



# **Domestic Violence Best Practices for Homeless Service Providers**

**Safe Choice Program for Domestic Violence  
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eliminating racism  
empowering women  
**ywca**



# What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is a **pattern** of behavior including physical, sexual, financial and psychological attacks, as well as multiple types of coercion, that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners to gain and/or maintain **power and control** over them.

# Abusive Behaviors might include...

- Physical abuse
- Verbal & Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Social abuse
- Isolation
- Financial abuse



# Domestic violence is **NOT** caused by...

- Genetics or gender
- Alcohol/drugs
- Mental health
- Anger
- Stress
- Survivor's behavior
- Relationship challenges



# Domestic Violence affects everyone

- Approximately 90-95% of domestic violence victims are women
- LGBTQ Survivors
- Survivors of Color
- Socio-economic, religious, racial, ethnic, cultural, disability status, class, and age groups



# Barriers to leaving an Abusive Relationship

- Safety
- Financial dependence on abuser
- Fear of losing children to abuser
- Fear of not being believed
- Lack of a support system or increased isolation
- Not wanting to end relationship

# Domestic Violence and Housing

Domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children, both in Washington state and nationwide.

- As of December 2019, 38% of survivors seeking services with SafeChoice for the first time were experiencing homelessness or housing instability
- 46% of homeless women reported that they had previously stayed in abusive relationships because they had nowhere to go
- The number of survivors moving from shelter to safe and stable housing is declining

# DV Survivors & COVID

- Survivors remaining in unsafe housing situations with abuser because of loss of work and **limited housing options**
- Survivors expressing they are less willing to call law enforcement when abuse escalates
- Landlords are still charging late fees during the moratorium and people are paying them for fear of retaliation



# What does housing advocacy look like?

## Survivor-centered and determined

Currently SafeChoice is supporting many survivors who are experiencing housing instability including fear of loss of housing due to inability to pay rent once the eviction moratorium is lifted.

Relationship with Council for the Homeless through the City of Vancouver Prevention Consortium

# Supporting Survivors:

- **Listen** to them
- **Believe** them
- **Learn by asking**
- **Maximize empowerment**
- **Connect** them
- **Avoid questioning**

# Safety Planning:

- Shelters and Day Centers
- 911 Phones
- Safe Parking
- Relocating
- Transportation

# Tenants Rights for Survivors

**In Washington State, the Residential Landlord-Tenant Act (RCW59.18) provides rights for both landlords and tenants. The law includes certain protections for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking who are renting.**

# Terminating a lease

**Survivors can terminate their lease early without penalty or fees if they meet these three conditions:**

- Valid Protection Order or a record of the incident of domestic violence from a qualified third party
- Written notification to the landlord explaining that they are a victim along with a copy of the order for protection or the record of the report with the letter.
- They inform their landlord that they will be moving out within 90 days of the incident that caused them to seek a protection order or make a report.

<https://wscadv.org/resources/housing-protections-for-survivors/>

**Survivors cannot be discriminated or denied housing access, if they would otherwise qualify, based on Domestic Violence**

- Incidents of abuse are not considered good cause for eviction or lease termination

**Survivors have power (if they know about the laws)**

- Leases can be bifurcated to remove abuser including Section 8 vouchers
- Survivors can remove themselves from a lease or break a lease due to dv/sa
- A survivor can be asked to reapply for housing if household income changes due to an abuser being removed from home due to DVPO

**Clark County Volunteer Lawyers Program** runs a **Housing Justice Project**. The Housing Justice Project connects people with legally related housing issues in Clark County to volunteer lawyers able to provide advice. Common housing issues include landlord/tenant disputes, evictions, housing discrimination, or any issue which prevents a client from being safely or fairly housed. Additionally, the volunteer lawyers who help staff the housing legal advice clinics may accompany clients, if necessary, to the unlawful detainer (eviction) docket.

Individuals with housing issues and/or concerns can call (360) 334-4007 to see if they qualify for services through the Housing Justice Project. If eligible, they will be scheduled to speak with a volunteer attorney about their housing issue at the next available housing clinic.

# Best practices

- Contact your local DV program contacting similar programs in surrounding areas is helpful, LE and local churches might have motel vouchers or EFA to pay for a few nights of stay. Always safety plan, if you don't know how call the hotline and ask for help
- If a survivor is experiencing an eviction: Contact a YWCA Advocate, WA Tenants Union or Legal Aid
- If a survivor is experiencing landlord retaliation: Legal Aid, WA Tenants Union or a SafeChoice Advocate



# SafeChoice Services

- Domestic Violence Shelter
- 24-Hour Domestic Violence Hotline
- 360.695.0501
- Advocacy
- Legal Advocacy & Legal Clinic
- Support Groups & Classes
- Outreach & Education
- Information & Referral

# Additional resources

- WA State Tenants Union
- Legal Aid Options
  - CCVLP
  - CLEAR
  - SafeChoice Legal Clinic
- Call to Safety & Surrounding DV Shelters
- Pathways to Healing - Cowlitz Tribe
- SafeChoice 911 Phones
- Address Confidentiality Program

**YWCA Clark County SafeChoice  
Domestic Violence Program  
Hotline: 360-695-0501  
Main Line: 360-696-0167  
3609 Main St. Vancouver, WA 98663  
[www.ywcaclarkcounty.org](http://www.ywcaclarkcounty.org)**

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