



November 2, 2015

SNAPS In Focus: Ensuring Access for Survivors of Domestic Violence

Many of you may not know that I started my career in homeless services as a VISTA Volunteer in a program that primarily served survivors of domestic violence and that worked closely with the local domestic violence shelter. In the Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS), we have staff who specialize in this area and who work closely with our federal and national partners to ensure access to programs for survivors.

As we conclude October – which was National Domestic Violence Awareness Month – we thought we should take the opportunity to talk a bit about the intersection between intimate partner violence (IPV), housing instability, and homelessness, and to raise awareness and explore more ways in which collaboration and strategic partnerships can ensure that survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking have access to safe and affordable housing.

Persons experiencing domestic violence, particularly women and children with limited economic resources, are at increased vulnerability to homelessness. According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) report, nearly 10 million people in the U.S. experienced physical violence by an intimate partner in 2010. Domestic violence often includes exertion of financial and psychological control – leaving survivors with poor credit, limited networks of support, and few resources. Many survivors must leave their homes to escape violence but may not have access to safe housing and needed services. The good news is that a growing number of programs that serve survivors of domestic violence are providing short- or medium-term housing assistance to help families move quickly to safe, permanent housing, allowing emergency domestic violence shelters to make beds available for those in the most immediate danger. This helps because we know that when shelter is inaccessible or unavailable, many survivors end up in precarious and often unsafe housing situations where their abuser might be able to locate them, and some may feel forced to return to the abuser if they do not have viable options to assure housing stability and safety for their children.

At HUD, we recognize this intersection between domestic violence and homelessness and we want our stakeholders to know that we are committed to finding effective ways to serve this population. Through an interagency collaboration process led by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), we are working with our federal partners to ensure that **across systems** we are reducing barriers faced by survivors of domestic violence. As a result of this interagency collaboration, HUD has partnered with the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop the federal *Domestic Violence and Housing Technical Assistance Consortium*. The three agencies have teamed up and are awarding \$2.3 million to four organizations to provide national training, technical assistance, and resource development on domestic violence and housing. The work of this Consortium will have a direct impact on strengthening partnerships between the domestic violence community and the housing and homeless service system, resulting in an increase in safe housing options for survivors of domestic violence. We will be announcing more specifics on this work in the future.

Other initiatives that I'd like to share with you include the following:



Coordinated Entry and Victim Service Providers Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Every Continuum of Care (CoC) is required to establish a coordinated entry system. HUD's primary goals for coordinated entry processes are that assistance be allocated as effectively as possible and that it be easily accessible no matter where or how people present. HUD is currently working on a set of FAQs to help communities ensure that the needs of survivors of domestic violence are incorporated into the CoC's coordinated entry process. HUD will post these FAQs on the HUD Exchange for your reference.

Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for the FY 2015 CoC Program Competition

The [FY 2015 CoC Program Competition NOFA](#) contains a greater emphasis on ensuring that CoCs are addressing the needs of persons fleeing domestic violence than in previous years. Although projects that serve survivors of domestic violence have long been an integral part of the CoC, in 2015 HUD clarified or added several policy and programs areas related to domestic violence programs and survivors:

- Within HUD's policy priorities HUD has included the following:
 - CoCs should ensure that their projects address the safety needs of persons fleeing domestic violence; and
 - CoCs should ensure inclusive decision-making – which means including domestic violence providers and others in the CoC's planning body and decision-making structures.
- The NOFA includes points for addressing the needs of victims of domestic violence;
- New this year – persons fleeing domestic violence situations are included in eligible populations served by rapid re-housing projects;
- Persons fleeing domestic violence situations are included in eligible populations served by new permanent supportive housing (PSH) projects that will exclusively serve chronically homeless individuals and families; and
- A reminder that domestic violence providers do not participate in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), but must use a comparable database and provide de-identified information to the CoC.

VAWA/HOPWA Project Demonstration NOFA

- In August, HUD released a NOFA for the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)/Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) Project Demonstration – a collaborative effort between HUD's Office of HIV/AIDS Housing (OHH) and the DOJ's Office of Violence Against Women (OVW). This innovative project will examine the intersection between IPV and HIV, and help selected communities to integrate housing and services in meaningful ways at the local level.
- For more information visit the [VAWA/HOPWA Project Demonstration Grant Opportunity page](#).

As always, thank you for your commitment to ending homelessness, and for the hard work you do on a daily basis to serve those who experience homelessness in your community.

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