

Adapting to the Evolving Needs of Survivors while Navigating Homelessness to Stability

A collaboration from the
Domestic Violence Regional Coordinators



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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REGIONAL COORDINATORS

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TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE AND
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When you hear the word safety, what comes to mind?
Whose definition of safety is that?

What does 'just leave' assume about a survivor's access to resources, housing, and support?

Have you ever seen a survivor punished for doing what they needed to do to survive?

In your role, how are you supporting survivors move beyond short-term safety into long-term stability?

Are there policies or practices in your agency that create obstacles to housing or safety – perhaps unintentionally?

What's one barrier to housing you've seen that isn't always obvious from the outside?

II. Reframing “leaving”: Safety and System Innovation



“Why don't they just leave?”

What does safety *really* look like?

Myth

Leaving means safety & that the abuse will stop.

All survivors should obtain restraining orders to protect them from further abuse.

Safety can only be achieved by going to a domestic violence program.

There are available shelter beds to meet the needs of all individuals leaving abusive relationships.

Reality

Leaving \neq safety—leaving is the most dangerous time for a survivor.

A restraining order may not always be the best option for some survivors.

Not all survivors go through a domestic violence program.

DV Shelters, both emergency and transitional have limited capacity and may not meet the needs of the person.

COERCIVE CONTROL

After Leaving

Legal System

Even after a survivor leaves an abusive relationship, the abuse may continue using the legal system by making Immigration threats, involving CPS/DCFS, family court & custody battles, criminal system

EFFECT

Survivors feel isolated and have fears of losing children, housing or immigration status.

Friends & Family Threats

Abusers may involve friends and family to: monitor, control, or harass, use children as messenger or discredit survivor

EFFECT

It undermines the survivors support network and can result in them being reluctant to seek help

Stalking & Harassment

Stalking and harassment are often used to instill fear, punish the survivor for leaving, and instill fear. Stalking and harassments can be physical, cyber, through others, or through the legal system

EFFECT

Can cause anxiety, PTSD, or sleep disruption. The survivor might feel trapped

Financial Abuse

Financial abuse can continue after leaving in the form of withholding child support, sabotaging employment or acquiring debt

EFFECT

The survivor feels stuck in the unsafe situation and can lead to debt and housing instability

III. Systems that Complicate Safety

IMMIGRATION

- Long waits for U-Visas caused by court backlogs
- Threats of deportation made to survivors

1

ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES

- Complex intake systems
- Each system has own program requirements
- Identification documents required

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

- Enforcement issues with restraining orders
- Self-defense leading to arrests
- Limited trust in law enforcement
- Bias and victim blaming

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SYSTEMIC BARRIERS

How do these systems complicate safety?

HOUSING

- Shelters are often at capacity
- Survivors flee into homelessness
- Shelters may not accommodate household pets
- Discrimination by property owners

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CHILD WELFARE

- Custody battles
- "Failure to Protect" used against survivors
- Custody could make it challenging to enter confidential programs

3

ECONOMIC

- Financial dependence on the abuser
- Job loss or instability
- Workplace discrimination

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IV. HOUSING INSTABILITY & MAKING CHOICES FOR SURVIVAL

Defining Housing Instability

- Frequent moves
- Challenges paying rent
- Threats of being evicted
- Couch-surfing, staying with friends/family
- Staying in shelters (DV, Homeless, Transitional etc.)
- Living in vehicles

Housing Instability for Survivors

Housing instability can:

- Compromise a survivor's safety
- Cause unsafe/temporary situations that are not sustainable (car, couch surfing, unable to stay with family, etc.)
- Increase risk of returning to the abuser
- Cause mental and physical decline
- Increase legal and custody challenges
- Add barriers to employment/economic security
- Increase vulnerability to other exploitation
- Delay in reporting abuse – to avoid losing income, housing, or community ties

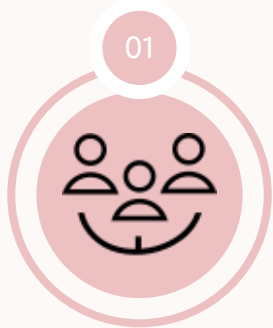
Why is Housing Critical?

