

Housing and Sexual Assault Toolkit

The National Sexual Assault Housing Collaborative



Introduction

Survivors of sexual assault have unique housing needs that set them apart from other populations in need of housing. The link between sexual assault and housing need is irrefutable. Experiencing sexual assault can jeopardize what was once safe, stable, and affordable housing while being unhoused can increase someone's risk of experiencing violence, including sexual assault. The trauma of experiencing sexual assault can result in immediate and/or life long housing needs. For this reason, it is important to frame housing needs as a challenge that will impact a survivor throughout their lifespan and not solely as an immediate need following an assault.

Housing continues to be one of the fastest growing requests sexual assault programs receive from survivors and one of the most unmet requests. Despite this acknowledgement and the ever-increasing number of housing focused requests from survivors of sexual assault, the level of collaboration between local sexual assault professionals and housing professionals is inconsistent from one community to another. Inconsistent levels of engagement and coordination at all levels leads to variable results, limited options to address housing need, and confusion for survivors who are seeking housing assistance.

Recognizing the need for a separate and concerted effort to address these unique housing challenges, particularly for survivors whose experiences occur(ed) outside the context of domestic violence, the National Sexual Assault Housing Collaborative developed this toolkit for:

- sexual assault service providers to build a foundational knowledge around housing and equip advocates to meet survivors housing needs throughout their lifespan, and
- housing professionals, including transitional housing service providers, to elevate the unique housing challenges experienced by sexual assault survivors and improve housing outcomes for survivors.

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How to Use this Toolkit

The intention of this toolkit is to:

- raise awareness around the unique housing needs of sexual assault survivors throughout their lifespan,
- provide a foundational understanding of key topic areas elevated by the field,
- improve access to housing services for survivors of sexual assault, and
- enhance coordination between sexual assault, housing, and allied professionals working at this intersection.

It is comprised of downloadable resources designed to encourage organizations to explore current housing service provision through a sexual assault lens. From knowledge building around sexual assault survivors housing challenges and funding that can be used to support this work to tools that promote future housing strategy, this toolkit serves as one component of an organization's journey to meet sexual assault survivors housing needs. It does serve as a substitute for cross-training opportunities or connection with local, state, or national experts. View the Connecting with Resources section for more information on building robust networks.

Contributors to this toolkit include the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (NAESV), the National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault (SCESA), the National Sexual Violence Resource Sharing Project (NSVRC), the Resource Sharing Project (RSP) and many others working to enhance coordination and improve access to housing services for survivors of sexual assault.



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Overview of Sexual Assault

This section of the toolkit provides an introduction to sexual assault including grounding information that can be helpful when interacting with survivors of sexual assault. Survivors experience unique housing challenges that are different from other communities. To address survivors housing needs, it is important to have a basic understanding of sexual assault. This is not a replacement for an in-depth training lead by sexual assault professionals in your community.

About Survivors

Anyone can experience sexual assault. Sexual assault impacts people of different ages, gender identities, sexualities, races, religions/faiths, abilities, migrant or immigration statuses, and socioeconomic status. Although sexual assault can impact anyone, there are certain factors that can increase an individual's risk, such as being unstably housed, homeless or chronically unhoused.

When a survivor seeks services (if they do at all), requests and solutions to meet their needs vary from one survivor to the next. A survivor may seek services immediately following an assault and request medical care and/or evidence collection. Or a survivor may wait days, weeks, months or even years to reach out for support. Service requests can include assistance with housing, crisis counseling, concerns with privacy or confidentiality, assistance with getting basic needs met, medical support/options, civil legal or criminal justice advocacy/accompaniment, or a discussion of other options. Adult survivors of childhood sexual violence may seek support well after the initial abuse occurred.

Tips for Responding to Disclosures

Disclosures can happen anywhere, at any time, for any reason. It is up to you to create a supportive and as-safe-as-possible space. Here are some tips to help address disclosures:

- Believe the survivor.
- Be aware of your role, obligations, and confidentiality. If you are a mandated reporter, be transparent about it and give the survivor the option to continue or stop.
- Do not pass judgement or what could be felt as judgement onto the survivor. Pay attention to the tone of your voice, the look on your face, your body language, and try to mirror the language the survivor is using.
- Actively listen to the survivor and be empathetic. There may be data or demographics you need to collect for reporting purposes, like an intake process.
- Encourage breaks.
- Share hotlines and other local resources.
- Acknowledge that what is discussed may be upsetting for the survivor and they can request a break or to stop and regroup again when they are ready.

Barriers

Survivors face a number of barriers that can prevent or impede their ability to access services. These barriers include fear of not being believed, stigma, unaware of where to access services, lack of culturally specific services/unwelcoming services, language access, immigration status, confidentiality concerns, concerns about what could happen to the person who caused harm, fear of police or systems. When it comes to housing challenges, a few specific barriers include: tenant screenings, criminal background checks, past eviction records, past experiences with violence at shelters, fear of safety, being screened out due to substance use, negative experiences with systems, lack of shelter flexibility or rules that inhibit survivors' autonomy.

The Economic Costs of Sexual Assault

Sexual assault/violence results in more than \$122,000 in costs per survivor and nearly \$3.1 trillion to the economy over the lifetimes of all 25 million survivors in the US population (2017). Direct costs for a rape survivor average \$5,560 for health care, lost earnings, property damage or loss, and other losses. Lost quality of life/pain and suffering can cost \$198,000.¹ In one study, victims, on average, lost the equivalent of \$730 in short-term productivity, and there was \$110 billion in lost short-term productivity across all victims' lifetimes. In another, 2/3 of students sexually assaulted in college reported a negative impact on their academic goals; nearly 1/4 did not complete their degree or were no longer enrolled.²

Sexual Assault and Housing

Since the beginning of the anti-sexual violence movement, survivors, advocates, and others have continually uplifted the housing challenges survivors face while elevating that current systems responses do little to meet these needs. While housing programs, shelters, and safe spaces have been created for other populations facing housing insecurity, similar resources that address the unique challenges faced by sexual assault survivors have not been as extensively developed, funded, or supported. Separate and concerted attention is needed to intentionally address these unique challenges.

Sexual assault survivors have unique housing needs that often go unaddressed, under-addressed or are conflated with the needs of other populations in need of housing. These housing challenges stem from their experience with sexual violence, although a survivor may or may not recognize the link, and can crop up at any point during the survivors' lifespan. For example, a survivor may have safe, affordable, stable housing for years following an assault. But when a relative of the person who caused harm moves in just down the street, the survivor's housing quickly shifts, becoming unsafe and causing an urgent housing need. A survivor may wish to move immediately following an assault, stay in their home, relocate to a multigenerational home for greater support, rent a space with trusted friends, or need a night away to process in a neutral space (like a hotel). The housing needs of

1. Lifetime Economic Burden of Rape Among U.S. Adults (2017) <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28153649/>

2. Economic Costs of Sexual Violence Research Roundup (2019)
<https://journalistsresource.org/economics/economic-cost-sexual-violence/>

survivors are complex and can change overtime making flexibility a crucial consideration when working to meet survivors needs.

Sexual assault is a root cause of housing instability and homelessness, impacting a survivor's ability to obtain and maintain housing throughout their lifespan. Experiencing sexual assault can jeopardize what was once safe, affordable housing while experiencing homelessness can increase someone's risk of experiencing violence, including sexual violence.³ Sexual assault programs, culturally specific programs, sexual assault coalitions, Tribal coalitions, and other stakeholders who work directly with survivors have reported a consistent increase in the frequency of survivor's requests that center housing challenges. This increase in requests is paired with a general broadening of the scope of requests, likely due to the swiftly shifting housing landscape and housing crisis across the country. Requests range from assistance with rent/utilities and help navigating housing programs to housing options and housing protections to issues with landlords/property management or safety concerns.

