

Facilitator's Guide: Assessing Coalitions' Strengths and Challenges Around Addressing Sexual Assault Survivors' Unmet Housing Needs



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Facilitator's Guide: Assessing Coalitions' Strengths and Challenges Around Addressing Sexual Assault Survivors' Unmet Housing Needs

Sexual assault coalitions have not historically received funding to address survivors' housing needs ([District Alliance for Safe Housing, 2015](#)). Most rapes occur outside the contexts of domestic violence (DV) and intimate partner violence (IPV). In 2016/2017 it is estimated that a little over 39% of women and 12.5% of men experienced rape in an intimate partner relationship ([Basile, et al., 2022](#)). Most people (over 56% women and over 57% men) are raped by an acquaintance (such as co-workers or landlords), family member, person of authority, a brief encounter, or a stranger ([Basile, et al., 2022](#)). Even dual sexual assault/domestic violence coalitions that receive funding to address housing needs are usually funded to focus on DV or IPV only and not the full range of sexual assault ([National Housing Law Project \[NHLP\], 2018](#)).

Limitations on many federal grants do not fund the full spectrum of services sexual assault survivors need to find and keep stable housing, especially amongst communities of color and other marginalized groups. As a result, many state and territory sexual assault coalitions' training and advocacy work on housing may feel inconsistent and under-resourced.

In response to growing acceptance that survivors of sexual violence need solutions to housing that go beyond emergency domestic violence shelters or transitional housing ([National Sexual Violence Resource Center \[NSVRC\], 2020](#)), this guide was designed to help you as a coalition (and the rape crisis programs you serve) to consider how best to meet the housing needs of survivors of sexual violence.

Coalitions can use this discussion guide with staff members and/or in conversation with local programs. The activities are designed to clarify the many connections between sexual violence and housing for people who are newer to this work. These questions also begin a process of assessing what knowledge and relationships coalitions can leverage to deepen their housing work for sexual assault survivors.

Coalition Discussion Guide

Housing is an integral part of staying safe from sexual violence and a basic need for healing. Sexual violence can be the reason someone needs to find new housing, and the lack of safe and stable housing can be the reason someone is more vulnerable to sexual violence ([NSVRC, 2020](#)).

Consider the hypothetical scenarios below where sexual violence has created a housing need for survivors. These scenarios are based on common situations survivors have reached out to local programs for support in the past

- Mara is an 8-year-old who was sexually abused by her uncle, with whom she and her mother, Monet, live. Monet needs housing for herself and her child. Monet is worried about moving Mara from her school and the support system she has built with school staff. Monet also needs to live within walking distance of the bus or train to help her get to and from work.
- Michael was sexually abused by a clergy member as a child. He has struggled with the mental and emotional impacts for years. He does not have any retirement savings and is approaching an age where he can no longer work. If he retires, he will not have enough income to afford his mortgage and utilities.
- Jordan is being sexually assaulted by a current landlord and needs to find another place to live to escape the violence. Jordan is also the primary caregiver for their two nephews, ages 7 and 11, who live with Jordan, though Jordan is not their legal guardian.
- Nora was sexually assaulted while migrating from her country of birth to the United States years ago. She works two jobs and is being told she doesn't qualify for housing assistance, even though she doesn't make enough money to afford housing for herself and her daughter. She is currently living with multiple friends and the lack of privacy and personal space is triggering her trauma. Her living arrangements are harming her ability to work and maintain her income.
- Nathanael is an adult survivor of child sexual abuse and was sexually assault while incarcerated. He is being released and needs help finding housing.
- Gene has a disability and lives in an assisted living facility. They were sexually assaulted by a personal care attendant there. They can live independently, and they (along with their new non-abusive caregivers) need housing.
- Isaiah is currently homeless and has been sexually assaulted by other residents of the local warming center and homeless shelter. He would like long-term housing, but his sole source of income is a monthly disability payment.

▶ Part 1: Small Group Discussion

In small groups, pick one or two scenarios to discuss in depth and answer the following questions:

What is happening in this scenario?

What do you know from the description?

What do you not know?

How might the survivor's race and geographic location impact their experience?

What does the survivor need in this scenario?

How might the information you don't know about the scenario impact what the survivor wants or needs?

What skills, knowledge, or relationships might an advocate need to help that survivor get housing or stay housed?

What skills, knowledge, or relationships might coalition staff need to be able to provide those resources to advocates?

What supports currently exist to help advocates address the survivor's housing issue?

What barriers currently hinder an advocate's ability to address the survivor's housing issue?

How can the coalition help local programs get the resources they need to address these housing issues?

What systems, groups, or agencies impact housing for survivors?

What kind of relationships or partnerships does the coalition have, or want to have, to be able to assist survivors interacting with those systems?

- **Consider what kind of relationships the coalition has with the following groups:**
 - ◇ Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Continuum of Care
www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/
 - ◇ HUD Homelessness Assistance Funding grantees
www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/
 - ◇ Rental housing owners and managers associations
 - ◇ Property management companies and their associations
 - ◇ Housing developers and their associations
 - ◇ Mental health service providers and their associations
 - ◇ Homeowner programs
 - ◇ Financial planning for non-profit organizations
 - ◇ Anti-homelessness organizations
 - ◇ Other organizations offering similar housing assistance
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|||▶ Part 2: Large Group Discussion

After spending time in small groups, invite people to share back what they talked about. Begin making a list of all the answers. Then start looking for themes.

