requirements create a disempowering and unsafe environment for survivors in transitional housing programs.



**Difficulty Navigating Multiple Systems**  
Survivors are unable to access all the services they need at one location and often seek support from several agencies to address their multiple needs. The complex process of navigating multiple systems is burdensome and overwhelming.



# EMERGING PRACTICES FOR ADDRESSING THE HOUSING NEEDS OF SURVIVORS

## SURVIVOR-CENTERED HOUSING FIRST APPROACHES

Recognizing adequate housing as a human right and prioritizing models such as Domestic Violence Housing First (DVHF) and Rapid Re-housing (RRH) to quickly and successfully connect survivors and their families to permanent housing with no preconditions to housing support, and supporting wealth-building efforts through homeowners savings assistance programs.



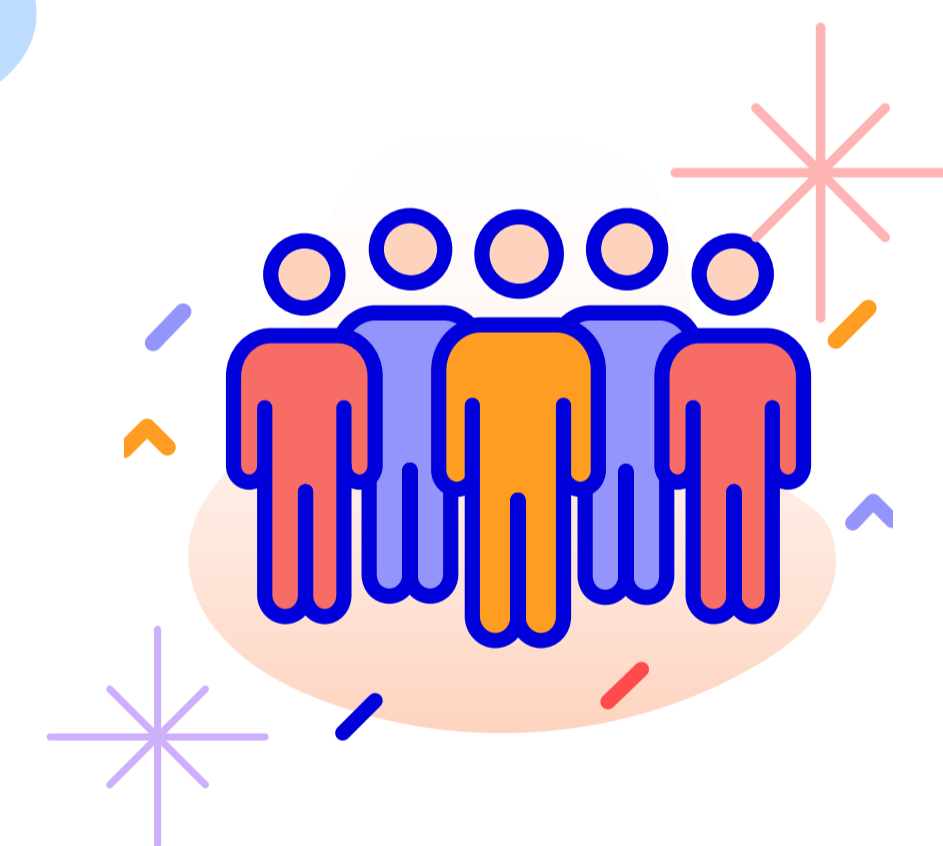
## SYSTEMS CHANGE EFFORTS



(a) Centering racial equity in practice by acknowledging and addressing racially biased systems and structures that increase barriers to safety and housing; and (b) Enhancing the connections between DV, housing, and homelessness, and coordinated entry services through innovative strategies e.g., hiring DV Regional Coordinators.