The housing needs of survivors of sexual assault are complex and vary from one survivor to another. A survivor may need housing because the person causing harm, or who has caused harm in the past, is a threat to them physically or psychologically. They may not feel safe or comfortable remaining in their home immediately following an assault or years after the assault occurred, whether or not it occurred in their home. Adult survivors of child sexual abuse may have long term economic impacts directly resulting from their trauma making it difficult for them to keep a job, find safe housing, and keep up with their financial obligations. An adult survivor and their minor child may be staying with friends to keep rent costs affordable but find the environment is no longer conducive to their health or safety after a few months. An adult survivor of child sexual abuse may secure a new housing unit only to find the facilities manager reminds them of their abuser, deepening their depression, leading to employment issues and resulting in loss of housing. Additionally, housing needs may arise due to:

- landlords or housing managers refusing to make housing safer;
- non-offending parents and children losing housing;
- landlords or other tenants engaging in sexual violence or harassment;
- being labeled a nuisance tenant for making too many requests;
- being kicked out after disclosing sexual violence (this is particularly true for youth);
- losing subsidies or assistance; or
- landlord/housing manager finding out the tenant is a survivor and making it difficult for the survivor to stay.

Housing is a priority for survivors of sexual assault. Addressing housing challenges experienced by sexual assault survivors requires an overall understanding of how to best provide services and work with survivors of sexual assault. It also requires reframing housing as an issue that impacts survivors throughout their lifespan. You can find resources to help build on these core principles and practices in the Additional Resources section of this toolkit.

Connecting with Resources

Addressing the unique housing challenges faced by sexual assault survivors takes a collaborative, community approach that includes a variety of stakeholders including sexual assault programs, coalitions, culturally specific organizations, and others who work directly with survivors. Reviewing this toolkit is just one step organizations can take to enhance service coordination and improve survivors housing outcomes. It does not substitute for collaboration, coordination, or cross-training opportunities between professional fields. Sustainable change requires ongoing connection. Here are a few places to start building your network.

Sexual Assault Resources

The National Sexual Assault Housing Collaborative

National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (NAESV) - <https://endsexualviolence.org>*

Project Contact: Brittni Gulotty, Housing Project Coordinator, brittni@endsexualviolence.org

NAESV is the voice in Washington for state and territorial sexual assault coalitions as well as local rape crisis centers working to end sexual violence and support survivors. The organization educates sexual assault coalitions and local sexual assault programs about federal and state laws, legislation, and appropriations impacting the fight to end sexual violence.

National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault (SCESA) - <https://sisterslead.org>

The National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault (SCESA) is an advocacy organization of Women of Color dedicated to working with our communities to create a just society in which all Women of Color are able to live healthy lives free of violence. SCESA's core work is supporting and advocating for women of color and organizations by and for communities of color.

National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) - <https://www.nsvrc.org>

NSVRC is the leading nonprofit in providing information and tools to prevent and respond to sexual violence. NSVRC translates research and trends into best practices that help individuals, communities and service providers achieve real and lasting change.

*Coordinating Organization

State and Territory Coalitions

Every US state and territory has a designated sexual assault coalition. Some are single issue coalitions while others are dual sexual assault and domestic violence coalitions. Head to the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence's [National Sexual Assault Coalition Network Directory](#). Once on the directory page, select a state or territory. Depending on the type of connection, the Coalition may be able to assist or can help direct your request to a local program.

Housing Resources

OVW Transitional Housing Program

The [grantees list](#) provides information on current and previous grantees. This source is limited and may require additional research to find the closest service provider. The Collaborative can provide additional assistance.

HUD Find Shelter Tool

The [Find Shelter tool](#) provides information on HUD funded housing resources in your community. Simply select a category, enter the zip code where the service is being requested, and search. *There may be other housing resources available in your community that are not funded by HUD and not listed.*

HUD Continuum of Care Contact (CoC) Locator

A CoC is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. Connecting with your [CoC coordinating agency](#) presents short and long term opportunities, providing guidance on local housing organizations/resources and the opportunity to build a robust network through continued engagement with the CoC.

HUD Public Housing Authority (PHA) Locator

A PHA is responsible for the management and operation of its local public housing program. It is authorized to develop, operate, and manage low-rent public housing programs and Section 8 vouchers. Similarly to CoCs, [connecting with your PHA](#) can help build your network and enhance coordination.

Sexual Assault Survivors' Housing Protections and Rights

This section of the toolkit explores survivors' housing protections and rights with a focus on the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), including definitions, covered housing programs, navigating a complaint, and considerations for advocates working with survivors.

The Violence Against Women Act

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is a comprehensive federal law designed to improve response to sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking. In part, it provides housing protections for people applying for or living in units subsidized by the federal government and who have experienced sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking, to help keep them safe and reduce their likelihood of experiencing homelessness. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), U/S Department of Treasury (Treasury), U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) administer housing programs covered by VAWA's housing protections. Generally U.S.C. § 12291.

VAWA 2022 requires HUD to enforce VAWA's housing rights "consistent with, and in a manner that provides, the same rights and remedies as those provided for in the Fair Housing Act."⁴ As of October 1, 2022, FHEO and the U.S. Attorney General's Office enforce VAWA's housing protections using the same processes that are used to enforce the Fair Housing Act. VAWA complaints can now be filed with HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO). 34 U.S.C. § 12494(c) & 12495(d) (2023).

VAWA's housing protections apply to federally subsidized tenants who have previously experienced or are currently experiencing sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking or dating violence. Federally subsidized tenant means living in a public housing project, has a Section 8 voucher, or is living in a rental unit that receives federal housing assistance. VAWA's housing protections do not apply to survivors living in market rate units. VAWA protections apply to all survivors regardless of when the survivor experienced violence. Survivors do not need to be married or live with the person causing harm to be protected. 34 U.S.C. § 12491.

4. More information can be found: *Notice to Public Regarding FHEO Enforcement Authority and Procedures: Violence Against Women Act of 2022 (VAWA)*, FHEO Notice FHEO-2023-01 (Jan. 20, 2023); 34 U.S.C. §§ 12494 & 12495 (2023).

Helpful VAWA Definitions

Sexual Assault is a continuum of behaviors defined in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) to include sexual assaults committed by offenders who are strangers to the victim/survivor and sexual assaults committed by offenders who are known to, related by blood or marriage to, or in a dating relationship with the victim/survivor. VAWA defines sexual assault as any conduct proscribed as sexual abuse by federal statute. Such proscribed behavior includes knowingly causing another person to engage in a sexual act by using force against that other person or by threatening or placing that other person in fear. It also includes engaging in a sexual act with another person after knowingly rendering that person unconscious, or administering to another person by force or threat of force, or without the knowledge or permission of that person, a drug, intoxicant, or other similar substance and thereby substantially impairing the ability of that other person to appraise or control sexual conduct. Sexual assault also includes knowingly engaging in a sexual act with another person if that other person is incapable of appraising the nature of the conduct or is physically incapable of declining participation in or communicating unwillingness to engage in that sexual act. Sexual assault also includes knowingly engaging in sexual contact with another person without the other person's permission. 34 U.S.C. § 12291(a)(35).

Dating Violence is violence committed by a person who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim. The existence of such a relationship is determined by the length of the relationship, the type of relationship, and the frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship. 34 U.S.C. § 12291(a)(11).

Domestic Violence includes felony or misdemeanor crimes of violence (including threats or attempts) committed by a current or former spouse of the victim, by a person with whom the victim shares a child in common, by a person who is cohabitating with or has cohabitated with the victim as a spouse, by a person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction receiving grant monies, or by any other person against an adult or youth victim/survivor who is protected from that person's acts under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction receiving grant monies. It should be understood that domestic violence/dating violence applies to any pattern of coercive behavior that is used by one person to gain power and control over a current or former intimate partner or dating partner. This pattern of behavior may include physical or sexual violence, emotional and psychological intimidation, threats, verbal abuse, stalking, isolation, and economic control. 34 U.S.C. § 12291(a)(12).