- Provides immediate safety and security
- It is the foundation for long-term healing
- Provides address for legal and social services
- Breaks the cycle of abuse
- Due to leaving, survivors have increased risks of stalking, retaliatory violence – increases the need to access to safe and supportive spaces

SHELTER LIMITATIONS

SHORT TERM

Emergency shelters typical stay of 30 to 90 days (depending on VSP). Homeless shelters have 90 day stays.



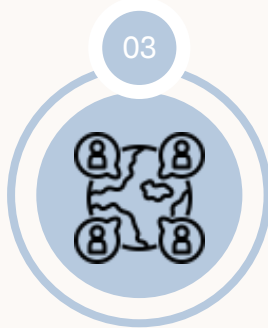
LIMITED CAPACITY

All shelters often operate at full capacity leading to delays in access. DV ES is only for those that are actively fleeing

02



03



CULTURAL NEEDS

Shelter may not meet the cultural or language needs of all survivors

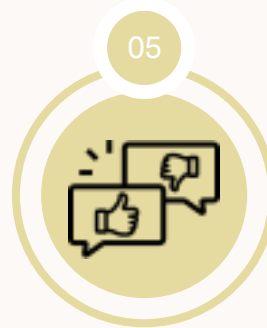
PETS

Some shelters can not accommodate pets or exotic pets



04

05



RESTRICTIONS

Some shelter rules can feel retraumatizing to the survivors.

GEOGRAPHY

Shelters may be far from support networks and essential services. DV ES/TS require relocation



06

V. PROVIDING A TRAUMA-INFORMED AND SURVIVOR-CENTERED APPROACH

A survivors' choices are not failures but adaptive responses to structural and personal barriers.

Emotional vs. Instrumental Support

Emotional Support

Providing empathy, encouragement, and emotional responsiveness to individuals

Examples:

1. Actively listening without judgement
2. Validating experiences
3. Offering encouragement
4. Creating a safe and supportive space

Instrumental Support

Offering and providing assistance, resource or guidance

Examples:

1. Connecting individuals to resources
2. Help with filling out forms
3. Warm-hand off to supportive services and referrals
4. Court navigation

What is a survivor-centered approach?



01

Safety

Ensure the safety of survivors including preventing and mitigating further violence.

- Asking survivors what support would help increase their safety



02

Confidentiality

Protect a survivor's information:

- Consent to share information, their autonomy to decide what information is shared and to who
- Survivors should never feel pressured to share information



03

Respect

Listening and showing empathy

- Honoring the survivors choice that may be affected by their intersectional identities
- Empower their right to make their own decisions



04

Non-discrimination

Ensuring that survivor's of all backgrounds can access services

Active efforts to engage those who may not feel welcomed by acknowledging that survivors can be anyone

- Staff training and supervision

TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES



SAFETY

- Safety is different for everyone
- Avoid victim blaming
- Model a nurturing environment and dialogue



TRANSPARENCY

- Predictability is reassuring
- Be reliable and consistent
- Be transparent
- Build rapport



CHOICE & EMPOWERMENT

- Respect participant's choice
- Present several options
- Skill building



CULTURAL LENS

- Culturally responsive services
- Recognizes historical trauma
- Values cultural connections



COLLABORATION

- Promote participation in planning
- Implement “power with”
- Link tenants with other service provider

Criminal Justice System

Complicating Safety Measures:

- Restraining orders are difficult to enforce, especially when abusers exploit system delays or manipulate court processes.
- Self-defense can lead to arrests and used as a manipulation tactic.
- Limited trust in law enforcement:
Especially in BIPOC communities.

Best Practices for Survivors:

- Connect and refer to legal organizations that have a knowledge in the dynamics of domestic violence.
- Understanding that self-defense for survivors can be complex. Never assume that self-defense has changed the power dynamic.
- Understand history of law enforcement and BIPOC community while respecting survivors choice in level of law enforcement involvement.

Immigration System

Complicating Safety Measures:

- Fear of Deportation: Undocumented survivors often stay silent due to ICE fears, despite state protections like SB 54.
- Language Barriers: Inconsistent interpreter access in courts and shelters creates miscommunication and uninformed decisions.
- Court Backlogs: Long immigration delays leave survivors in legal limbo with few protections.

