

Inspiring Faith



June 30–July 2, 2025 🌅 Washington, D.C. 🌅 #NAEH2025

Solving Family Homelessness: How to Make Progress Despite New & Deepening Challenges

July 1, 2025
2 pm – 3:15 pm.



What does Research Tell Us About Family Homelessness?

Jill Khadduri, Independent Consultant on Housing Policy and Homelessness

National Alliance to End Homelessness

Breakout Session on Solving Family Homelessness

Washington DC, July 1, 2025

Major Sources of Data and Research on Family Homelessness

- Annual Homeless Assessment Report—Part 1 PIT and HIC (most recent is 2024)
- Annual Homeless Assessment Report—Part 2 HMIS (most recent is 2022)
- Family Options Study—2010-2025 reports at huduser.gov
- Understanding Rapid Rehousing—2018-2021 reports at huduser.gov
- Puget Sound Families Initiative—2008-2020—reports at gatesfoundation.org
- Synthesis of research literature on homelessness: *In the Midst of Plenty: Homelessness and What To Do about It.* Marybeth Shinn and Jill Khadduri. Wiley Blackwell

Most families experiencing homelessness are either sheltered or hidden.

- 2024 PIT count found that only 7 % of people in families (18, 500 people) were unsheltered.
 - Parents rarely have their children sleep in potentially dangerous locations such as vacant lots, bus stations, or encampments.
 - Families with children either go to shelters or their homelessness is hidden, rotating among relatives or sleeping in vehicles or back yards.
- Hidden homelessness varies by location based on the capacity of the local shelter system, reluctance to go to shelter for some families, and climate.

Most family homelessness is driven by deep poverty combined with a triggering event.

- The pathway into homelessness often starts with doubling up. The high cost of housing forces families living in poverty to stay with relatives or friends rather than in their own housing unit.
- AHAR estimates based on HMIS data show that 75% of families who were housed prior to an episode of family homelessness were staying with family and friends rather than in their own unit.
- The family faces a crisis that forces them to shelter, the option of last resort.
- The crisis can be family break-up, eviction, losing a job, or no longer being able to stay in someone else's housing because of a death, illness, or family conflict.

Most families do not need intensive services to resolve their homelessness.

- Severe mental illness is rare among parents experiencing homelessness with their children. Depression and a history of interpersonal violence are common, as they are among all families living in deep poverty.
- Family Options Study found families headed by adults with more psycho-social challenges or housing barriers did not have better outcomes from transitional housing than families with fewer challenges.
- Puget Sound Families Initiative had similar findings. For families with multiple challenges, the most important driver of success in leaving homelessness was rental assistance and not supportive services.
- Families with children rarely need permanent supportive housing, although they may need a long-term housing subsidy.

Families may have repeat episodes of homelessness, but chronic patterns are rare.

- AHAR estimates based on HMIS data show that only 6 percent have chronic patterns of homelessness.
- Family Options Study showed that, three years after being found in shelters, only 9 percent of families had stayed in a shelter during the past 6 months.
- This may be related to the age of the parents and their children. Most parents experiencing homelessness have very young children, often infants..
- Once children are older, parents may avoid shelter by sending children to live with relatives during a crisis.

Families with children need the same non-residential services as other deeply poor families.

- The study of rapid rehousing programs found that lack of childcare was a major barrier to maintaining housing and employment.
- Families also needed transportation assistance to maintain work and income.
- Unpredictable work schedules made it difficult to arrange childcare and transportation.

Some families who experience homelessness are able to work their way out of poverty, but many are not.

- The Family Options Study has continued to track families over a longer period. For example 7, years after the episode of sheltered homelessness, half of the families were not working for pay.
- Safety net programs are key to both preventing and resolving homelessness. This includes rental assistance, SNAP, income support through the tax system, unemployment insurance, Medicaid, and SSI for children with disabilities.
- This point was illustrated by the drop in family homelessness during COVID, when safety net and income protection programs focused on families.

Implications

Communities should:

- continue to focus on providing rent subsidies and other safety net programs to families experiencing homelessness.
- focus on programs that divert families from going to shelter during a crisis.
- focus on non-residential services such as childcare, transportation, and links to safety net programs.

Thank you

- jillkha@hotmail.com





Innovating to End Homelessness

Kalifia Thomas, LICSW
Senior Director of Housing

Caring for Families. Improving Lives. Leading Change.

