

NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND HOUSING

WHY IT MATTERS

An estimated 1.3 million women are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner each year.¹ Many of these victims are forced to stay with or return to their abusive partners because of a lack of available shelter or affordable housing. In 2000, more than half of the U.S. cities surveyed by the U.S. Conference to Mayors identified domestic violence as a primary cause of homelessness.² Victims of domestic violence need access to safe, adequate, and affordable housing in order to gain independence and permanently end the cycle of violence.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & HOMELESSNESS

- Because a victim of domestic violence will often leave her abuser multiple times before she finally escapes the violence, she and her children may experience multiple periods of homelessness.³
- Requests for emergency shelter by homeless families with children increased in 88% of U.S. cities surveyed in 2003.⁴
- 92% of homeless women experienced severe physical and/or sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.⁵
- In some regions of the country, approximately one-third of all homeless women are homeless due to domestic violence.⁶
- One study found that 46% of homeless women reported staying in an abusive relationship because they had nowhere to go.⁷
- Almost half of women receiving funds from Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) reported domestic violence as a factor in their need for assistance.⁸

SECURING PERMANENT HOUSING

- Domestic violence victims often return to their batterers when a viable option for permanent housing cannot be found.⁹
- The number of people in need of federal rent subsidies to afford housing outweighs the number of units available. In some states, people have remained on the waiting list for years.¹⁰
- A family earning minimum wage cannot afford a two-bedroom apartment at fair market rent.¹¹
- Victims and survivors of domestic violence often have trouble finding other housing as their history of abuse may have caused poor employment, credit or rental histories.¹²
- Due to high demand, most domestic violence shelters do not allow victims to stay for more than 90 days. However, the average length of time it takes a homeless family to secure housing is six to ten months.¹³

DV AND HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

- Landlords frequently turn away women who have protection orders or other indications of domestic violence.¹⁴
- Many victims of domestic violence fear calling law enforcement if they are in danger due to “zero tolerance for crime” policies. These policies allow landlords to evict tenants when violence occurs in the home, regardless of whether the tenant is the victim or the perpetrator of violence.¹⁵
- Under a similar “one strike” policy, federal law allows public housing authorities to evict families for criminal activity committed by a tenant’s family member or guest. Some public housing authorities have improperly used this provision to evict victims of domestic violence.¹⁶

NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



Every Home A Safe Home

The Public Policy Office of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) is a national leader in the effort to create and influence Federal legislation that positively affects the lives of domestic violence victims and children. We work closely with advocates at the local, state and national level to identify the issues facing domestic violence victims, their children and the people who serve them and to develop a legislative agenda to address these issues. NCADV welcomes you to join us in our effort to end domestic violence.

IF YOU NEED HELP

- If you are a victim of domestic violence and need immediate assistance, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE or visit www.ndvh.org.
- If you feel you have been discriminated against in housing because of domestic violence, contact the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence at (202) 745-1211 or visit www.ncadv.org.

HOUSING LAWS IN YOUR STATE

- One way to reduce the risk of homelessness for domestic violence survivors is to protect them from housing discrimination on the basis of domestic violence. Some states have already adopted laws specifically aimed at reducing housing discrimination against domestic violence victims. However, most states have no laws that explicitly guarantee survivors the right to be free of housing discrimination. To learn more about the laws in your state, check out Legal Momentum's "Housing Laws Protecting Victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence" at www.legalmomentum.org/issues/vio/housing.pdf.
- **States which provide a defense against eviction to victims of domestic violence** — Colorado (Col. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 13-40-107.5), Iowa (Iowa Code § 562A.27A & 562B.25A), New Mexico (N.M. Stat. Ann. § 47-8-33), Rhode Island (R.I. Gen. Laws § 34-37-1, -2, -3, -4), Washington (Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 59.18.130 & E.H.B. 1645, 58th Leg.), and Wisconsin (Wis. Stat. Ann § 106.50).
- **States which place restrictions on the ability of public housing agencies to terminate the tenancies of victims of domestic violence** — California (Cal. Health and Safety Code § 34328.1) and Louisiana (La. Rev. Stat. Ann § 40.506).
- **States which prohibit landlords from including provisions in rental agreements that waive a tenant's right to call law enforcement in response to domestic violence** — Arizona (Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 33-1315), Colorado (Col. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 38-12-401), Minnesota (Minn. Stat. § 504B.205), and Texas (Tex. Prop. Code Ann. § 92.015).
- **States which require landlords to release victims of domestic violence from rental agreements** — Oregon (Or. Rev. Stat. Ch. 659A, § 90.453), and Washington (Wash. Rev. Code Ann § 59.18.352).

SOURCES

¹ Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/ipv_cost/index.htm.

² Housing First: A Special Report. NPR, <http://www.npr.org/news/specials/housingfirst/whoneeds/abuse.html>.

³ A. Browne & S. Bassuk, *Intimate Violence in the Lives of Homeless and Poor Housed Women*, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 67(2) 261-278 (April 1997).

⁴ National Conference of Mayors, *Hunger and Homelessness Survey 71* (December 2003).

⁵ National Low Income Housing Coalition, <http://www.nlihc.org/advocates/vawa.htm>

^{6,7} Wilder Research Center, *Homeless in Minnesota 2003*, 22 (February 2004).

⁸ Rapheal, J., *Welfare Women, Violent Men*, *The Christian Science Monitor* (1995).

⁹ A. Correia, *Housing and Battered Women*, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (March 1999).

¹⁰ J. Davies & R. Hammeal-Urban, *Federal Housing and Domestic Violence: Introduction to Programs, Policy, and Advocacy Opportunities*, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (1999).

¹¹ *Housing in America: Recent Research on Housing Trends*, Campaign for Housing and Community Development Funding (2003).

¹² Susan Reif & Lisa Krishner, *Subsidized Housing and the Unique Needs of Domestic Violence Victims*, National Center on Law and Poverty (2000).

¹³ *Lifting the Voices of Homeless Women*, Roofless Women's Action Research Mobilization, Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development (1997).

^{14, 15, 16} *Interviews with State Coalitions and Local Shelter Programs*, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2003).