Best Practices for Survivors:

- Educate survivors on legal protections. Documentation status does not mean they can not report.
- Have language line available–National Hotline to End DV has free language line.
- Connect and refer to legal organizations that have a knowledge in the dynamics of domestic violence and can connect to additional resources (mental health support, immigration education, etc.)

Child Welfare System

Complicating Safety Measures:

- “Failure to protect” is used against survivors.
- Custody battles re-victimize survivors: Abusers often manipulate the family court system.
- Distrust in Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) system.

Best Practices for Survivors:

- Shift from punitive to supportive models—e.g., prevention-focused Family First programs
- Partner with DV agencies for safety planning (court accompaniment, explanation/preparation of the process)
- Provide trauma-informed parenting support, not just surveillance.

Accessing Social Services

Complicating Safety Measures:

- Long waitlists: Shelters, housing vouchers & DV support services (counseling, legal, support groups)
- Eligibility challenges: Lack of important documents to access services
- Complex intake systems: Survivors repeat trauma stories to multiple agencies

Best Practices for Survivors:

- Work creatively with the survivor to problem solve and find alternative housing placement.
- Connecting to resources and agencies that can provide replacements for free or low cost.
- Prep the survivor on intake process for agency and provide safe space to decompress

Supporting Survivors Navigating Housing Instability

- Provide immediate safety and crisis intervention
 - Emergency shelter access, 24/7 hotlines, safety planning
 - Become familiar with the homeless system and referral process
 - Understand the eligibility requirement of Victim Service Provider Programs and work alongside VSP's to support one another
 - Offer low-barrier access to services within your agency
- Support with transitional and longer term housing solutions
 - Transitional housing programs (homeless and DV), rapid rehousing/time limited subsidy, affordable housing options
- Connect to legal and financial advocacy
 - Protection orders, housing programs, credit and debt support
- Case Management and Supportive Services
 - Provide culturally responsive systems and referrals while remaining survivor centered
 - Offer low-barrier access to services within your agency
- Respect the survivor's choices even if they are choices we would not make
 - A survivor is the expert in their life

Housing Resources for Survivors

01

Shelters

DV Shelters (Emergency
& Transitional)

Homeless Shelters

- [Find a Shelter](#)

02

Safe Parking LA

A safe space to park car
overnight

[Home - Safe Parking LA](#)

03

Time Limited Subsidy (TLS)

Short-term
financial/rental
assistance through
homeless providers

04

Survivors First

Short-term
financial/rental
assistance through City
of Los Angeles funding

Housing Resources for Survivors

05

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Protections

Emergency Transfers for eligible housing programs

Cannot be denied admission to/or removed from housing program

06

Early Lease Termination

Can terminate lease if experiencing domestic violence [Civil Code 1946.7]

07

Housing Protections

Victims of abuse can have their locks changed. [Cal. Civ. Code § 1941.5(a), (f)(2)]

Property owners cannot punish you for calling law enforcement. [Cal.Civ.Code § 1946.8]

08

California Victim Compensation Board

Can support with moving costs, eligible expenses vary

Domestic Violence Regional Coordinator Support

- DVRCs can coordinate/conduct agency trainings on various topics including domestic violence, human trafficking, stalking, sexual assault, and coordinated entry system.
- 1:1 consults with service providers on the dynamics of domestic violence, safety planning, etc.
- Support with system navigation of homeless service or victim services

Intersectionality

- What is intersectionality
 - *“the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage”*



Agencies that Provide Culturally Specific Services in LA County



Center for the Pacific Asian Family (CPAF) is committed to ending domestic and sexual violence in Asian Pacific Islander (API) communities by breaking through language, cultural, and institutional barriers.



Korean American Family Services (KFAM) specializes in providing linguistically and culturally appropriate services through its multilingual and multicultural staff.



Niswa is committed to helping underserved muslims and other minority communities by providing culturally and linguistically competent counseling, case management, referral, crisis intervention, domestic violence shelter, and preventative health education.



The LGBTQ Center Long Beach's mission to advance equity for LGBTQ people through culturally responsive advocacy, education, programs, and services.



South Asian Helpline and Referral Agency (SAHARA) is a grass root organization focused to end all forms of abuse in the South Asian Community, the underserved and the marginalized.

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THANK YOU!