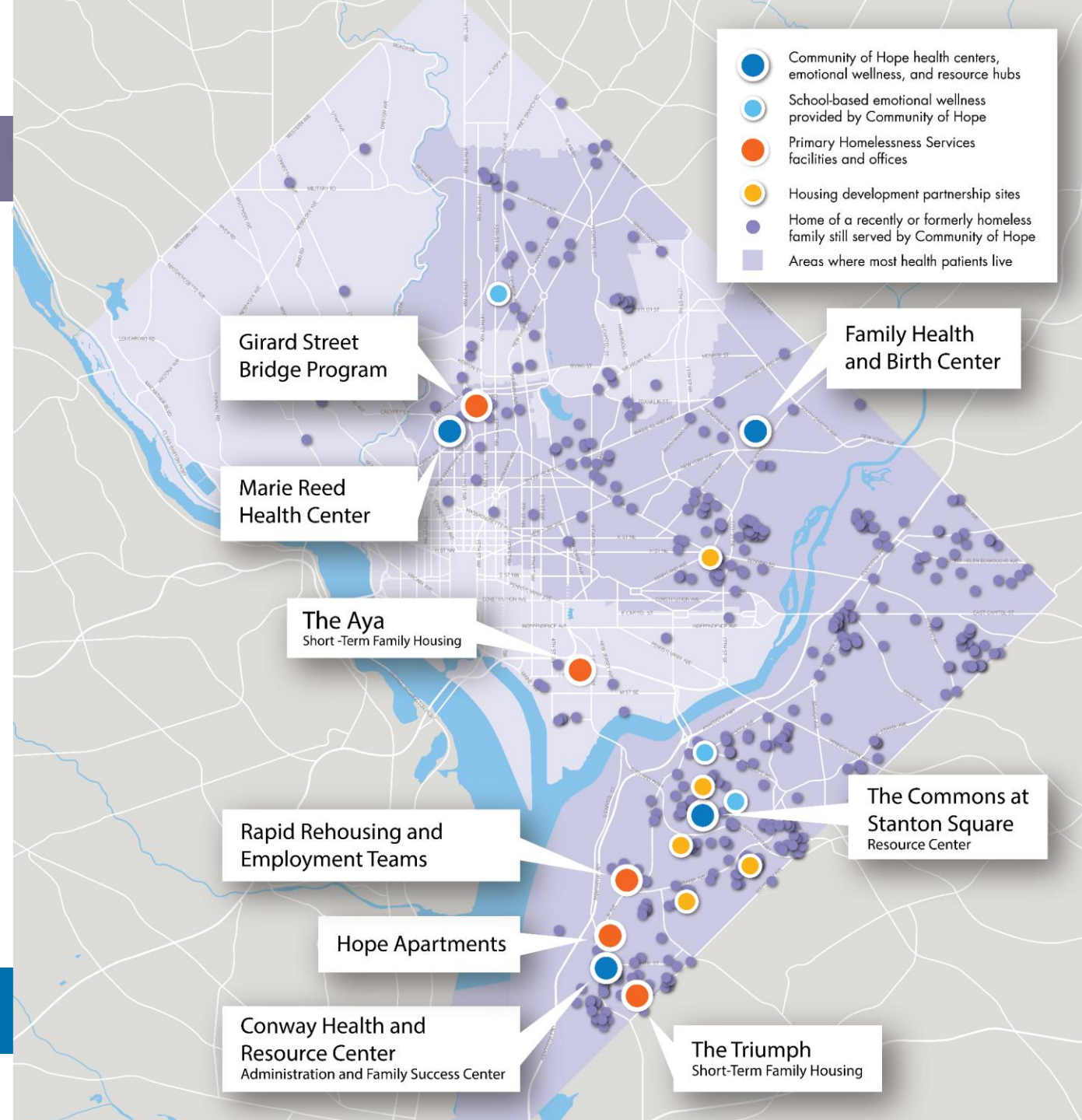
Mission & Vision

VISION

Everyone in Washington, DC is **healthy, housed, and hopeful.**

MISSION

Community of Hope works to improve health, end homelessness, and **partner with communities** to make Washington, DC more equitable



Community of Hope's Programs in Context



Community
OF HOPE

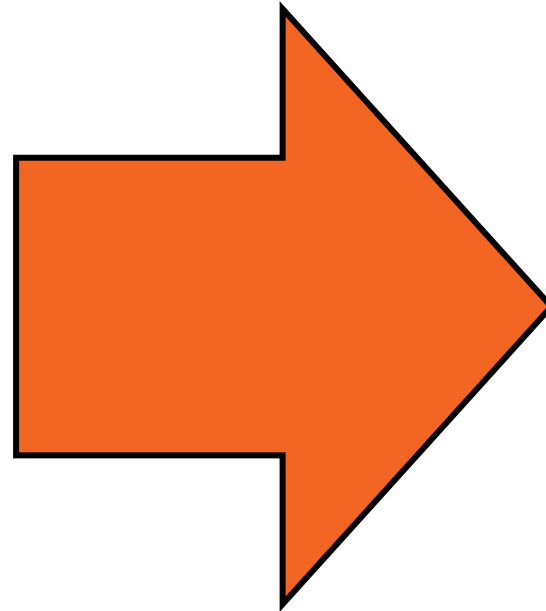
TEMPORARY

Girard Street
45 Single Adults

The Aya Shelter (Families)
50 Households

The Triumph Shelter (Families)
50 Households

STFH & Other Shelters



PERMANENT

Affordable Housing

Rapid Re-Housing (Families)
275 Households

Permanent Supportive Housing (Families)
296 Households

Permanent Supportive Housing (Single Adults)
182 Individuals

Homelessness Prevention (Families)
784 Households Served in FY24

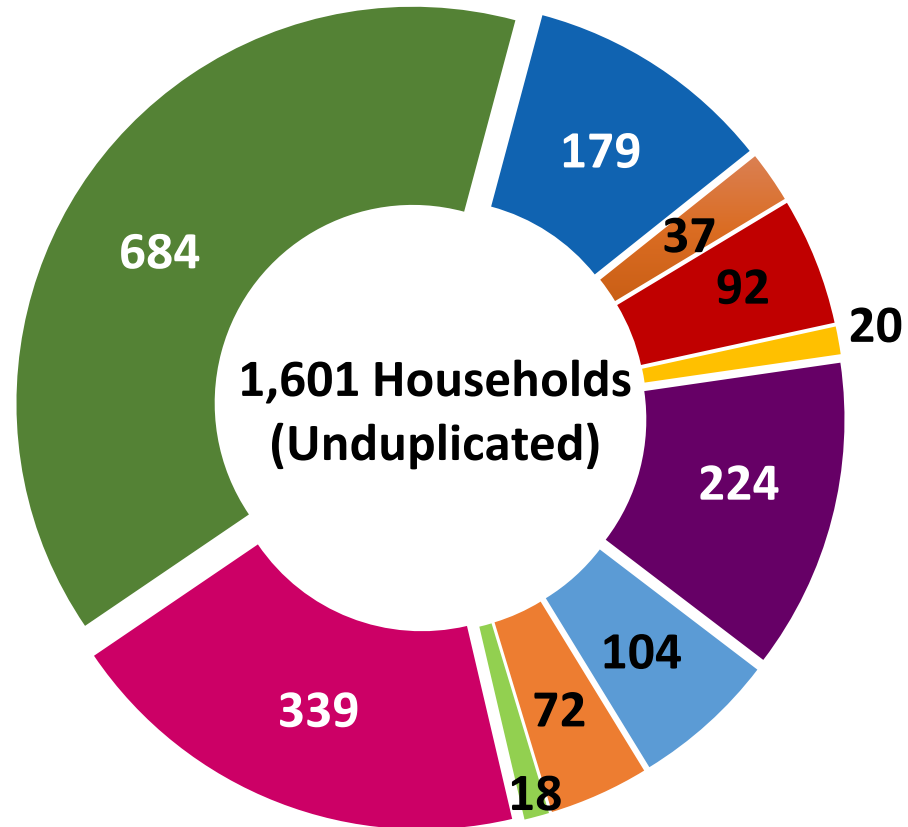
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Total Clients Served in 2024



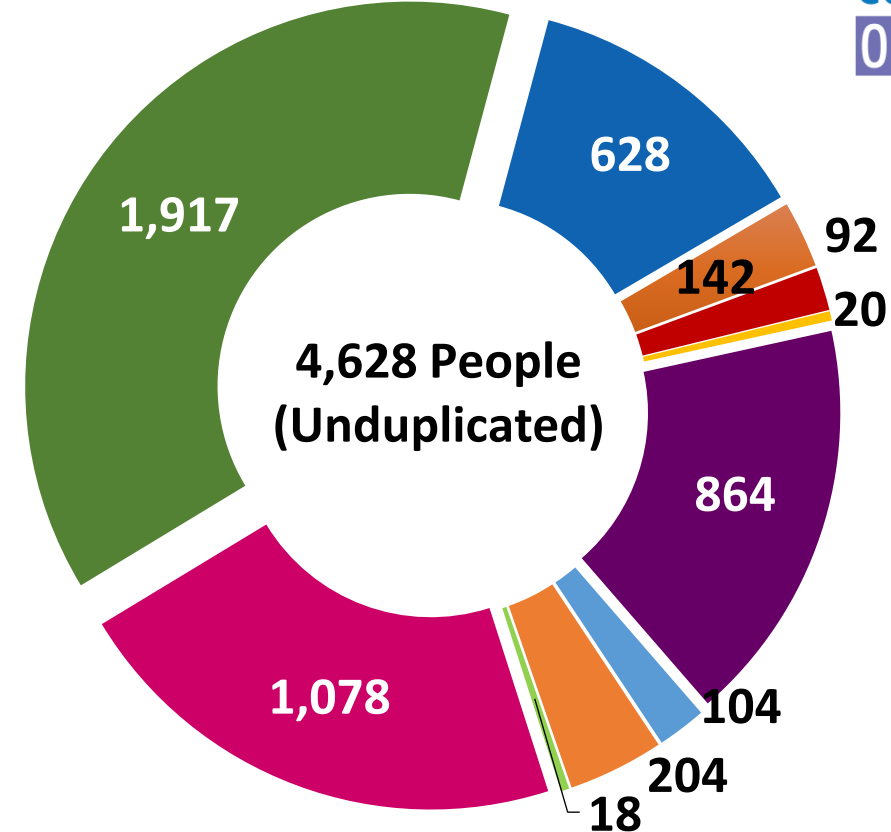
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OF HOPE