Stalking is engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to: fear for their safety or others; or suffer substantial emotional distress. 34 U.S.C. § 12291(a)(36).

VAWA Housing Protections

Under VAWA, someone who has experienced sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and/or dating violence:

- *Cannot be denied admission to or assistance under a HUD-subsidized or assisted unit or program because they are a survivor of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and/or stalking.*
 - *Cannot be evicted from a HUD-subsidized unit or have their assistance terminated because they are a survivor.*
 - *Cannot be denied admission, evicted, or have their assistance terminated for reasons related to the violence they experienced, such as having an eviction record, criminal history, or bad credit history.*
 - *Must have the option to stay in their HUD-subsidized housing, even if they experienced violence in the space.*
 - *Can request an emergency transfer from the housing provider for safety reasons related to the violence they experienced.*
 - *Must be allowed to move with continued assistance (if the survivor has a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher).*
 - *Must be able to provide proof to the housing provider by self-certifying (Form HUD-5382), and not be required to provide more proof unless the housing provider has conflicting information about the violence.*
 - *Must receive HUD's Notice of VAWA Housing Rights (Form HUD-5380) and HUD's VAWA Self-certification Form (Form HUD-5382) from the housing provider, when they are admitted to, denied admission to, or receive notice of eviction or termination from a HUD-subsidized unit or program.*
 - *Has a right to strict confidentiality of information regarding their status as a survivor.*
 - *Can request a lease bifurcation* from the owner or landlord to remove the person causing harm from the lease or unit, and*
 - *if the housing provider bifurcates, it must be done consistent with applicable federal, state, or local laws as well as the requirements of the HUD housing program.*
 - *Cannot be coerced, intimidated, threatened, or retaliated against by HUD-subsidized housing providers for seeking or exercising VAWA protections.***
 - *Has the right to seek law enforcement or emergency assistance for themselves or others without being penalized by local laws or policies for these requests or because they were victims of criminal activity.***
- 34 USC § 12491.*

*A landlord or public housing authority can "bifurcate" a lease to evict a member of the household who has caused harm while allowing the survivor and other household members to remain in the unit. The remaining tenant(s) may be given time to establish their eligibility to stay OR find alternative housing. 34 U.S.C. 12491 (3)(B).

**Also applies to advocates or others who assist survivors in seeking emergency assistance or law enforcement.

**VAWA
Covered
Housing
Programs**

HUD

- Public housing
- Section 8 Vouchers
- Project-based Section 8
- Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly
- Section 811 Supportive Housing for People with Disabilities
- 221d3/d5 Below Market Interest Rate
- 236 Multifamily Rental Housing
- HOME
- HOPWA (Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS/HIV)
- McKinney-Vento Homelessness Programs
- Housing Trust Fund & Section 202 Direct Loan

Treasury/IRS

- Low Income Housing Tax Credit

USDA

- Rural Development Multifamily Programs
- RD Vouchers

Department of Justice

- OVW Transitional Housing Assistance Grants

Veteran Affairs

- The Grant and Per Diem Program
- The Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program
- HUD-Veterans Affairs Supporting Housing

34 U.S.C.A. § 12491 (a)(3)

Housing Protections Under VAWA

While VAWA provides key housing protections for survivors of sexual assault, filing a VAWA housing complaint is not a survivor's only course of action to address discrimination nor does it need to be the single source to seek recourse. The state in which the discrimination occurred may offer additional housing protections for survivors via state housing laws. Some states also allocate financial resources, such as flexible funding, which can cover certain arrears and/or enhance survivor safety in their current home (such as changing the locks, providing additional locks, and security systems).

VAWA Reauthorization of 2022

Amends Homeless Definition

The VAWA Reauthorization of 2022 extends the same protections to all federally subsidized housing programs and any new federally subsidized housing that will be created. It also expands the definition of homeless and clarifies that a person can qualify as “homeless” if they are “experiencing trauma or a lack of safety related to “domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking.” Survivors of sexual assault are legally entitled to housing protections regardless of whether they are actively fleeing further sexual, physical, or emotional harm. The amended definition also clarifies that to qualify for homeless assistance a person must have no other “safe” residence, allowing survivors who would once be screened out due to having other/unsafe housing to now access housing assistance. This change removed a significant barrier for many survivors who are no longer required to demonstrate that they lack “support networks” to obtain safe housing. This amendment to the definition more closely addresses and reflects the lived realities of all survivors.

Establishes the HUD Office on Gender Based Violence

The Office on Gender Based Violence (OGBV) develops, coordinates, and implement policies and programs to address the safe housing and economic stability needs of survivors of gender-based violence (sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking). OGBV is responsible for setting policy on gender-based violence and housing issues, leading coordination efforts to implement VAWA across HUD and in collaboration with other federal agencies and overseeing HUD’s VAWA training and technical assistance work. HUD OGBV is also responsible for maintaining HUD’s VAWA Clearinghouse (<http://www.hud.gov/vawa>).

Other Key Updates

- Requires federal agencies with housing programs to establish a process to review compliance.
- Extends the same protections to all federally subsidized housing programs and any new federally subsidized housing that will be created.
- Protects program participants that exercise their rights (to VAWA protections) from retaliation.
Pub. L. 117-103.

Filing A Complaint

Who Can File

A survivor covered by VAWA's protections whose rights were violated under VAWA, or an advocate acting on their behalf, can file a complaint. VAWA's housing protections also apply to affiliated individuals including a spouse, parent, sibling, child or person living in the household with the survivor. As referenced above, VAWA 2022 added provisions that expanded VAWA protections. The anti-retaliation provision protects any person who exercises rights under VAWA or assists anyone in exercising their rights from coercion, intimidation threats, interference, or retaliation. Under the right to report crime and emergencies provisions, landlords, homeowners, tenants, residents, occupants, guests of, and applicants for, housing have the right to seek law enforcement or emergency assistance on behalf of someone in need of assistance and cannot be penalized. This expands protections to include individuals, organizations and other groups including sexual assault programs, domestic violence programs, tenant associations, fair housing organizations and others, who may be able to file a VAWA complaint for any interference with this right to report. 24 CFR § 103.

Tips for filing:

- File as soon as possible (must be filed within one year of the last date of alleged event).
- Provide as much detail as possible:
 - Name and address of person filing,
 - Name and address of the person or organization allegation is against,
 - Address or other identification of housing/program involved in allegation,
 - Short description of the event(s) causing you to believe your rights were violated,
 - Dates.
- It is important to also mention any timely or emergency issues within the complaint, such as potential eviction.

Where to Report

Complaints can be reported:

- Online (<https://portalapps.hud.gov/FHEO903/Form903/Form903Start.action>)
- Phone (1.800.669.9777)
- Mail
 - Must print the complaint form (can be found here <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/OCHCO/documents/903.1.pdf>) and mailed to regional
 - Office on Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO). You can find more information here <https://www.hud.gov/contactus/fairhousing#close>)

The Complaint Process

The first step is filing an allegation with the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO). Once FHEO receives an official complaint, the intake process begins to determine the timeliness of the complaint and jurisdiction. To be timely a complaint must be filed within one year of the initial violation or one year of the most recent violation if discrimination is ongoing. To determine jurisdiction, FHEO will assess the complaint to determine whether the complaint has merit under VAWA, or another enforceable fair housing or civil rights law addressed by FHEO.

If the complaint is determined to be timely and within FHEO's jurisdiction, an FHEO intake specialist will call the individual who filed the complaint to gather more information about the alleged discriminatory housing practices. It is critical to **elevate a pending eviction immediately with the intake specialist**. If it is determined that the complaint can proceed, FHEO will formally file a complaint and draft formal allegations for the complainant (person who filed the complaint) to review and sign.