## COMMUNITY-ORIENTED APPROACHES

(a) Applying a strengths-based approach to service provision through community-building initiatives that form networks for communal support among survivors; (b) Providing ongoing support to survivors by reaching out periodically to follow up on their well-being, and offer additional support and encouragement; and (c) Ensuring wraparound support for survivors in shelters, transitional, and permanent supportive housing locations by providing optional on-site services such as counseling, support group, food bank, and free clothing closet.



## STRATEGIC ADVOCACY EFFORTS



(a) Engaging in legislative advocacy efforts to raise awareness of effective community-based interventions and advocate for additional support to scale up successful interventions; and (b) Partnering with housing authorities and private corporations to increase affordable housing stock and prioritize the housing needs of survivors.



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING THE HOUSING NEEDS OF SURVIVORS

## FOR POLICYMAKERS AND FUNDERS:

### 1 Leverage existing funding sources and allocate additional funding to increase equitable longer-term and permanent housing options

Doing so provides opportunities to retool existing sources for maximum and best use such as increasing the availability and development of affordable-accessible housing, access to federal housing assistance, integrating affordable housing units with market-rate housing, and financially investing in community-driven housing solutions and homelessness prevention efforts.

### 3 Increase federal legislative efforts to address housing discrimination against survivors and other housing barriers in all types of housing

Address discrimination in federally funded public housing, subsidized housing, and private housing. This should include eliminating barriers to accessing housing resources for formerly incarcerated survivors and survivors with diverse family structures.

### 5 Increase support for culturally specific programs that have deep expertise in responding to the needs of marginalized and underserved survivors

Increasing funding opportunities for these community-oriented programs enhance the diversity and innovation of culturally responsive housing.

### 7 Increase administrative support for DV programs and service providers

Allocate additional funding to support budgetary increases in staff time, new hires, and other administrative allowances for DV agencies to implement staff-intensive initiatives.

### 2 Identify diverse and revolving funding sources to strengthen sustainable permanent housing solutions.

The housing security of survivors and the stability of programs are dependent on flexible and reliable funding sources. By allocating and implementing diverse funding solutions, survivors have access to flexible funding options which are responsive to their needs, provide access to broader permanent housing options, and helps DV service providers to better respond to survivors. For example, policies that support flexible use of funds for the development of education and training opportunities, access to healthcare, or towards the use of survivors earning thriving wages contribute to their economic outcomes and long-term housing security.

### 4 Increase support for cross-sector collaborations among formal services to improve survivor access to housing resources

Provide federal and state funding to promote collaborative efforts between housing and domestic violence service providers and develop approaches for best practices.

### 6 Assess and improve coordination between federal departments and state administrators

Ensuring a more coordinated, timely, and concerted effort of providing federal guidance to state administrators on how funds can be used contributes to avoiding delays in funding disbursements. Additionally, improvements in systems coordination will aid in identifying and developing responsive solutions to unique implementation challenges that may arise.

## FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS AND ADVOCATES:

### 1 Dedicate more resources towards prevention education and awareness-raising activities

This should include information about the nature of homelessness, an individual's right to housing, how to access support services/resources, and federal and local enforcement of survivor housing protections.

### 3 Implement innovative interventions that support survivors in securing and sustaining permanent housing

Engage in coordinated advocacy efforts to increase equitable longer-term and permanent housing options for survivors, identify funding sources to provide flexible funding to survivors, implement Domestic Violence Housing First (DVHF) approaches, and provide information, resources, and support for homeownership to survivors.

### 2 Implement community coordinated efforts to support permanent housing

Hire DV regional service coordinators and increase community engagement efforts to facilitate housing identification and placement. Create learning communities and information networks to share information and resources on promising interventions and funding opportunities, particularly for programs serving survivors from marginalized/underserved communities.

### 4 Center survivor-centered and trauma-informed approaches in service delivery

Engage survivors at all levels of service provision, provide ongoing training, supervision, and support to DV service providers to implement culturally relevant and trauma-informed services, evaluate advocacy efforts and program services from a racial equity lens and prioritize the provision of low-barrier services to survivors.