Households



- Triumph
- Bridge at Girard St.
- Home Now PSH Families
- Unit-based PSH Families
- Rapid Rehousing
- Aya
- Bridge at Hope Apts.
- Home Now PSH Individuals
- Unit-based PSH Individuals
- Prevention

People



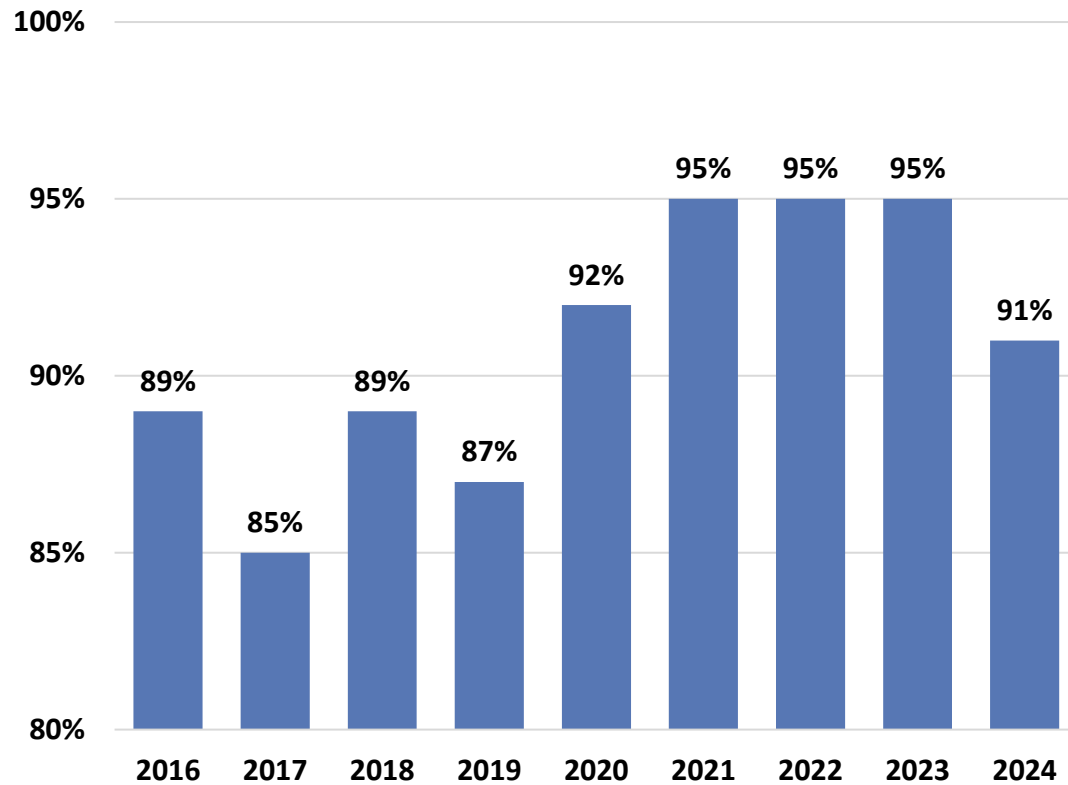
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Homelessness Prevention & Rapid Rehousing

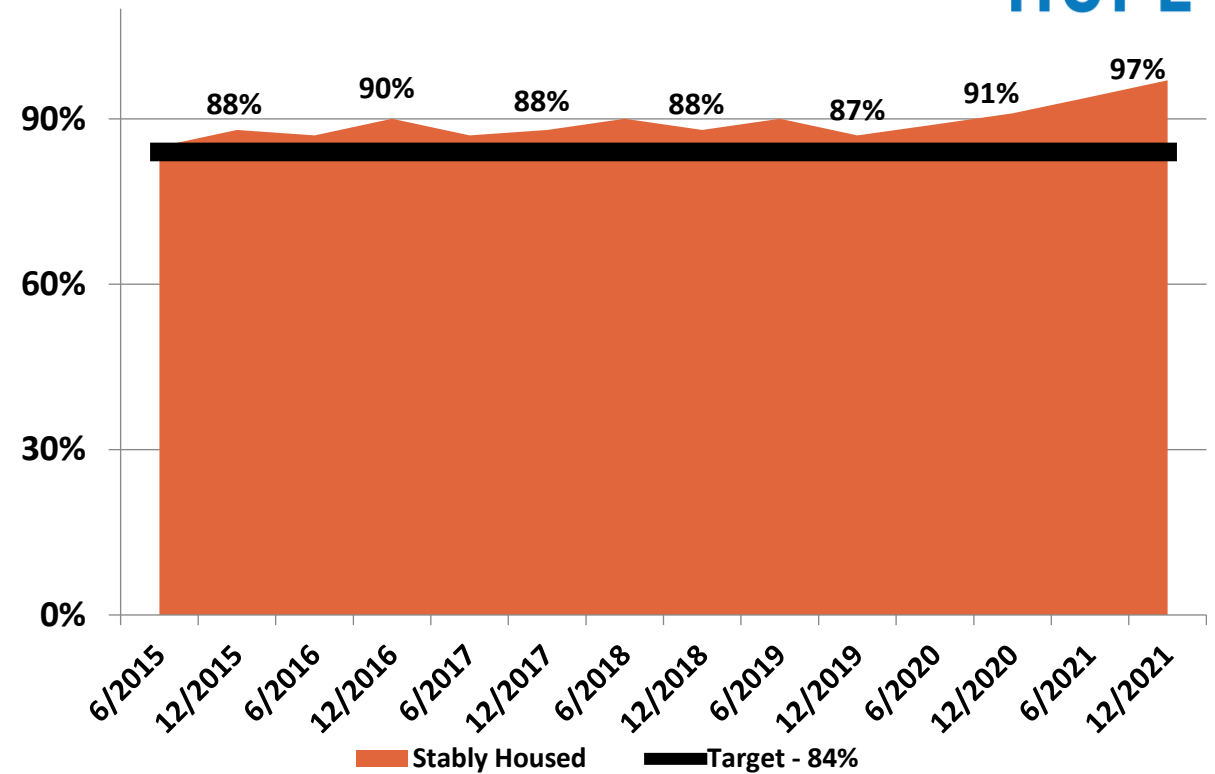


Community
OF HOPE

Families who received Prevention services and did not enter shelter directly from the program



