

NYSCADV

NEW YORK STATE COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Testimony Of The New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence To The Joint Budget Hearing Of The Senate Finance Committee And Assembly Ways And Means Committee Regarding Housing

Submitted In Writing By Connie Neal, Executive Director

February 5, 2015

On behalf of the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCDV), I want to express our appreciation to the Governor for including domestic violence victims in the list of vulnerable populations eligible for the new \$116 million supportive housing initiative available through the Mortgage Settlement Proceeds Trust Fund Account. NYSCADV is a statewide membership organization that works to create and support the social change necessary to prevent and confront all forms of domestic violence. Our membership consists of local domestic violence service providers and allied organizations across the state. It is with this collective voice of programs and the victims of domestic violence that they serve, that we ask the legislature to not only uphold this inclusion and ensure that there is a specific funding stream that prioritizes the unique needs of victims of domestic violence across the state, but to also increase the available funding to a level that supports 30,000 units.

BACKGROUND

Domestic violence victims and their children often face very serious housing problems related to the acts of violence perpetrated against them. The intentional sabotage of a victim's economic stability is a common tactic of abuse. The damage this causes to a victim's credit, rental and employment history makes finding safe, affordable housing very difficult.

The lack of affordable housing and long waiting lists for subsidized/supported housing mean that many domestic violence victims and their children are forced to choose between living with an abuser and life on the streets. The National Network to End Domestic Violence's (NNEDV) 2013 Census revealed that on one day (September 17th, 2013) in New York State, there were at least 186 requests for housing from domestic violence victims that programs were unable to help with. (This number only reflects the numbers from the programs that had the capacity to participate in the census - 74 out of 92 total programs statewide). While the programs do not always know what happens when they have to turn away a survivor because they don't have the capacity to provide assistance, NNEDV states that "61% report that victims are forced to return to their abuser, 30% report that victims become homeless, and 7% report that the families are forced to live in their cars."¹

In addition, victims and their children are often discriminated against based on the violence perpetrated against them. Civil legal services providers across the country have reported hundreds of instances of tenants being evicted or denied housing because of their status as a victim of domestic violence.² A study in 2008 found that

¹ National Network to End Domestic Violence (2014). 2013 *Domestic Violence Counts – New York Summary*. Retrieved on January 29, 2015 from <http://nnedv.org/downloads/Census/DVCounts2013/AllStateSummariesMerged.pdf>

² National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty & National Network to End Domestic Violence (2007). *Lost Housing, Lost Safety: Survivors of Domestic Violence Experience Housing Denials and Evictions Across the Country*

65% of the test applicants looking for housing on behalf of a domestic violence survivor were either refused housing entirely, or were offered more unfavorable lease terms and conditions than a non-victim.³

This all demonstrates how finding permanent, safe housing after escaping an abuser is one of the central struggles faced by victims of domestic violence. According to a fact sheet compiled by NNEDV:

- 92% of homeless women have experienced severe physical or sexual abuse at some point in their lives, and 63% have been victims of intimate partner violence as adults.⁴
- 93% of homeless mothers have experienced a trauma, the most common trauma involved violence by family or known perpetrator⁵
- Over 80% of survivors entering domestic violence shelters identified “finding housing I can afford” as a need, second only to “safety for myself” (85%).⁶
- Up to 57% of all homeless women report that domestic violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness.⁷

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING IS NECESSARY TO HELP VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The services provided in supportive housing programs include job readiness, safety planning, domestic violence counseling, eviction prevention, financial literacy, and children’s services. Supportive housing is cost effective. For example, New Destiny Housing, which builds affordable housing for victims of domestic violence in NYC, and provides supportive services to its residents, has proven to be effective in keeping families together and stable in permanent housing for a mere fraction of the cost to maintain a family in a New York City homeless shelter (\$3,300 in service costs per household per year vs. \$37,000 including facility and service costs). Yet, less than 1% of supportive housing in NYC is designated for victims of domestic violence⁸.

THE DHCR FUNDING PROPOSAL WILL POSITIVELY IMPACT VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Including domestic violence survivors in the available \$66,000,000 of the Mortgage Settlement Proceeds Trust Fund Account for supportive housing services is a very welcome step. This new funding will help domestic violence programs that received the 2014 capital funding available through OTDA’s HHAP to provide supportive housing services to the clients that will occupy the new units and will establish a new relationship between OTDA and DHCR in supporting the housing needs of dv survivors. Ensuring that there is funding dedicated specifically to the unique supportive housing needs of domestic violence victims is a strong step in the right direction to help end domestic violence in New York State

³ The Equal Rights Center (April 2008). *No Vacancy: Housing Discrimination Against Survivors of Domestic Violence in the District of Columbia*.

⁴ Browne, A. 1998. "Responding to the Needs of Low Income and Homeless Women Who are Survivors of Family Violence." *Journal of American Medical Women's Association*. 53(2): 57-64.

⁵ The Wilson Foundation. 2013. SHIF Study. Retrieved on February 1 from <http://wilsonfdn.org/study-highlights-link-between-homelessness-trauma/>

⁶ National Network to End Domestic Violence (n.d.). Domestic Violence, Housing, and Homelessness Fact Sheet retrieved on January 29, 2015 from http://nnedv.org/downloads/Policy/NNEDV_DVHousing_factsheet.pdf

⁷ National Network to End Domestic Violence (n.d.). Domestic Violence, Housing, and Homelessness Fact Sheet retrieved on January 29, 2015 from http://nnedv.org/downloads/Policy/NNEDV_DVHousing_factsheet.pdf

⁸ New Destiny Housing (n.d.). Homelessness and Domestic Violence in New York City: The facts. Retrieved on January 30, 2014 from [http://www.newdestinyhousing.org/userfiles/file/New%20Destiny%20Handouts%208%2028%2013%20FINAL%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.newdestinyhousing.org/userfiles/file/New%20Destiny%20Handouts%208%2028%2013%20FINAL%20(2).pdf).