Once a complaint is accepted by FHEO, the investigation phase begins. FHEO will either investigate or refer to another agency to investigate. Generally, FHEO has 100 days to investigate. HUD will assign an investigator who may ask the complainant to provide more information. A timeline of events, location of events, list of those present when event occurred, list of others who may have more information to share related to the allegation, and relevant documents are generally helpful in establishing and supporting a complaint. Complainants and respondents have 20 days to decide if they want the case tried before a Federal District Court judge. If either party elects to have a federal civil trial, HUD will refer the case to the US Department of Justice. Results can include compensation for damages (out of pocket expenses/emotional distress), permanent injunctions (order not to discriminate), equitable relief (making housing available), payment of attorney fees (if a private attorney was hired) and punitive damages.

If neither party elects to have a federal civil trial, HUD will schedule an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) hearing at a court located near where the discrimination occurred. HUD attorneys will be assigned to represent the complainant at no cost or the complainant can choose to retain their own attorney. If the ALJ determines a violation has occurred, they can order compensation, a permanent injunction, equitable relief, payment of attorney's fees, and/or payment of civil penalty.

HUD may also dismiss the case. If an allegation is dismissed with a Determination of No Reasonable Cause, the complainant can submit a written request for reconsideration to the FHEO Director. 24 CFR § 103.

Considerations for Advocates

It is important to note that this is a relatively new process and with new potential challenges. Investigators may not be aware of the rights and protections for survivors. They may not be trained in trauma-informed interviewing practices. Both scenarios could potentially create environments where survivors can be retraumatized. As an advocate, with the survivors' permission, you can request advance notice of the questions that will be asked or intervene by redirecting the investigator to answers already provided by the survivor. A survivor may be asked if they are entitled to VAWA protections followed by a request for third-party attestation. In most cases covered housing programs are not allowed to request this level of documentation. As an advocate you can push back on this request and elevate the parameters of what documentation can and cannot be requested, reminding the investigator of VAWA's documentation rules. Since this process is typically slow and a survivor may be at risk of becoming unhoused, advocates can ask for a stay or status quo agreement to prevent the survivor from being evicted or losing their housing subsidy pending a resolution.

Emergency Transfers

Under VAWA, survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking and/or dating violence have the right to request an emergency transfer from to another available and safe dwelling unit assisted under a covered housing program. 34 U.S.C. §12491(e).

Eligibility

A tenant of a covered housing program is eligible if:

- they are a survivor of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, or dating violence;
- they expressly request the transfer; AND
- they believe there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence if they stay in the unit -or- they are a victim of sexual assault that occurred on the premises during the 90 day period preceding the request for transfer.

A survivor seeking an emergency transfer must meet all three of the above-referenced criteria to be eligible.

Covered housing providers (CHP) are required to have an Emergency Transfer Plan that details eligibility, policies, and instructions on the emergency transfer process. Information about the Emergency Transfer Plan, as well as contact information and procedures, should be included in the Notice of Occupancy Rights provided to individuals who are admitted to a HUD covered unit or program, denied by a HUD covered unit or program, or evicted from a HUD covered unit or program.

A few things to know:

- A tenant requesting an emergency transfer must expressly request the transfer following instructions/procedures provided in the Notice of Occupancy received.
- Tenants who are not in good standing may still request an emergency transfer if they meet the eligibility requirements.
- CHP's are instructed to keep any information provided concerning violence/abuse, request for an emergency transfer, and status as a victim confidential.
 - However, it is important to note that there are exceptions there are exceptions to the confidentiality provision including the following:
 - except to the extent that the disclosure is-
 - A) requested or consented to by the individual in writing;
 - B) required for use in an eviction proceeding under subsection (b); or
 - C) otherwise required by applicable law.

Emergency Transfer Request Documentation

To request an emergency transfer, the tenant must notify the housing provider's management office and submit a written request for a transfer. The written request for an emergency transfer should include either:

- A statement expressing that the tenant reasonably believes that there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence if the tenant were to remain in the same dwelling unit assisted under the housing provider's program, OR
- A statement that the tenant is a sexual assault survivor and that the sexual assault occurred on the premises during the 90-day period preceding the request for transfer. 34 U.S.C. §12491.

Note: The documentation and process can vary amongst providers.

Emergency Transfer Timing and Availability

A housing provider cannot guarantee that a transfer request will be approved nor can they guarantee how long it will take to process. If a tenant believes a proposed transfer would not be safe, they can request a transfer to a different unit. A tenant must meet eligibility requirements for the new unit.

HUD VAWA Housing Forms

HUD 5380 Notice of Occupancy Rights Under VAWA

This is what is typically provided to tenants upon unit acceptance or denial. This form provides basic guidance around who is protected, what programs are covered, and how tenants can request an emergency transfer.

HUD 5381 Model Emergency Transfer Plan

This can provide insight into what an emergency transfer plan should include and/or what your client's process may look like if they decide to move forward with requesting a transfer. Sometimes the only way to know exactly what's in a specific CHP's emergency transfer plan is to request a copy from the CHP (if it's a larger CHP it may be on their website).

HUD 5382 Certification of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking or Dating Violence

This is used to comply with a CHP's request for written documentation of the tenants' status as a "victim." It's important to note that a tenant can request an emergency transfer even if they owe rent and that survivor's information is kept strictly confidential.

HUD 5383 Emergency Transfer Request for Certain Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault or Stalking

This form can be used to request an emergency transfer and certify that a survivor meets the requirements of eligibility for an emergency transfer under the VAWA.

Funding Your Housing Work

This section of the toolkit is focused on funding that supports housing work with sexual assault survivors. Funding is one of the most significant barriers impacting ability to address sexual assault survivors specific housing needs. Most sexual assault programs do not receive funding that solely supports housing work with survivors nor do they have a dedicated staff member supporting only housing requests.

Historically sexual assault coalitions and programs have not received or had access to the funding necessary to adequately and equitably address the unique housing challenges faced by sexual assault survivors. Lack of flexible funding streams inhibit programs' and coalitions' ability to comprehensively address housing needs while creating significant differences in the type of support a survivor can access. Resources available to a survivor should not be based on where they live or experienced trauma. Here are some federal funding opportunities that can support housing work with sexual assault survivors.

Office on Violence Against Women (OVW)

Transitional Housing Assistance Grants for Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking (Transitional Housing Program)

- Eligible applicants include tribal, state and local governments and organizations with a documented history of effective work concerning domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.
- In 2024, the Transitional Housing Program gave out 78 awards totaling \$41.64 million.
- Provides support for up to 24 months of transitional housing including support services for victims:
 1. who are homeless or in need of transitional housing as a result of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking, and
 2. when emergency shelter services or other crisis intervention services are unavailable or insufficient.
- Funds transitional housing, short-term housing assistance, and voluntary support services.
- Additional information can be found in the Transitional Housing FAQ.

Sexual Assault
Services
Formula
Program (SASP)

- Formula grant awarded to states and territories.
- The first federal funding stream solely dedicated to assist survivors of sexual assault.
- In 2024, OVW gave out 56 awards totaling \$52.04 million.
- Supports rape crisis centers and other nonprofit or tribal programs that provide services to survivors of sexual assault and their families (supplements other funding sources).
- Allows for direct cash payments to survivors for costs related to sexual assault including costs associated with securing new or temporary housing.
- Contact your state coalition ([find here](#)) or SASP administrator ([find here](#)) for state specific information.

*Grants to
Enhance
Community-
based Services
for Survivors of
Domestic
Violence, Dating
Violence, Sexual
Assault, and
Stalking Program*

- Eligible applicants include private nonprofit organizations and Tribal organizations whose primary purpose is to provide culturally specific services to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking - or- community-based organizations whose primary purpose is providing culturally specific services who can partner with a program having demonstrated expertise in serving victims of these crimes.
- In 2024, the Grants to Enhance Community-based Services for Survivors of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking Program gave out 52 awards totaling over \$22.97 million.
- Supports community-based programs providing culturally specific services as well as the development of innovative culturally specific strategies to enhance access to services and resources for survivors of sexual assault.