Families who exited RRH and did not return to shelter within 2 years



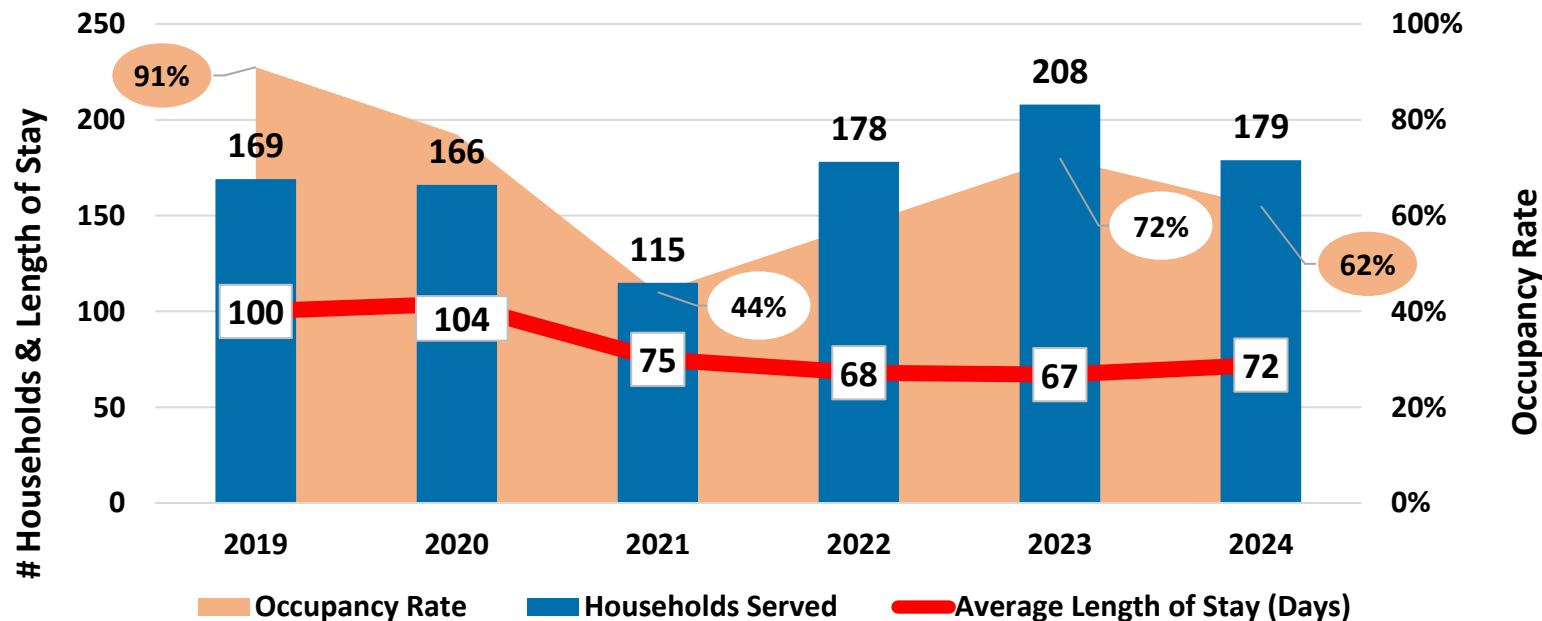
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The Triumph/The Aya

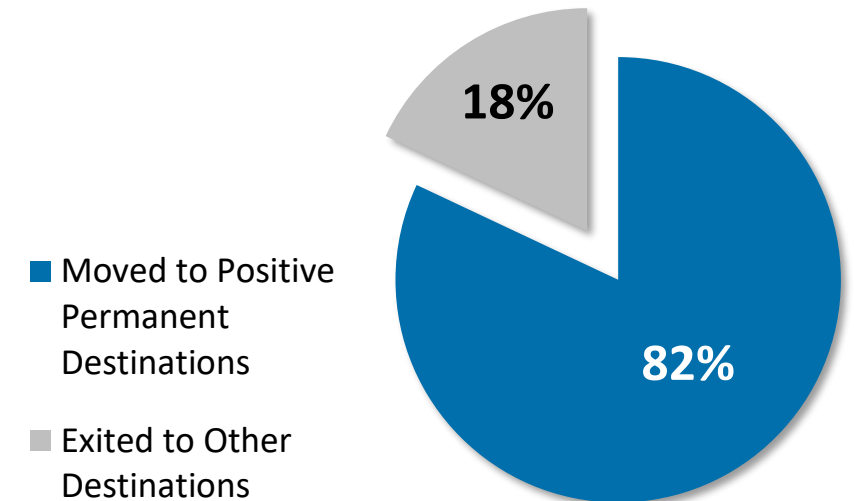


Overall goal of the programs: Move households to permanent housing destinations in 90 days or less

