

Homelessness and Domestic Violence in New York City: An Overview

Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness in New York City, devastating not only individuals but their families and the community as a whole: at least 1/3 of families using the family shelter system are survivors.

Survivors often lack access to New York City's homeless housing resources and as a result, the vast majority remain homeless, often with little choice but to return to their abusers.

New Destiny seeks to end domestic violence by providing survivors and their families with permanent, affordable housing and supportive services that will guarantee their long-term safety and wellbeing.

Here's what we know

Secure housing is the only way to ensure the long-term safety of domestic violence survivors and their families, and place them on a path toward economic independence.

But for many, housing alone is not enough. The availability of services tailored to the individual needs of survivors is essential to help them achieve self-sufficiency.

Affordable housing is not only a lifesaving resource for survivors, but saves the City significant money over the long-term and reduces the usage of City shelters.

The cost to house a family in a shelter for one year is \$36,000, compared to an average of \$12,000 per year in rent for permanent affordable housing.

Solutions:

There are several minor adjustments we can make today that will substantially increase survivors' access to existing housing resources.

We also need to expand beyond current resources and introduce bold new initiatives that will quickly transfer survivors to safe and stable permanent homes.



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Homelessness and Domestic Violence in New York City: The Facts

Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness.

- At least **1/3 of the families** using New York City's family shelter system are **homeless due to domestic violence**. (SOURCE: NYC Consolidated Plan 2010)
- In 2011, a national survey of 738 domestic violence shelters found that 78% (nearly eight out of ten) reported an **increase in women seeking assistance** from abuse. (SOURCE: Mary Kay Truth about Abuse 2012 Survey)
- In New York City, domestic violence is the second leading cause of homelessness. (SOURCE: NYC Independent Budget Office Fiscal Brief, November 2014)

Survivors of domestic violence, compared to other homeless populations, lack access to existing housing resources.

- While at least **31% of homeless families** in NYC are **homeless because of domestic violence**, **less than 1% of supportive housing** in NYC is **designated for domestic violence survivors**. (SOURCE: New Destiny Housing)
- **80% of domestic violence shelter residents** who **exited the emergency shelter system** in 2011 were unable to secure permanent housing or a transfer to a transitional shelter, leaving them **with no safe place to go**.
- **Only 28%** of domestic violence emergency shelter residents are **eligible for NYCHA'S Domestic Violence priority**, greatly reducing their ability to obtain public housing.
- Of those that are eligible for Domestic Violence priority, **only 3% are placed in NYCHA housing** before their emergency shelter stay ends.

Without stable permanent homes, many survivors wind up back on the street, often with little choice but to return to their abusers.

- In 2011, **only 10% of emergency shelter residents** were able to obtain **permanent housing** before their shelter stay expired.

Many survivors are unable to obtain employment that will support them and their families, making supportive services, including job training, critical to their long-term security.

- Nearly **54% of heads of households** in the emergency shelter system had **no work experience** or had worked for one year or less before entering a shelter.
- In order to **afford a two-bedroom apartment** in New York at fair market rent, an individual **needs to make \$20.30 per hour**.

Providing affordable housing to survivors of domestic violence is a cost-effective option that will save the City significant money over the long-term.

- **The cost to house a family in shelter** for one year is **\$36,000** compared to an average cost of \$12,000 per year in rent for **affordable rental housing**.
- The City spent **\$140 million on shelter for domestic violence survivors** compared to **\$400,000 for permanent housing**. (SOURCE: New York City Independent Budget Office 2007 Study)

* Unless otherwise noted, the above information is sourced from New Destiny Housing's October 2012 report, *Out In The Cold: Housing Cuts Leave Domestic Violence Survivors With No Place To Go*.

Homelessness and Domestic Violence in New York City: Policy Recommendations

Federal Initiatives (specifically focused on domestic violence and permanent housing)

HUD/McKinney-Vento Supportive Housing Program

- Mandate that local Continuum of Care Coalitions (CoCs) count homeless domestic violence victims (sheltered and unsheltered) AND show domestic violence homeless as a subpopulation on the HUD dashboard.
- Provide extra points for permanent housing projects serving individuals fleeing domestic violence (Category 4 homeless).

Other HUD initiatives

- Require that local public housing authorities prioritize domestic violence survivors in Category 1 and Category 4 homeless (individuals fleeing domestic violence) for Section 8 vouchers and public housing.

Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women

- Expand the existing Transitional Housing Assistance Grants to include permanent housing projects for domestic violence survivors, not just transitional housing.

New York State Initiatives

- Foster success of residents in NYS funded affordable housing.
 - Increase funding for NYSSHP (New York State Supportive Housing Program) AND make NYSSHP funding available annually through a rolling RFP.
- Raise the “shelter allowance” for public assistance recipients statewide to a level closer to fair market rent.
- Support the NYC LINC rental subsidy programs (LINC II-VI) which do not currently have state participation.
- Facilitate the development of affordable and supportive housing projects by aligning NYS and NYC documents and requirements for capital programs.

New York City Initiatives

- Ensure housing stability by providing NYC HRA funding for support services at permanent supportive housing serving homeless domestic violence survivors built with NYC capital funds.
- Include domestic violence survivors from the HRA shelter system as an eligible population for NYC HPD homeless housing resources – e.g., Section 8 vouchers and homeless set-aside units in HPD-supported projects.
- Ensure that homeless domestic violence survivors using the HRA shelter system are given the same priority for public housing as homeless residents of the DHS system.
- Promote interagency coordination among HPD and the agencies in charge of homeless policy – HRA and DHS.
- Include victims of domestic violence as a subpopulation on the NYC Coalition on the Continuum of Care (CCoC) homeless count dashboard.
- Expedite transition to permanent housing.
 - Develop and implement an assessment tool to evaluate housing need of persons fleeing domestic violence to ensure that available housing resources are effectively allocated.
 - Provide all eligible residents of emergency domestic violence shelters with appropriate available housing subsidies by day 45 in shelter.