Office of Victims of Crime (OVC)

VOCA Victim Assistance

- Formula grant to states and territories.
- States provide subgrants to local community-based organizations and public agencies that provide services to victims.
- A base amount of \$500,000 (except for the territories of Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and American Samoa, which are eligible to receive a base amount of \$200,000).
- Includes shelter, crisis counseling, information, referrals, criminal justice support and advocacy, and therapy.
- Can be used to develop new programs that address emerging needs or gaps in service.
- Any remaining Crime Victims Fund deposits are distributed to states, based on the state's population.

VOCA Victim Compensation

- Formula grants to states to cover 75% of the amount a state pays out for eligible crime victim compensation.
- Provide funding to supplement state compensation programs providing financial assistance and reimbursement to survivors for related out-of-pocket expenses.
- It can include relocation, moving, and storage costs, lost earnings, replacement of essential personal property, and more.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

- Formula grant allocated local jurisdictions and states.
- Formula is weighted to support low-income communities, and poor housing conditions.
- Supports community development activities to build stronger and more resilient communities.

Continuum of Care (CoC)

- Annual competitive grant process.
- Eligible applicants include public housing agencies, nonprofits, state and local governments.
- Multiple community organizations can join together to form a Collaborative Applicant, submitting one joint application for their project.
- If there are circumstances that cause a potential applicant to feel they cannot join a collaborative application, they can submit their own application as a solo applicant.
- The application is scored based on policy priorities and program goals.
- Designed to promote community-wide planning and strategic use of resources to address homelessness; improve coordination and integration with mainstream resources; improve data collection and performance measurement; and allow each community to tailor projects to meet needs.
- Supports permanent housing, transitional housing, supportive services, and homelessness prevention.
- Find your CoC [here](#).

Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Bonus Funds (DV/SA Bonus Funds)

- DV Bonus funds are dedicated dollars allocated during the CoC application process to projects that support housing for survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and dating violence.
- \$50-\$52 million set-aside for housing for survivors in DV/SA Bonus Funds in the HUD CoC homelessness assistance program.
- Improve access to safe housing and can help build the capacity of sexual assault programs/coalitions to provide survivor-centered housing.
- Requires participation with CoC.

Emergency
Solutions Grants
(ESG)

- Formula grant to states, larger cities and counties
- Provides funding to:
 - engage homeless individuals and families living on the street,
 - improve the number and quality of emergency shelters for homeless individuals and families,
 - help operate these shelters,
 - provide essential services to shelter residents,
 - rapidly rehouse homeless individuals and families.
- Eligible uses include provision of short-term and medium-term rental assistance, hotel or motel vouchers, prevention and re-housing assistance.
- Requires participation with CoC to access funds.

Non-Federal Funding Sources

Non-federal funding sources vary from state to state and community to community. Although sometimes time-consuming, exploring alternative funding that can support housing work with sexual assault survivors can make a huge difference for survivors. Take the time to educate community members and key stakeholders about the unique housing challenges survivors of sexual assault face, especially for survivors who experience sexual assault outside the context of domestic violence. Look into your state appropriation/budget process or other state/local specialized funds/initiatives. Help connect the dots between housing and sexual assault. Or see what other states are doing. California and New York have set asides allowing survivors to access more flexible funding to cover expenses other sources may not.

You know your community best. Housing is a need you can elevate with current or perspective donors. And don't forget to evaluate what resources you have locally. You may find there's a landlord, property management company, hotel or other community stakeholder who wants to assist. Reaching out to potential donors takes an investment of time but it may be worthwhile.



Frequently Asked Questions

OVW Transitional Housing

OVW transitional housing programs can assist survivors of sexual assault who are homeless, in need of transitional housing, or other housing assistance as a result of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and/or dating violence. Put your transitional housing knowledge to the test.

Transitional housing is temporary housing offered for at least six months and up to 24 months to help survivors transition into permanent housing.

True. Transitional housing can be offered to survivors for up to 24 months. Length of time varies from one program to the next so it is important to connect with your local transitional housing program(s) in order to provide accurate information to survivors.

A survivor has to be actively fleeing to be eligible for transitional housing.

False. Victims may be in need of transitional housing if they have lost or will imminently lose their current housing or have identified a need for housing assistance as a result of experiencing sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking or dating violence.

To apply, someone must be:

- survivor of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking and/or dating violence, and
- homeless or in need of housing due to experiencing sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking and/or dating violence.

True. VAWA defines homeless broadly to include individuals who are sharing housing, living in shelter, or living in a motel, trailer park or campground due to lack of alternative housing options. Under the expanded definition of homeless in VAWA Reauthorization of 2022, a survivor qualifies as “homeless” if they are “experiencing trauma or a lack of safety related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking.” The expanded definition also clarifies that a survivor must have no other safe residence, removing the burden once placed on survivors to prove they lack support networks to gain safe housing. For example, an adult survivor of child sexual abuse is no longer required to reach out to those who may have played a role in the harm they experienced to demonstrate a lack of support network.

Transitional housing must be offered to all who are eligible.

False. Transitional housing must be offered on a first-come, first-serve basis. However it is based on availability and capacity of the program.

Vital documents and identifiable information should be collected and stored in a survivor's file.

False. The confidentiality and/or privacy of a program's files, including survivor files, can be breached. Only collect what is absolutely necessary and keep your notes brief. Ask yourself "could this information be harmful to the survivor?"

Transitional housing is made up of two purpose areas, transitional housing and short term housing assistance.

False. Transitional housing is made up of three purpose areas 1) transitional housing 2) short-term housing assistance and 3) supportive services. Transitional housing includes funding for operating expenses of newly developed or existing transitional housing. Short-term housing assistance includes assistance with rent or utilities, security deposits, and other costs associated with relocation. Supportive services can include assistance with employment, transportation, childcare services, counseling, occupational training, financial literacy and other assistance related to securing permanent housing.

Support services must be voluntary and not a condition of receiving housing assistance.

True. Voluntary means that a survivor cannot be required to participate in any supportive services including counseling, case management, or other programming to receive housing.

Transition housing models include scattered site, clustered site, and communal site.

True. Scattered sites are private landlord units located throughout a community. A survivor can locate a unit that meets their needs within their desired community. There is even the possibility that they can transition in place once the original assistance period has ended. A clustered site offers individual units located in the same building. These are usually program owned/rented and intended for temporary use while enrolled in assistance. A communal site offers communal style housing with common shared areas.

Frequently Asked Questions

Continuums of Care (CoC)



A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a communitywide planning approach that promotes collaboration and coordination (regionally or locally) with the goal of ending homelessness. CoCs are funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and are codified into law through the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2009 ([HEARTH Act](#)).

Funded Programs

1. Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)- long term housing option that combines affordable housing assistance with voluntary, comprehensive supportive services to address the needs of people who are chronically homeless.
2. Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)- short- and medium term-rental assistance to move people experiencing homelessness as quickly as possible to permanent housing with an emphasis on housing search and relocation services.
3. Transitional Housing (TH)- temporary housing units designed to assist people in gaining stability through supportive services and ultimately transition into permanent housing.
4. Supportive Services Only (SSO)- emphasis on outreach to people who are unsheltered with the goal of linking with housing or other services/ongoing support.

Who Should Be Part of Your Local CoC?

Anyone who wants to help build a coordinated approach to ending homelessness in their region or local community. No prior housing knowledge or experience is necessary to get involved.