The Triumph Households Served and Average Length of Stay



2024 Household Exits to Positive Permanent Destinations

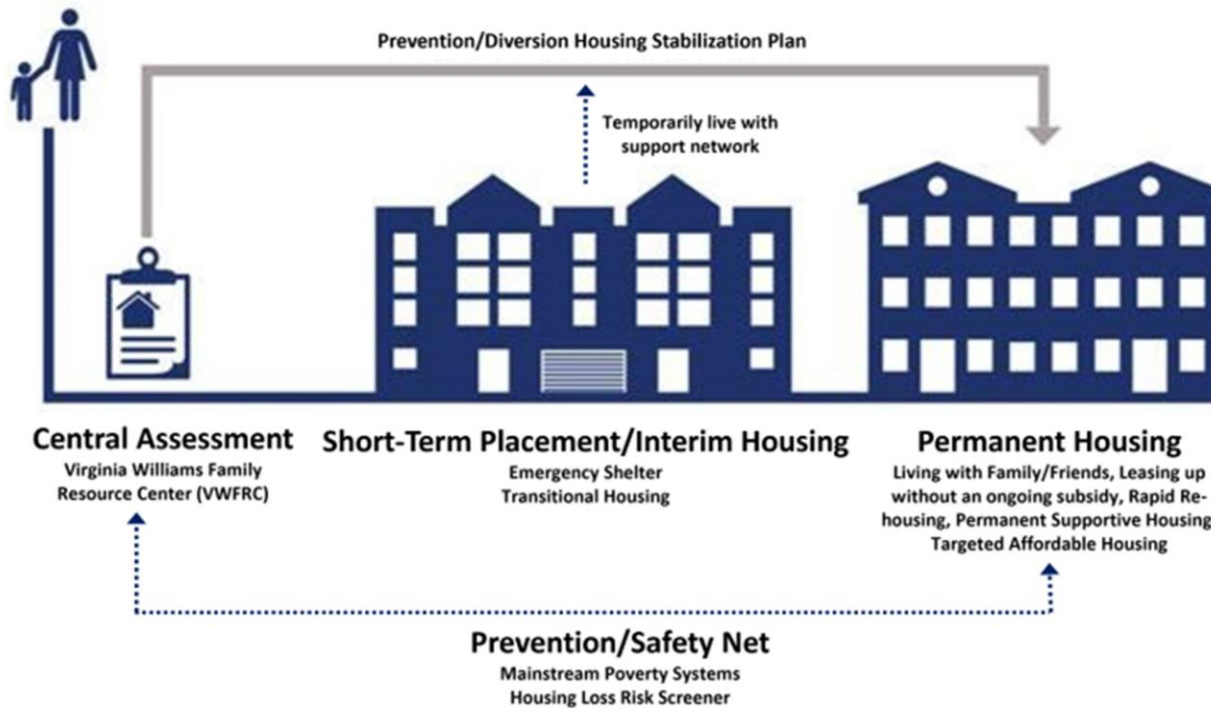


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Permanent Housing Pathways Families Homeless Services System

Our Family Caring for Yours



Caring for Families. Improving Lives. Leading Change.

Goal: Make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.



- **Prevent homelessness** through effective targeting of resources.
- Provide safe, caring **temporary housing and support** and help people quickly return to permanent housing.
- Support people to **maintain permanent housing**, connecting them to resources and increasing financial stability, with programs such as rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing.
- Promote people's **health and well-being**, with a focus on chronic disease, emotional wellness, and maternal and child health.
- Use **a whole-family approach** to support the needs of families and children experiencing homelessness.

Our Approach



- **Housing-Focused Case Management**

- Diversion Attempts
- FSPDAT tool to support creation of case plan and goals
- Housing Specialist to support in housing searches
- Life Skills and Financial Literacy (budgeting, escrow, etc.)

- **Employment, Other Income, and Education Services**

- Job Searches
- Education/Training Program Searches
- Resume Writing Support
- Career Fairs/Connection to Employers
- Supporting families in applying for TANF, SNAP, and/or Social Security benefits
- Connecting families to their TANF provider

Our Approach, continued



- **Youth Focused Supports**

- Supporting families in enrolling young children in daycare
- Supporting families registering older in school as well as monitoring school attendance
- Youth and family-based activities such as Fam Club and Project Create

- **Supportive Services**

- Referrals for pregnant people through COH Perinatal Care Coordinator
- Referrals to COH and other health services/providers for primary care, emotional wellness, dental services, prenatal care, etc.

New Challenges Arising in DC

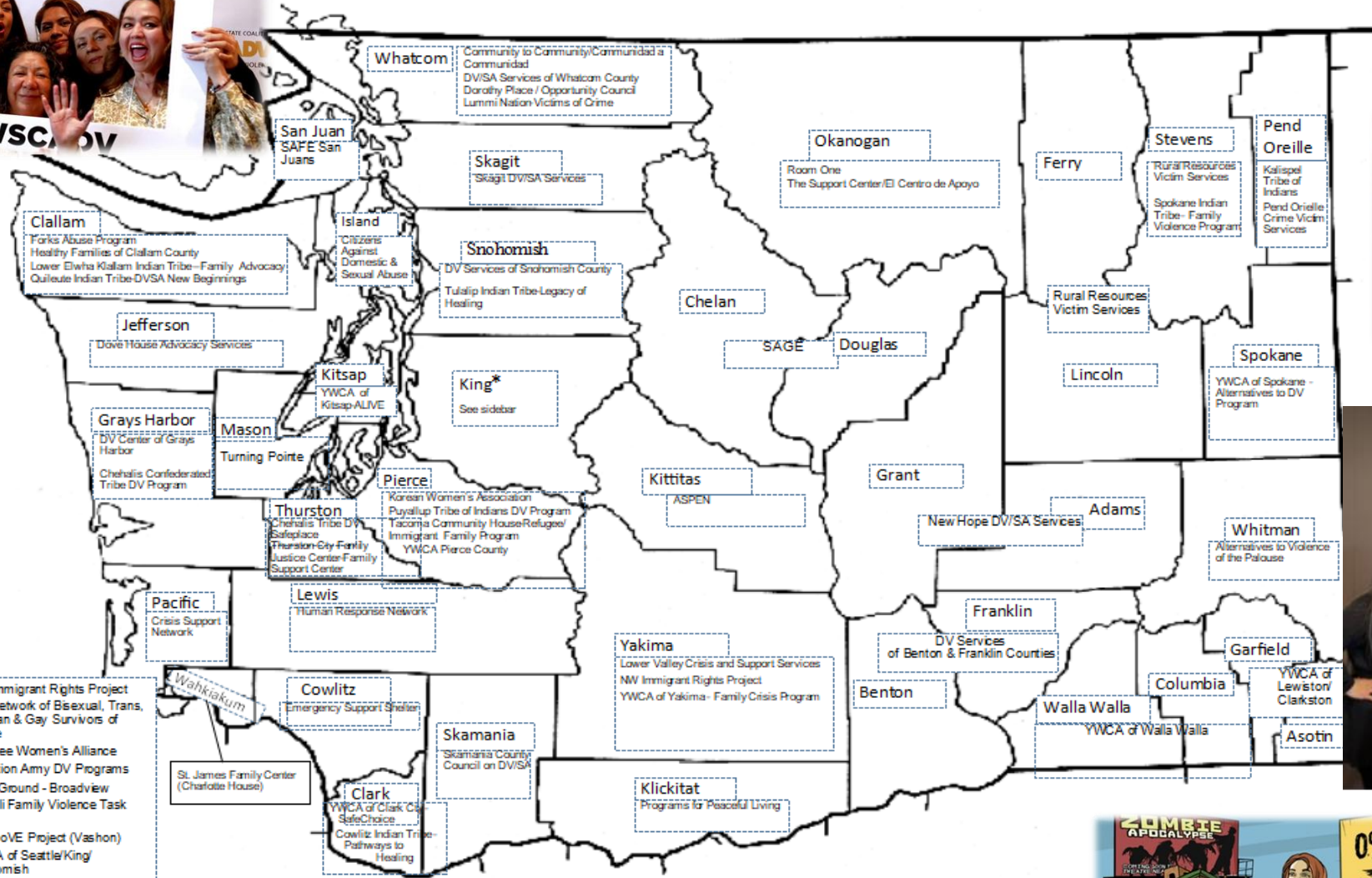


- **DC budget challenges have resulted in reduction or elimination of some services/programs.**
 - DC is attempting to “right size” Rapid Rehousing.
 - As of June 1, 2025, families in shelter no longer have Rapid Rehousing as a housing resource as an exit strategy for the rest of the fiscal year.
 - Primary case management focus is to increase family's income to exit shelter, paying market rent or to be able to qualify for affordable housing opportunities such as the Inclusionary Zoning units.
 - DC Flex program will now be a housing resource for families in shelter.
 - Will continue to include diversion out of shelter in our work.

