DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
HOUSING FIRST:
SAFETY AND STABILITY
FOR SURVIVORS

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Overlap of Homelessness and DV

- Domestic violence and homelessness are interrelated
- As many as 80% of women and children who are homeless have experienced domestic violence

People of Color are More Likely to Experience Homelessness

- The general population in the U.S. is 74% White, 12.4% Black, and 17.2% Hispanic/Latinx. Yet 78% of homeless people are people of color.
- Black people comprise 13% of the general population in the U.S. and 26% of those living in poverty, yet account for more than 40% of the homeless population. Poverty rates alone don’t explain the over-representation.
- Homelessness among American Indian/Alaska Native people was 3-8x higher than their representation in the general population. SPARC Report
Root Causes of Homelessness are Structural

- Lack of affordable housing, economic immobility, and systemic racism
- People did not become homeless because of lack of financial resources, but rather as a result of fragile social networks marked by two weak points: lack of financial capital and lack of emotional support. 
  **Network impoverishment**
- DV also identified as a common thread in the lives of many respondents across gender and age.

SPARC Report

The Housing First Philosophy

- Housing is a right.
- Housing FIRST, not Housing READY
- No barriers for housing access
- Tailored, voluntary services

Survivor-Driven, Trauma-Informed Mobile Advocacy
Flexible Financial Assistance
Community Engagement
**DV Housing First History**

- 2019-2014 Gates investment in WSCADV to pilot housing first for DV survivors
- Findings emerge suggesting that DVHF is a successful approach to supporting survivors in becoming safe and stable
- 2014 Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation invites WSCADV to coordinate 5 year demonstration project
- 2015-2020 Phase III Demonstration Project

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**Survivor-driven, Trauma-informed, Mobile Advocacy**

- Advocates focus on addressing the needs identified by survivors rather than on pre-determined needs promoted by agencies
- Advocates are mobile, meeting survivors where it is safe and convenient for them
- Advocates engage in trauma-informed practice

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**Trauma Informed**

- Establish safety
- Discuss triggers
- Rebuild control
- Establish connection

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Flexible Funding Assistance

- Related to housing
- AND funds that are critical to housing stability

Community Engagement

- Advocates
  - Housing providers
  - Service providers
  - Community members

Restoring Connection

- Community is vital for restoration of social network.
- Community is vital for a survivor to heal and for children to build resiliency.
- Community is vital for connection to resources and relationships.
- Community is vital for safety.
**Housing Options**

- Retain current housing (Prevention/Diversion)
- Rapid Rehousing (Private Market; Short – term HUD funding)
- Subsidized Housing (HUD Tenant or Project based housing)
- CoC Permanent Supportive Housing

**Level of Effort will Differ by Need**

- **Light Touch**—One time financial assistance, with or w/out brief advocacy
- **Medium Touch**—Longer term advocacy (3-6 months) with substantial financial assistance
- **Higher Needs**—Intensive, long term advocacy with significant financial support

**DVHF Demonstration Evaluation**

- 2 Regions, 4 agencies in each (urban-King County, rural-South Central Washington)
- Agencies receive $30,000 flexible financial assistance per year (4 years)
- No funding for staffing or infrastructure
BIGGEST QUESTION

Are we setting survivors up to fail?
What happens when the money and the advocacy go away?

Community
Rebuilt Social Network=Resilience and Housing Retention

Evidence for the DV Housing First Model

Evidence for DVHF Components
Does Flexible Funding Work?

- Evaluated an innovative program in Washington, DC
- DASH – District Alliance for Safe Housing

DASH Provides a Range of Services:

- A 43-unit apartment-style “shelter”
- A transitional-to-permanent scattered site safe housing program
- Housing Resource Center: A variety of homeless prevention services through:
  - Advocacy
  - The Survivor Resilience Fund (a flexible funding program), where funds are given to help survivors attain stable, safe housing

Guiding Principles in Flexible Funding Decisions

- “Can any other organization provide this resource?”
- “Will this money help this person to retain housing, not just today, but over time?”
- Process is survivor-centered, accessible, and respectful
- Process is quick to respond to urgent situations
Evaluation Design

• Survivors invited to participate after they received flex funding
• Interviewed at 30-days, 3-months and 6-months post-funding
• 55 survivors in study
  ▪ 95% retention rate at three months
  ▪ 87% retention at six months

Who Was Helped?