Consider also discussing as a large group:

What work focused on housing has the coalition done in the past, is doing currently, or already has planned?

- **How was this determined and funded?**
 - **Was it working?**
 - **What can be changed?**
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What stories are advocates, local programs, and/or coalition staff hearing about the housing needs of survivors in your area?

How do the themes that came from the small group discussions relate to the stories local programs and coalition staff know about?

What creative ways are local programs meeting sexual assault survivors' housing needs now?

How can the coalition support, bolster, or strengthen the creative ways local programs are meeting sexual assault survivors' housing needs?

Is the coalition interested in addressing sexual assault survivors' housing needs?

How can the coalition learn more about sexual assault survivors' housing needs?

- What resources exist, if any, to support doing this work?
- What further information do coalitions need?

|||▶ Part 3: Gathering Information from your Membership Programs

Questions in the appendix can be used by coalitions with their member programs to identify the housing needs of sexual assault survivors. The focus is on those who are experiencing sexual assault from someone other than an intimate partner (past or current).

For additional resources on sexual violence and housing see the following resources:

- National Sexual Violence Resource Center's Sexual Violence & Housing Resource Collection www.nsvrc.org/sexual-violence-housing-resource-collection
- Safe Housing Partnerships www.safehousingpartnerships.org/

About Safe Housing Partnerships

Safe Housing Partnerships is the website for the Domestic Violence and Housing Technical Assistance Consortium (DVHTAC), which is funded by a partnership between the U.S. Department of Justice, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Consortium supports a technical assistance team of five national organizations: Collaborative Solutions, Inc., National Alliance for Safe Housing, National Network to End Domestic Violence, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, and National Sexual Violence Resource Center. DVHTAC provides training, technical assistance, and resource development at the critical intersection of homelessness and domestic violence and sexual assault.

References

Basile, K. C., Smith, S. G., Kresnow, M., Khatiwada S., & Leemis, R. W. (2022). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 report on sexual violence*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs/nisvsReportonSexualViolence.pdf>

District Alliance for Safe Housing. (2015). *Community-based advocates toolkit: How to make sure your clients have safe housing*. Safe Housing Partnership. <https://safehousingpartnerships.org/node/77>

National Housing Law Project. (2018). *Housing rights of domestic violence survivors: A state and local law compendium*. <https://www.nhlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2017-DV-State-and-Local-Housing-Laws-Compendium.pdf>

National Sexual Violence Resource Center. (2020). *Sexual violence and housing infographics* [Webpage]. <https://www.nsvrc.org/resource/2595/sexual-violence-housing-infographic>

US Housing and Urban Development [HUD]. (2024a). *CoC: Continuum of care program*. <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/>

HUD. (2024b). *Homeless assistance programs*. <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/>

Appendix

Housing for Sexual Violence Survivors

Your coalition wants to understand the housing needs of sexual assault survivors in our state/territory and we need your help. We've put together the following questions to help us understand more about the work local programs are and are not able to do to connect survivors with housing. Your answers to these questions will help us develop new trainings and resources and will help us develop our advocacy agenda.

The information you share in this form will not be used against local programs or advocates in any way.

Questions

Program Name: _____

Name of person filling out this form: _____

Title: _____

Phone number: _____

Email: _____

Population(s) your program serves: _____

Service area: _____

Are you a supervisor or manager at your agency? (Y/N)

May we contact you to follow up on any of your answers? (Y/N)

1. How confident, on a scale of 1-10 (1 = "not confident at all", 10 = "I'm a housing expert"), do you feel helping sexual assault survivors address their housing needs when the sexual assault is a part of domestic violence (DV) or intimate partner violence (IPV)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. What brought you to that number?

3. How confident, on a scale of 1-10 (1 = "not confident at all", 10 = "I'm a housing expert"), do you feel helping sexual assault survivors address their housing needs when the sexual assault is not also a part of domestic violence or intimate partner violence?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. What brought you to that number?

5. If you answered below a 9 or 10 on question three, are you interested in developing more skills? What do you think you would need to get to a higher number?

6. If you answered a 9 or a 10 on question three, what helped you develop your skills and confidence? Would you be willing to share your skills and knowledge with a broader audience?

7. Does your program currently have resources to help non-intimate partner (non-IPV) sexual assault survivors find and move into safe housing?

8. Does your program currently have resources to help non-IPV sexual assault survivors keep safe housing?

If you answered yes to questions 7 or 8, please answer questions 9 and 10. If not, please skip to question 11.

9. Please describe the resources your program has to help non-IPV sexual assault survivors find, move into, and/or keep safe housing?

10. In what scenarios is it easier for your program to help sexual assault survivors find, move into, or keep safe housing?

11. What makes it harder to help sexual assault survivors find, move into, or keep safe housing?

12. What do you know about the resources the communities you serve have to help sexual assault survivors find, move into, and keep safe housing?

13. What do you think are the barriers to sexual assault survivors getting their housing needs met?

14. What else should the coalition know about sexual assault survivors and housing?

15. What resources, trainings, etc. do you need from your coalition to improve services that expand sexual assault survivors' access to housing?



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