Hello from WSCADV!

75+ Member Programs:

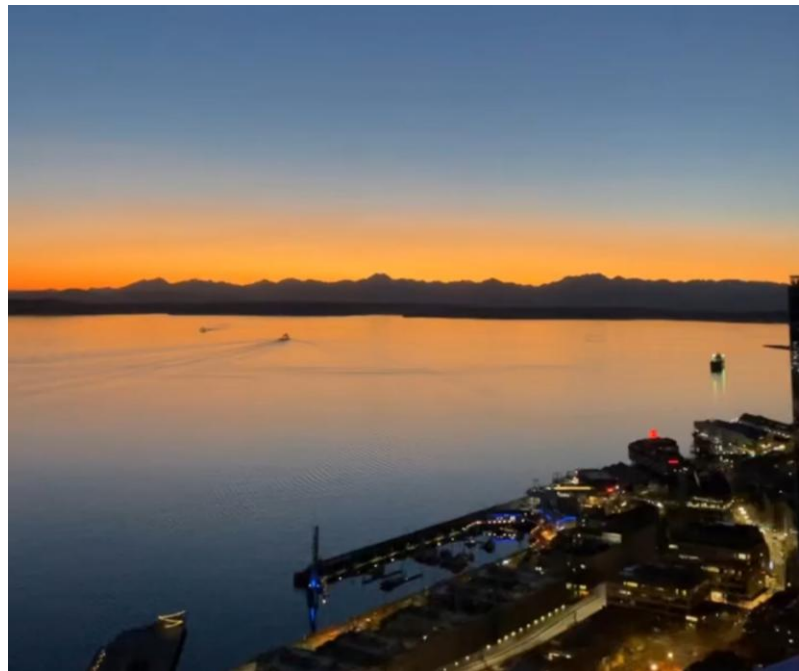
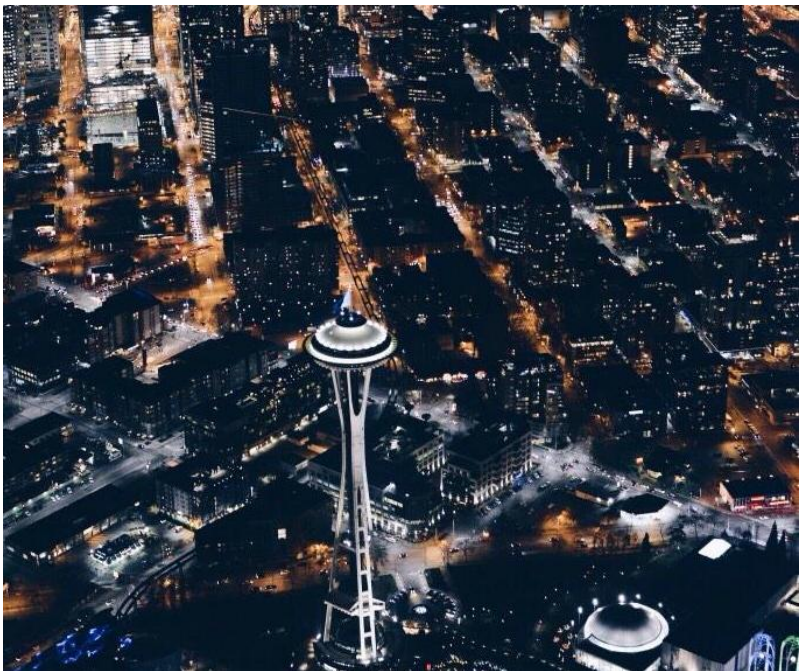
39 state-contracted emergency DV sheltering programs
1/3 Culturally Specific or Tribal
Rural Majority



*** King County Programs**

- | | |
|---|--|
| API Chaya
DAWN
Jennifer Beach Foundation
Jewish Family Service/Project DVORA
Life/Wire
Mother Africa
Mother Nation
Multi-Communities (MIC)
New Beginnings | NW Immigrant Rights Project
NW Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian & Gay Survivors of Abuse
Refugee Women's Alliance
Salvation Army DV Programs
Solid Ground - Broadview
Somali Family Violence Task Force
The DoVE Project (Vashon)
YWCA of Seattle/King/
Snohomish |
|---|--|





Historical Context: The Battered Women's Shelter Movement

Established in the late 1970s by survivors as a response to violence happening behind closed doors

The movement grew into a large and strong network of shelters across the US, and with that, increased funding and legal protections for survivors like VAWA

Expanding Beyond Shelter: Survivors need ALL the options

Resources have since been largely focused on emergency shelter and temporary housing

Barriers to accessing victim-specific housing

Growing emphasis on expanding and broadening the movement's focus from crisis shelter to creating access for survivors throughout the housing continuum

Growing focus on both immediate and lasting impacts of domestic and sexual violence – ***and of the need for a survivor-focused lens when addressing housing barriers***