• 53 women, 2 men
• Average age 34 (range 21-57 years old)
• Primarily African American
• 82% have children (range 0-4)

Amount of Flexible Funding Awarded

• Average amount: $2,078
• Range: $275 - $8,508

Funds were used for:
  Moving expenses
  Utilities
  Car repair
  Back rent
  Storage unit fees
  Out-of-state travel to court for custody hearing
  Other needs
### Housing at Six Months Follow-up

94% housed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Up-to-date on rent</th>
<th>Somewhat behind on rent</th>
<th>No way to pay next month’s rent</th>
<th>Homeless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37 (76%)</td>
<td>6 (12%)</td>
<td>3 (6%)</td>
<td>3 (6%)</td>
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### Impact on Well-being

- Midway through the evaluation, we started asking at 6 months (n=31):
  - Thinking back over the last 6 months, when you went to DASH for funds... would you say that, overall, your life is better off, worse off, or no different:
    - 100% felt “better off”
  - And would you say you are more hopeful about the future than you were then? Less hopeful? Or no change?
    - 90% felt “more hopeful”

### Impact on Safety

- We later began asking survivors in 6 month interviews if they had experienced any domestic violence since receiving their flexible funding

- Of the 23 survivors asked the question:
  - 20 (91%) reported no further DV
  - 1 reported receiving harassing phone calls
  - 2 experienced further DV
The Promise of Flexible Funding

- Flex funding with brief advocacy is promising option for some survivors
  - Those who were relatively stable, and are now experiencing a crisis
- Flex funding is far cheaper than shelter
- Flex funding with longer-term advocacy (DV Housing First, DV Rapid Re-housing) is also promising, needs further research

Does DVHF Work?

- Early evidence that mobile advocacy leads to greater well-being and less abuse over time (Sullivan & Bybee, 1999)
- Pilot evaluation in Washington State that DVHF led to greater housing stability (Mbilinyi, 2005)
- Ongoing, rigorous evaluation in Washington State following survivors over 2 years
- Ongoing evaluation in California, focused on using VOCA dollars for DVHF model
  - Need to understand what it takes to do the model

Evidence from California

- As part of a statewide evaluation of the DVHF model, NEWS (in Napa) is being highlighted as an exemplar of their outstanding work in the three pillars of the model
- In the last 18 months they have helped >50 families stay in their own homes, and >50 families move to safe housing
Information Gathered about NEWS

- The evaluators visited Napa twice to interview staff, survivors who had received services, a local landlord, and a local property manager.
- Focus of our report was to identify what NEWS specifically did as an organization to support each of the 3 pillars of the model.

Supports for Advocacy

- Leadership offers ongoing training and weekly supervision meetings, and expect staff to consider survivors' overall wellbeing.
- Leadership fully supports advocates' flexible schedules and efforts to work with survivors in the community.
- Advocates have relatively small caseloads to provide services that promote long-term improvements.

Supports for Flexible Funding

NEWS organized their budget into 4 main categories of financial assistance:

- Prevention/low-touch: clients needing financial support for 0 – 3 months
- Short-term: clients needing financial support for 4 – 6 months
- Mid-term: clients needing financial support for 7 – 12 months
- Long-term: clients needing financial support from more than 12 months
Supports for Community Engagement

NEWS’ leadership provides staff time and support for:

- **Proactive engagement** with community members who can support the safety, stability, and wellbeing of survivors
  - Mechanic
- **Collaboration and partnership** with several private landlords and property managers in the area
  - Mutually beneficial relationship

Increasing Interest in DVHF

WSCADV created a toolkit: