

OVERVIEW

When providing supportive housing options to families involved in the child welfare system with a history of domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, or sexual assault there are special considerations supportive housing providers should take to help increase family safety, assist with the family's child welfare goals, and ensure access to safe, affordable housing options.

Families involved with the child welfare system may have certain agency and court ordered requirements unique to those families that have an open child welfare case. As a supportive housing provider you want to be the best advocate for the survivor and the family while also helping to ensure the safety of the children and meeting any mandated reporting requirements you may have under state and local law.



Considerations when Providing Supportive Housing to Child Welfare Involved Families with a History of Domestic Violence

Below are a set of consideration and tips that can assist in partnering with child welfare involved families to offer quality supportive housing options.

Assisting Survivors in Securing Safe Housing

Consideration: Survivors of domestic violence may have poor credit/lack of credits, poor rental history, and/or a criminal record that is a direct result of domestic violence. These factors may make it difficult to find rental housing in the private market.

Tips:

- If the supportive housing project is in a building owned or operated by the non-profit, ensure there is project has a low barrier to entry.
- If the supportive housing project is scattered site, assist survivors in finding landlords that will work with tenants with barriers to signing a lease or consider master leasing the units.
- Develop strong relationships with landlords and property managers to help educate them on the barriers survivors may face when being approved for an apartment. This personal relationship can help foster sustainable housing options for survivors.
- If the project is utilizing U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding, such as Continuum of Care funds, Housing Choice Vouchers or Project Based Vouchers, or HOME funds, survivors have housing protections under the Violence Against Women Act, including protections from being denied housing assistance based on being a survivor of domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, or sexual assault. For more information, see HUD's [Final VAWA Rule](#).

Consideration: Landlord and property management may be concerned that the perpetrator of the domestic violence will cause a safety issue to the community. While there may be a real risk that the perpetrator may come on the property, there are steps that can be taken to reduce risk and increase the safety of the survivor and other tenants on the property.

Tips:

- Develop strong relationships with property management and landlords, utilizing provider and landlord agreements that outline the roles and responsibilities of the supportive housing agency, the landlord, and the tenant. Offer access to supportive housing staff that can help with landlord mediation.
- Develop strong relationships with local law enforcement that can help support the safety of the survivor and the other tenants. Work with your local domestic violence agency to foster stronger relationship with law enforcement that can better meet the safety needs of survivors.
- Work with survivors to offer choice in the location of the housing that ensure they feel safe and follow all confidentiality laws to ensure the location of their choice is not shared with anyone without their consent.
- Work with landlords to help ensure survivors have full access to their housing rights under the VAWA final rule, including access to emergency transfers when necessary for life and safety. And make partnerships with other supportive housing providers to help facilitate emergency transfers across projects.

Consideration: Survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, stalking and sexual assault residing in HUD-assisted housing have certain housing rights that you must work to protect. Many state and local jurisdictions have further protections for survivors.

Tips:

- Read and understand the [HUD Final VAWA Rule](#) – as a supportive housing provider utilizing HUD funds, you have differing responsibilities depending on the HUD funding stream. For assistance with understanding your responsibilities you can contact the [Safe Housing Partnership](#) – a federal technical assistance consortium.
- Work with your local domestic violence agency and legal advocacy organization to understand the state and local protections offered to survivors. Partner with the survivor to ensure they understand their rights and can advocate for the legal protections offered them.
- Partner with the child welfare system to help ensure that when a survivor needs to utilize certain rights, such as emergency transfers under the HUD VAWA rule, the child welfare agency is engaged to ensure the new housing is considered safe and appropriate for the children. Child welfare agencies have a set of requirements on the housing situations they can return a child to and/or allow a child to safely reside.

Addressing the Needs of a Survivor and Family

Consideration: Survivors of domestic violence may continue to face serious safety risks even after leaving a domestic violence situation. Safety planning is critical and should involve the child welfare worker and domestic violence advocates.

Tips:

- With the family's permission, utilize a teaming approach that brings together the supportive housing case management, the child welfare worker, and domestic violence advocates. Each social worker will be working with the family on different goal but one unified goal should always be safety. Utilizing the expertise of all three experts will help increase safety planning for the survivor and the survivor's children.
 - Work with the family and your child welfare partner to understand any court requirements around contact with the perpetrator and custody agreements. Be a partner to the family and your child welfare agency in helping to meet these court requirements while also helping to ensure the safety of the survivor.
 - You may have mandated reporting requirements under your state and local laws; you should be honest with the survivor regarding your obligations to report certain safety issues to the child welfare agency to ensure a trusting relationship.
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Consideration: Domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and sexual assault can cause major trauma to the survivor and the survivor's children. The effect of the trauma present in many different way effecting the ways in which the family engages in supportive services. The effects of trauma may become more apparent after the survivor meets their basic housing needs and settles into supportive housing.

Tips:

- Offer training and support for case management staff and property management staff on trauma informed care. Review policies and procedures with experts to ensure they are trauma informed and responsive to the effects of the trauma the family may have undergone.
- Offer a flexible service model that allows for you to increase the intensity of services when needed, remembering that the effects of the trauma may not present till months or even years into serving the family.
- Discuss any signs of trauma the survivor and/or children may be showing and ways to address trauma with your child welfare partner; utilize the expertise of the full team of social workers serving the family.
- Bring the children's child care provider and/or education partner into the team. The children may also suffer the effects of the trauma and the education partner can be critical in helping to address the trauma and ensure the child has access to trauma informed schooling practices.

Consideration: Perpetrators of domestic violence often use economic control as a method to keeping survivors trapped in the relationship. This may result in the survivor having limited employment history and other barriers to seeking employment.

Tips:

- Build in strong employment supports into your service model that can help address employment barriers and increase employment experience overtime.
- Remember that trauma response can also show up in employment settings as well, assist survivors in recognizing these signs and addressing them to help sustain employment over time.
- Child care may be a major barrier to employment for a survivor. Work with your child welfare partner to utilize any public resources available to assist with child care.

Safe Housing Partnerships

For more assistance in forming partnership to better address the needs of families with domestic violence histories please [contact the Safe Housing Partnership](#) – the federal Domestic Violence and Housing Technical Assistance Consortium. The Consortium is an innovative, collaborative approach to providing training, technical assistance, and resource development at the critical intersection of domestic and sexual violence, homelessness, and housing.

Funded and supported by an unprecedented partnership between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Justice, and Department of Housing and Urban Development, this multi-year Consortium brings together national, state, and local organizations with deep expertise on housing and domestic violence in order to collaboratively build and strengthen technical assistance to both housing/homelessness providers and domestic violence service providers. The Consortium aims to improve policies, identify promising practices, and strengthen collaborations necessary to improve housing options for survivors of domestic violence and their children in order to enhance safety, stability, and well-being.

Additional resources are available at 1rooffamilies.org