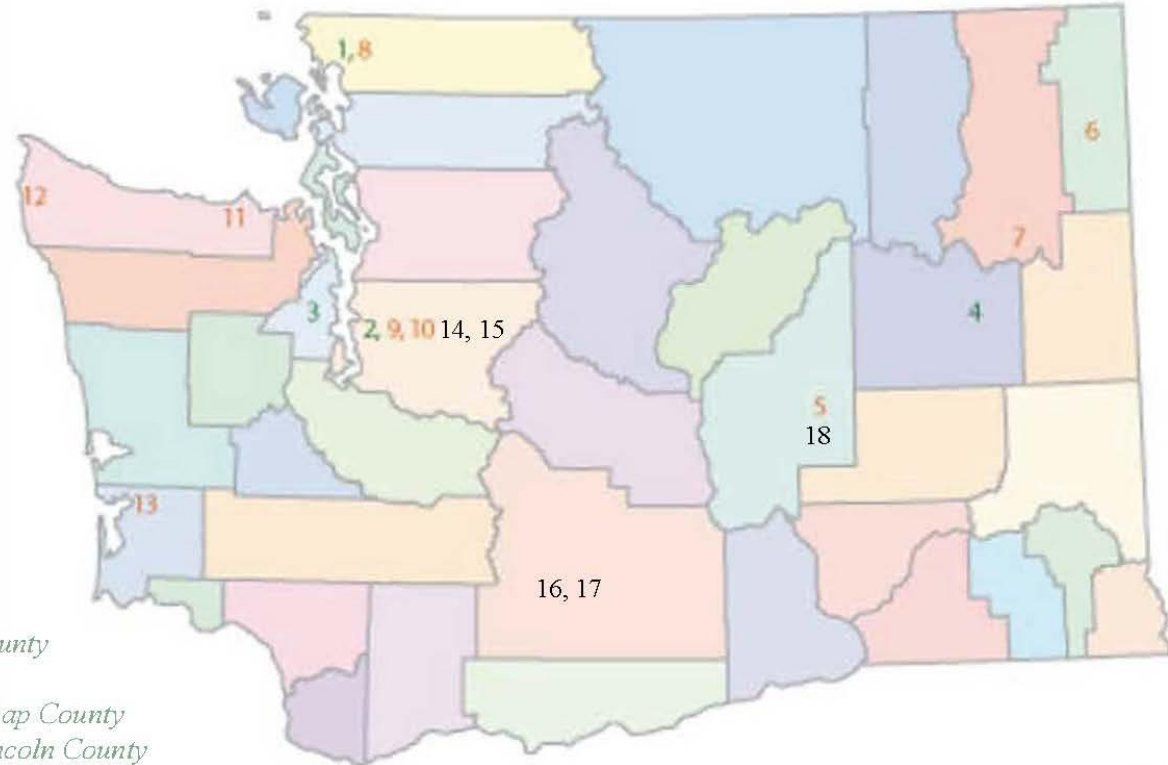
DV Housing First: The Approach

DVHF supports survivors and their children to rapidly access new housing, or retain their current housing, while maintaining safety and stability.



16 years of Piloting, Demonstrating, and Evaluating

Rural
Urban
Tribal Nations
Culturally specific, By-and-For
Immigrant & Refugee
Economically depressed regions



Cohort One

1. WomenCare Bellingham, Whatcom County
2. Lifewire Bellevue, King County
3. Kitsap County YWCA Bremerton, Kitsap County
4. Family Resource Center Davenport Lincoln County

Cohort Two

5. New Hope DV/SA Services Moses Lake, Grant & Adams Counties
6. Kalispel Tribe of Indians Usk, Pend Orielle County
7. Spokane Tribe Family Violence, Wellpoint, Stevens County
8. Lummi Victims of Crime, Bellingham, Whatcom County
9. Salvation Army Domestic Violence Program, Seattle, King County
10. Interim CDA, Seattle King County
11. Healthy Families of Clallam County, Port Angeles, Clallam County
12. Forks Abuse Program, Forks, Clallam County
13. Crisis Support Network, Raymond, Pacific County

Demonstration Sites

14. LifeWire Bellevue, King County
15. New Beginnings Seattle, King County
16. Yakima YWCA Yakima, Yakima County
17. Lighthouse Sunnyside, Yakima County
18. New Hope Moses Lake, Grant County

DV Housing First = Evidence-based practice

Results Across 24 Months

Compared to survivors who received SAU, at 6-months, 12-months, 18-months and 24-months, survivors who received the DVHF model reported:



*Domestic Violence includes physical, emotional, sexual, economic abuse, stalking, and use of children as an abuse tactic.

The DVHF model was **equally effective** regardless of race (comparing BIPOC with white survivors), **ethnicity** (comparing Latinx with non-Latinx survivors), or rural/urban location of DV agency.

Note: 89% retention at 24 month follow up

DV is a leading cause of homelessness among women & children

38%

of all domestic violence victims become homeless at some point in their lives.

Source: [Baker, C., Cook, S., & Norris, F. \(2003\)](#)

Among mothers with children experiencing homelessness, more than **80%** had previously experienced domestic violence

Source: [Aratani, Y. \(2009\)](#)

In a California study, women who experienced interpersonal violence in the last year had almost **4 times the odds** of reporting housing instability than women who did not experience interpersonal violence.

Source: [Pavao, J., Alvarez, J., Baumrind, N., Induni, M., & Kimerling, R. \(2007\)](#)

In a national survey of victim service providers, one third of providers reported that up to **20% of victims and survivors struggle to find or keep housing because of sexual violence.**

Source: National Sexual Violence Resource Center (2010)

In a national survey of victim service providers, over one third of respondents reported that up to **20% of victims and survivors became homeless as a result of sexual violence.**

Source: National Sexual Violence Resource Center (2010)

A Complex Entanglement: DV, SV & Homelessness

- For survivors, housing is a huge consideration in decision-making
 - Escaping DV may mean losing housing and income, or inability to sustain housing if abuser leaves
- 50% of sexual assaults take place within a mile of the victim's home, leaving survivors in danger of re-encountering their assailants
- Sexual violence can severely disrupt survivors' lives and increase likelihood of job loss and homelessness
- Many survivors stay in abusive situations in order to remain housed – especially when there are children
- Homeless women may seek the perceived safety of a new partner and become the victim of coercive control

Domestic Violence: The Way it Works

DV: Pattern of power and coercive control- includes much more than physical abuse

Abusive person's behavior- and anticipating it- often dominates survivor's choices and behavior- both to increase their own safety and to resist/cope

Survivors are typically very isolated from supports

Abusive person uses variety of tactics to reinforce survivor's fears

Abusive person often sabotages survivor's attempts to live independently through economic abuse

Survivor-Driven, Trauma-Informed, Mobile Advocacy

Survivor-Driven Advocacy

- “What do you need?” instead of “Here’s what we offer.”
- Meet where it is safe and convenient for survivors.
- Survivors lead the process and choose their own goals.



- Focused on the survivor, not the program
- Considers the unique needs and strengths of each survivor
- Validation and acceptance
- Considers a survivor’s culture and community to increase safety and rebuild connections



Cultural Responsiveness- Lessons from WA Tribal Partners

- We always meet in a place identified by the survivor. I “went fishing” with a survivor for safety. Many survivors don’t like coming to the office because it’s in a visible, well-known place on the reservation.
 - Kalispel Tribe of Indians Program
- Many challenges for native people coming from the reservation being discriminated by landlords who think they are not good tenants. Mobile advocacy and financial assistance helps support survivors off reservation.
 - Lummi Victims of Crime