- People with Lived Experience
- Shelter Service Providers
- Public Housing Authorities
- Outreach Teams
- Case Managers
- Local Government
- Sexual Assault Advocates
- Domestic Violence Advocates
- Veterans' Groups
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Law Enforcement
- Foster Care

[**Find Your CoC Here**](#)

Benefits of Being a Part of Your CoC

Coordinated Resource Allocation

CoCs offer additional opportunities to secure funding or pool resources to better meet community needs, aligning resources to maximize and increase impact. Some funding sources require participation in CoCs to access. During the CoC competition DV Bonus funds are available. Having a sexual assault advocate as a member of a CoC expands opportunities to utilize DV Bonus funds that may have gone unspent years prior. Becoming a member of a CoC is a great place to start if your organization is interested in applying for DV Bonus funds and seeking guidance. More on DV Bonus Funds can be found in the Funding Your Housing Work section.

Collaboration and Strategy

Building broader networks helps shape system-wide strategies. These networks grow stronger, long-term relationships between a variety of stakeholders, leading to new partnerships that may have been overlooked in the past as well as future collaborations to better address unique housing needs, such as those of survivors of sexual assault. Being part of a CoC can bring about new opportunities for training or even cross-training between fields throughout the year.

Enhance Advocacy

CoCs bring a unique cross-section of the community together to explore the housing and homelessness landscape. Joining a CoC meeting offers the opportunity to connect with participants and build collaborative advocacy and explore intersections.

Advocates play a crucial role ensuring CoCs equitably serve those who are most in need of assistance and expand access to mainstream resources. By having a seat at the CoC table sexual assault advocates can raise awareness to the unique housing needs of survivors of sexual assault and help shape housing priorities. Including sexual assault advocates as a key part of the CoC can help break down barriers for survivors seeking housing, enhance housing services through better coordination and warm handoffs, carve out space for intentional conversations around the impacts of sexual violence on an individual's housing stability, and identify new or emerging gaps.

Access to Data

The CoC model encourages the collection and use of data from a variety of areas. Every opportunity to collect data offers greater insight into an intersectional issue, such as housing and sexual assault. Additionally, this data offers a more comprehensive understanding of not just the issue but how an

individual stakeholders' clients are impacted, such as survivors of sexual assault. To fully understand the scope of survivors' housing needs, data is needed. Just knowing whether survivors of sexual assault are accessing housing programs can identify gaps and barriers to service. If a housing program is not seeing survivors of sexual assault come in for assistance, consider it a red flag that something is not working as well as it could.

CoC Data Collection: Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) and Comparable Databases

Victim Service Providers (VSP) are critical members of local and regional CoCs. They can provide insight into housing trends, barriers, and other challenges experienced by survivors. Yet there are some complexities when it comes to data collection.

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA) contain legally codified confidentiality provisions limiting VSPs from sharing a survivor/victim's personally identifying information. This is to protect the safety and privacy of survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and dating violence who are seeking services, including housing services. These provisions apply to all grantees and subgrantees funded by VAWA and/or FVPSA. Meaning that under the requirements of VAWA, HUD Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and CoC VSP subrecipient are prohibited from entering personally identifying information into Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

HMIS is an electronic data collection system that tracks and analyzes housing services data for individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This data is used by HUD and policymakers to better inform policy and decision making. Since VSP data is a critical datapoint needed to comprehensively understand and address the scope of housing need, under the HMIS Propose Rule, VSPs can enter their client related data into a separate Comparable Database.

A Comparable Database must comply with HMIS requirements but it offers an alternative system that allows VSPs to enter client level data over time and then generates an aggregate report that can be submitted to the CoC. Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and CoC funds can be used to create and operate a Comparable Database. To get this done, the CoC and VSP must work closely with the HMIS lead (a role within the CoC) to determine

if a system is a Comparable Database and document that the alternative system meets all HUD system requirements.

Important factors for VSPs to consider when selecting a Comparable Database:

- the VSP controls who can access and see client information
- meets the standards for security, data quality, and privacy of the HMIS
- can be programmed to collect most up to date HMIS Data-Standards
- can de-duplicate client records
- customizable data fields
- generate all reports required by federal partners

VSPs should destroy individual client data as soon as the program no longer needs it to provide services or be compliant with grant/legal requirements.

More information can be found in the resource *Comparable Database 101: What Victim Service Providers Need to Know*.

Talking Points

Now that you have started having an internal discussion around the unique housing needs of sexual assault survivors and started brainstorming your local resources, it is time to start focusing on external partnerships. Here are a few talking points to use when meeting with stakeholders about improving survivors' access to housing and enhancing coordination between housing, sexual assault, and other allied stakeholders. (These can also be helpful in internal conversations exploring this intersection.)

General

- Sexual assault is a root cause of housing instability, homelessness, and chronic homelessness throughout a survivor's life.
- Sexual assault programs and coalitions have reported an increase in frequency of housing advocacy requests. These requests range from assistance with rent/utilities and help navigating housing assistance programs to questions about housing protections and eviction protections and more.
- Experiencing sexual assault can jeopardize what was once safe stable housing while having unstable housing or being unhoused greatly increases the risk of experiencing sexual assault. Housing is a protective factor that can reduce the risk of experiencing sexual violence in the future.
- The impacts of sexual assault can remain with survivors, influencing their mental and physical wellbeing, ability to maintain income and housing years or even decades later. It is critical to frame housing needs throughout a survivor's lifespan.

Funding

- Funding continues to be a primary barrier preventing sexual assault coalitions and programs from comprehensively addressing the housing needs of sexual assault survivors. Sexual assault programs and coalitions recognize that the need is there but without funding, most programs refer clients to local housing organizations as they cannot comprehensively address housing needs internally.
- Funding barriers are even more prevalent for culturally specific programs. It is critical that all programs be infused with strategies that are responsive to survivors from communities of color and other marginalized communities.
- Funding sources limit the options survivors have to access safe and affordable housing by deeming certain living arrangements ineligible for support. For example, some survivors would prefer to stay with a family member or friend and contribute to the monthly rent/utilities yet most funding does not allow for this type of arrangement.

Unique Needs Compared to Other Populations

- Survivors of sexual assault have unique housing needs that set them apart from other populations in need of housing.
 - Housing is a priority for sexual assault survivors and must be integrated as a core service promoting survivor-centered practices distinct from general or DV homelessness approaches.
 - When attempting to enter/access traditional emergency housing spaces survivors of sexual assault are often screened out.
 - Safety needs, confidentiality concerns, stigma, eligibility requirements, being “screened out” or deemed “less deserving,” and risk of re-traumatization are just a few examples of challenges survivors face.
 - While housing programs, shelters, and safe spaces have been created for survivors of domestic violence, dedicated housing options and assistance responsive to the unique needs of sexual assault survivors have not been as extensively developed.

Systems

- The housing system fails survivors of sexual assault by not considering the complexity of housing needs while implementing processes that create heightened and unnecessary barriers. Tools frequently used to determine eligibility/access to housing such as tenant screenings, eviction records, and criminal background checks, create unnecessary barriers often without offering survivors the opportunity to explain how the result may be linked to their experience with sexual assault.
- Systemic inequality, state-sponsored systems of segregation, redlining, prohibitive zoning and loan processes, and other discriminatory policies create heightened barriers for survivors from Communities of Color.
- Tenant screenings such as criminal background checks and eviction records may be harmful to survivors as such issues may be directly linked to their experience with sexual assault.

Innovation

- Survivors of sexual assault need housing solutions that fit their unique needs, go beyond emergency shelter or transitional housing, and are innovative. Such solutions include:
 - Creating new paths that bridge survivors with housing resources without requiring going into emergency shelter,
 - Setting up a survivor in a hotel for a night or two to clear their mind, process their experience, get a break from a multi-generational living situation or make it to a court appointment on time, and
 - Ensuring that sexual assault voices are included in all housing discussions.

Narratives and Discussion Guide

To better address the unique housing needs of sexual assault survivors, it is critical to explore the situation(s) that lead survivors to have housing insecurity, examine how these needs/challenges are (or are not) being met, and identify actionable steps that communities can take to ensure these needs are prioritized. Improving outcomes requires sexual assault, housing, and other allied professionals must identify gaps, program/ community capacity, barriers, trends, community resources, and action steps.

Below are a few examples of housing requests received by sexual assault programs followed by discussion questions, and a networking chart that can be individualized. Sexual assault, housing, and other community stakeholders are encouraged to review these narratives and utilize the discussion questions and networking chart to frame and guide future planning.

Narratives

- Drew was sexually abused by a clergy member as a child. Since then, he has struggled with the mental, emotional and financial impacts of his experience. He does not have any retirement savings and is approaching an age where he can no longer work. If he retires now, he will not be able to afford his monthly expenses, including his mortgage which is barely manageable now.
- Charli is turning 22 in 2 months. They are non-binary and have been homeless since 15 when their father found out about their gender identity and told them to “leave immediately and don’t come back.” Not knowing what to do, Charli slept in a local park for the first few months until they were sexually assaulted by someone they felt was a trusted adult. Shortly after the assault, Charli met a youth homelessness outreach worker who assisted them in securing stable housing. However, Charli is about to age out of their current accommodations.
- Esmerelda was sexually assaulted by her current landlord and needs to find another place to live. She spoke with a Sexual Assault Advocate who suggested she request an emergency transfer under VAWA but she is concerned about potential consequences. She is the primary caregiver for her niece and nephew, both minors, who have lived with her for the past 2 years but she is not their legal guardian.
- Erin migrated to the United States at 18. During her journey, she was sexually assaulted. She works two jobs to support herself and her daughter. She shares an apartment with friends but recognizes this is not a healthy environment for her. It is impacting her sleep, health, ability to work and pay her bills on time. She wants to move into her own apartment but was told she doesn’t qualify for housing assistance, even though she doesn’t make enough money to afford her own place by herself.

- Abraham is an adult survivor of child sexual abuse. He has struggled with substance use in the past and is currently incarcerated. The last time he searched for housing it was extremely difficult to find and that was without a criminal record. Now, with his current release date quickly approaching, he finds himself needing help to secure safe, stable, affordable and preferably sober housing.
- Alex lives in a small town in the rural Midwest. Alex experienced sexual assault at her home, perpetrated by someone she considered a friend, and Alex's home no longer feels safe to stay in. Her small community does not have any housing resources for survivors. There is a local DV shelter in a city an hour away, but lack of transportation means Alex wouldn't be able to get to and from work every day. She has a lead on another rental available in her town, but it isn't available immediately, so no matter what, Alex will face a gap in housing after the sexual assault she experienced. Even a week or so in a temporary safe location would help her clear her mind enough to make a plan.

Discussion Guide

What might the survivor need based on the information provided?

What skills/knowledge would an advocate/program/coalition need to help the survivor find or maintain housing?

What support currently exists to address the survivors' housing needs? (Federal/State/Local housing protections, funding assistance, housing programs, organizations, etc.)

What barriers may be encountered?

What types of relationships does your organization have that can assist in meeting the survivors' needs?

What additional relationships would be helpful to build?

Are there any outside of the box, non-traditional solutions that could assist the survivor?

Organizational Inventory

Does your organization receive housing requests from sexual assault survivors? (Note: if no, why not? What barriers could present challenges to survivors reaching out and how can your organization improve inclusion?)

Does your program have a policy or procedure for addressing these requests? (For sexual assault programs do you address the request/refer the survivor to a housing organization/ a mix of both? For housing organizations what is your relationship like with your local sexual assault program? For both, what could enhance services/relationships/strategies for sustainable community response? Is cross-training happening?)

How can your organization improve access to housing spaces for sexual assault survivors?

Has your organization or team received any training specifically around the housing needs of sexual assault survivors?

Have questions about enhancing your organization's services to better meet the housing challenges of survivors of sexual assault? Reach out to the National Sexual Assault Housing Collaborative.

Networking Chart

Organization	Contact (Name, Email, Phone #)	Outreach (y/n)
Local Housing Advocacy Organization:		
Local Sexual Assault Program:		
Local Homeless Shelter:		
Local Domestic Violence Shelter:		
Statewide and/or Territory SA Coalition:		
Local/State/National Culturally Specific SA/Housing Organization:		
Statewide Housing Advocacy Organization:		
Public Housing Authority:		
Continuum of Care:		
Other:		
Other:		

SMART Goal Worksheet

SMART goals are short-term, incremental, strategic goals and actions that support your organization's long-term success. The chart below is a tool to help your organization build actionable goals to reach long term success.

<p>Specific Clearly define what you want to accomplish.</p>	<p>Measurable Establish criteria to track your progress. Include the "small wins."</p>	<p>Achievable Balance what you want to accomplish with what is realistic.</p>	<p>Realistic The goal must align with the overall objectives of your agency/program for sustainable success.</p>	<p>Timely Set specific deadlines/time periods for achieving goals/reaching milestones.</p>
<p>What will you accomplish? Who is responsible for it? What steps do you/you team need to take? Is your plan survivor-centered? How can you identify any challenges?</p>	<p>What data will measure your goal? What does success look like? If collecting survivors' feedback/stories, build in confidentiality measures.</p>	<p>Is your goal doable? What resources are available? What about capacity? Are there any skills that would be helpful? How will you accomplish your goal?</p>	<p>How does this goal align with broader goals of your organization or community needs? What would success mean to survivors, your program, your community, or you?</p>	<p>What is the timeframe for accomplishing this goal? What are 3-5 target dates? Write down specific questions about the deadline. Be realistic.</p>

Using Low Barrier Intake Forms to Improve Access to Housing Services

According to sexual assault programs, housing continues to be one of the most requested services by survivors. It is also the most unmet need. The problem is that a majority of sexual assault programs do not have specific funding for housing work. They also lack dedicated housing staff, such as an advocate whose time is dedicated fully or partially to addressing housing requests. The choice becomes addressing the need internally, which can be time consuming especially for advocates who are unfamiliar with their local housing systems and processes, or referring the survivor to a local housing program. Making a referral can be a risk as there is no guarantee the survivor will reach out or that the survivor will not be unintentionally screened out. To improve survivors' access to housings and minimize their risk of being screened out, there must be a concerted effort to enhance coordination between sexual assault and housing professionals. Implementing a low barrier intake form is one way programs can start to address these concerns.

Most, if not all, sexual assault and housing programs include a general intake form as part to their intake process. Some have even embraced low barrier intake forms for other services as it can be introduced into an established intake process without too much disruption. A low barrier intake form is a simplified document designed to remove obstacles for individuals seeking services and can streamline the intake process, a characteristic particularly beneficial for survivors who may be actively navigating multiple service intake processes. It focuses on immediate need and requires staff to only collect information that is absolutely necessary to access services. So how are low barrier intake forms a part of the solution?

With guidance from the low barrier intake form example below and/or in collaboration with a local housing program, sexual assault programs can develop housing specific questions for their intake process. If a referral is the best route, the sexual assault advocate can discuss sharing this information with a housing advocate and get a signed release to start coordinating efforts. Enhanced coordination between service providers empowers survivors by minimizing the information needed to access services AND the number of times they need to share it. It also results in improved access to services and decreases the risk of being screened out as both advocates will be working together on a shared goal. Enhanced service coordination can also lead to other promising practices like opportunities for cross-training, resource sharing, and expanding networks.

The example below is also a great place to start for organizations that are building new sexual assault centered housing programs.

Sample Low-Barrier Intake Form

Survivor Information

1. **Name:**

- Preferred Name:
- Do you have a name other than the one given that you would prefer I use?

- Pronouns:
- My pronouns are (they/them, she/her, he/his). Would you mind sharing yours with me?

2. **Phone number (what is a good phone number to reach you at?)**

- Is it safe to contact you at this number?

- Is there a specific day/time to contact you?

3. **Preferred language (what language are you most comfortable with?)**

- a. Would you like an interpreter for future conversations?

4. **Family size (both adults and minors) (how many people will be going with you/living with you?)**

5. **Recent city (can you share where you have lived most recently city/town/zip code?)**

- a. Do you want to stay in same area (based on availability)

6. **Are you a survivor of sexual assault? (helpful to assess access to specific housing programs such as OVW transitional housing)**

Note: Build these topics into the conversation rather than rolling through them as a questionnaire. The goal is to build rapport with survivors, listen to their needs, and map out a plan to meet these needs. A survivor may not answer all or any of these questions. Do not get discouraged, especially if it is the first time you have connected. These prompts provide an example of a low barrier intake form. It is crucial to ensure you are collecting all the information you need based on funding source(s) but nothing more than what is absolutely necessary.

Common Acronyms

Working to meet the unique housing needs of sexual assault survivors is complicated. Add in the alphabet soup of acronyms used across the housing and sexual assault fields and you have a recipe for confusion. Whether you are new to a field or just looking for a refresher, here are some common acronyms you may come across in your advocacy efforts.

Sexual Assault

ACF	Administration for Children & Families
ATIXA	Association of Title IX Administrators
CAC	Child Advocacy Center
COC	Communities of Color
CSA	Campus Sexual Assault
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse
CSSAC	Culturally Specific Sexual Assault Center
FVPSA	Family Violence Prevention and Services Act
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act
ICJR	Improving Criminal Justice Response (VAWA grant)
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
LAV	Legal Assistance for Victim
MST	Military Sexual Trauma
OFVPS	Office of Family Violence Prevention & Services
OVC	Office for Victims of Crime
OVW	Office on Violence Against Women
PHHSBG	Preventive Health & Health Services Block Grant
PREA	Prison Rape Elimination Act
QTPOC	Queer and/or Trans People of Color
RCC	Rape Crisis Center
RPE	Rape Prevention & Education
SA	Sexual Assault
SAAM	Sexual Assault Awareness Month
SAEK	Sexual Assault Evidence Kit
SAFE	Sexual Assault Forensic Exam
SANE	Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner
SART	Sexual Assault Response Team
SASP	Sexual Assault Services Program (OVW grant program)
SOGI	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
STOP	Services Training Officers Prosecutors Grant (OVW grant program)
SV	Sexual Violence
UCR	Uniform Crime Report
VAWA	Violence Against Women Act
VOCA	Victims of Crime Act

Housing

AFFH	Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing
AFHM	Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant (HUD Program)
CFPB	Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
CHAS	Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy
CHDO	Community Housing Development Organization
CHP	Covered Housing Program
CIG	Community Improvement Grant
CoC	Continuum of Care (HUD Approach to Address Homelessness)
COSFDA	Council of State Community Development Agencies
EDI	Economic Development Initiative
EDSS	Economic Development and Supportive Services
ESG	Emergency Solutions Grant (HUD Program)
FHA	Federal Housing Administration
FHEO	Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (within HUD)
FMR	Fair Market Rent
HOME	HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HUD Program)
HOPWA	Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HUD Program)
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
IDIS	Integrated Disbursement Information System
LIHEAP	Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program
LIHTC	Low Income Housing Tax Credit (Housing Credit)
MOR	Management and Occupancy Review
MTW	Moving to Work Demonstration
NAHASDA	Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act
NSP	Neighborhood Stabilization Program
OZ	Opportunity Zone
PBRA	Project -Based Rental Assistance
PBV	Project -Based Voucher
PHA	Public Housing Agency
ROFR	Right of First Refusal
SAFE Act	Secure and Fair Enforcement Mortgage Licensing Act
SAFMR	Small Area Fair Market Rent
SRO	Single Room Occupancy
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TBRA	Tenant-Based Rental Assistance
TPV	Tenant Protection Voucher
TRACS	Tenant Rental Assistance Certification System
UA	Utility Allowance
UPCS	Uniform Physical Condition Standards
VASH	HUD–Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Voucher

Additional Resources

Working with Survivors

- [Comprehensive Services for Survivors of Sexual Violence](#)
- [Culturally Relevant Services for Tribal Communities and Communities of Color](#)
- [It Matters! How Defining Sexual Violence Defines Advocacy Programs / ¡Esto Importa! Cómo definir la violencia sexual define los programas de intercesoría](#)
- [Rape Crisis Center Annual Survey](#)
- [The Sexual Assault Response Toolkit](#)
- [Sexual Assault Response](#)
- [Strong Foundations for Meaningful Sexual Assault Services \(Webinar\)](#)
- [Throw Away the Menu Publication / Adiós al menú: cómo ampliar el alcance de la intercesoría](#)
- [Victim-Centered Responses](#)

Housing and Sexual Assault

- [Comparable Database 101: What Victim Service Providers Need to Know](#)
- [Exploring the Intersection of Sexual Assault and Housing](#)
- [Facilitator's Guide: Assessing Coalitions' Strengths and Challenges Around Addressing Sexual Assault Survivors' Unmet Housing Needs](#)
- [Funding Your Housing Work / Fuentes de Financiamiento para el Trabajo en Torno a la Vivienda](#)
- [Overview of HUD's Office on Gender Based Violence and the Violence Against Women Act \(English\)\(Spanish\)](#)
- [Reframing Services: Prioritizing the Housing Needs of Survivors of Sexual Assault](#)
- [Sexual Violence & Housing Resource Collection](#)

Survivors' Housing Rights

Survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking have the right to request an emergency transfer. The survivor must provide a written request and supporting documents to the landlord or property management (this process should be outlined in the tenant's copy of HUD 5380 Notice of Occupancy Rights Under VAWA).

Under VAWA, someone who has experienced sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and/or dating violence:

- Cannot be denied admission to or assistance under a HUD-subsidized or assisted unit or program because they are a survivor of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and/or stalking.
- Cannot be evicted from a HUD-subsidized unit or have their assistance terminated because they are a survivor.
- Cannot be denied admission, evicted, or have their assistance terminated for reasons related to the violence they experienced, such as having an eviction record, criminal history, or bad credit history.
- Must have the option to stay in their HUD-subsidized housing, even if they experienced violence in the space.
- Can request an emergency transfer from the housing provider for safety reasons related to the violence they experienced.
- Must be allowed to move with continued assistance (if the survivor has a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher).
- Must be able to provide proof to the housing provider by self-certifying (Form HUD-5382), and not be required to provide more proof unless the housing provider has conflicting information about the violence.
- Must receive HUD's Notice of VAWA Housing Rights (Form HUD-5380) and HUD's VAWA Self-certification Form (Form HUD-5382) from the housing provider, when they are admitted to, denied admission to, or receive notice of eviction or termination from a HUD-subsidized unit or program.
- Has a right to confidentiality of information regarding their status as a survivor with some exceptions.
- Can request a lease bifurcation from the owner or landlord to remove the person causing harm from the lease or unit, and
 - if the housing provider bifurcates, it must be done consistent with applicable federal, state, or local laws as well as the requirements of the HUD housing program.
- Cannot be coerced, intimidated, threatened, or retaliated against by HUD-subsidized housing providers for seeking or exercising VAWA protections.
- Has the right to seek law enforcement or emergency assistance for themselves or others without being penalized by local laws or policies for these requests or because they were victims of criminal activity.

VAWA Covered Housing Programs

HUD

- Public housing
- Section 8 Vouchers
- Project-based Section 8
- Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly
- Section 811 Supportive Housing for People with Disabilities
- 221d3/d5 Below Market Interest Rate
- 236 Multifamily Rental Housing
- HOME
- HOPWA (Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS/HIV)
- McKinney-Vento Homelessness Programs
- Housing Trust Fund & Section 202 Direct Loan

Treasury/IRS

- Low Income Housing Tax Credit

USDA

- Rural Development Multifamily Programs
- RD Vouchers

Department of Justice

- OVW Transitional Housing Assistance Grants

Veteran Affairs

- The Grant and Per Diem Program
- The Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program
- HUD-Veterans Affairs
- Supportive Housing