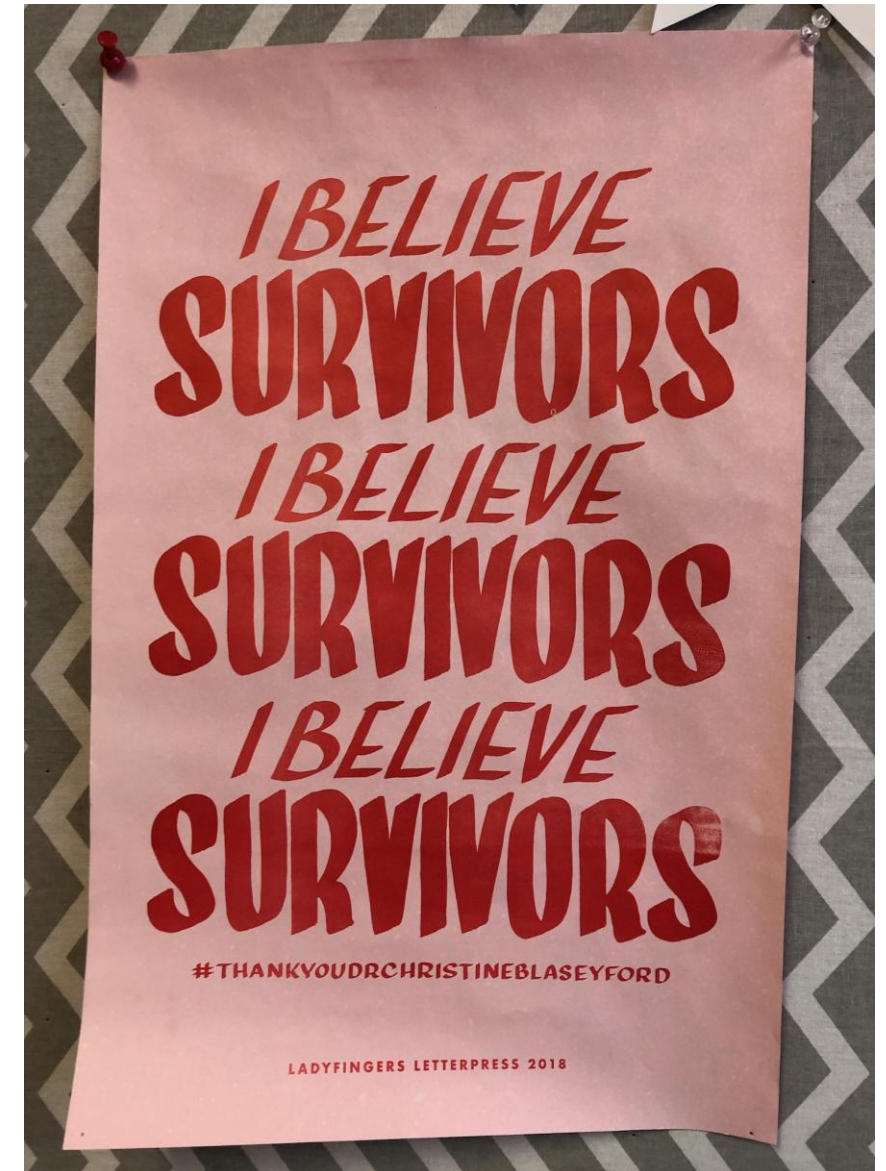
Community Engagement: It's all About Relationships!

Community Engagement

Advocates reach out to landlords, law enforcement, housing/homeless providers, and employment programs, encouraging them to support survivors.

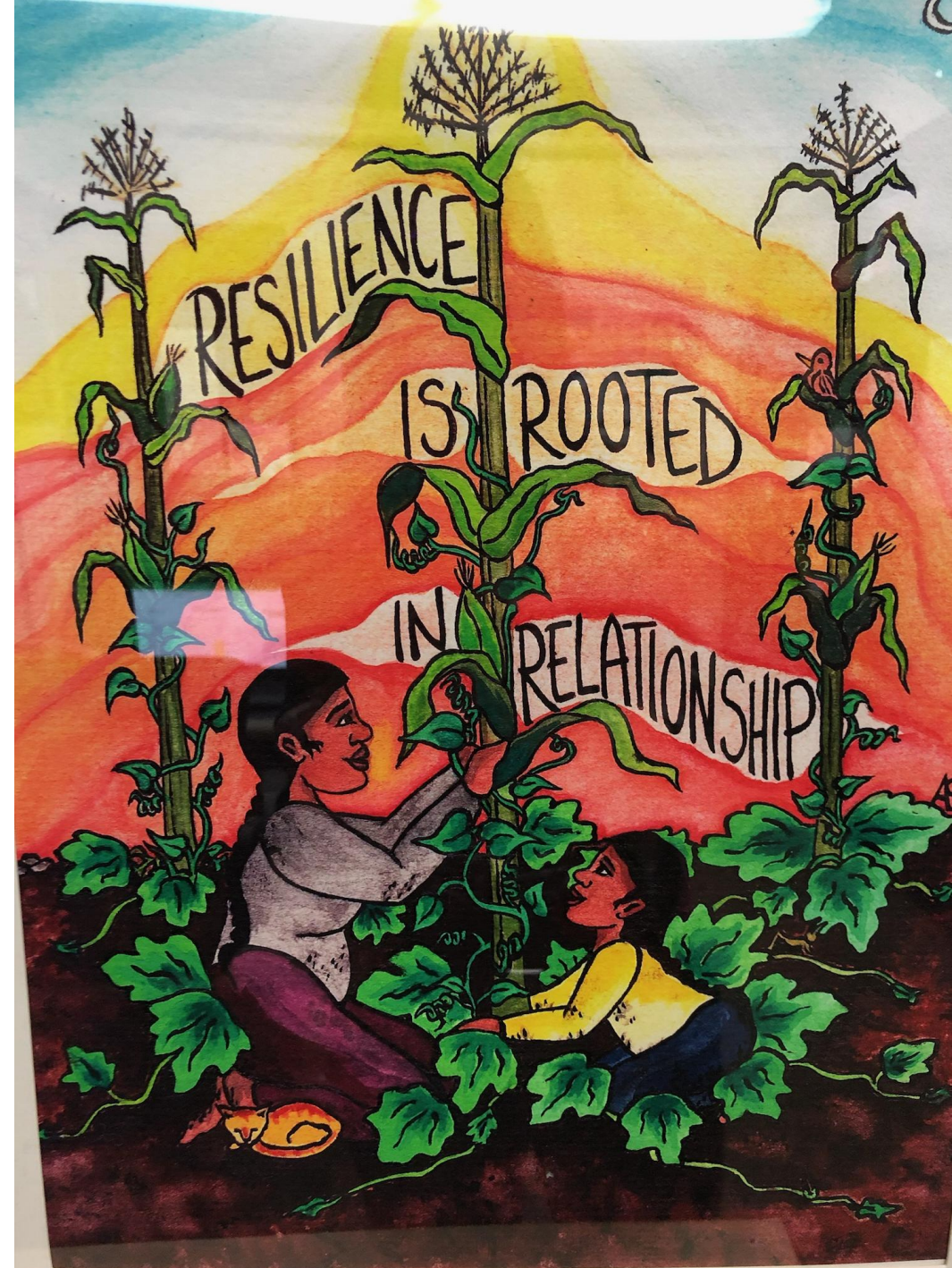
Enhancing Safety for Survivors within Housing and Homeless (HH) Systems

- Coordinating assessment and entry systems to include safety and confidentiality for survivors
- Making it safe for survivors to disclose; considering trauma informed assessment, physical space, privacy
- Creating access to DV/SV services throughout the HH systems
- Providing survivors the option to opt-in rather than opt-out of central databases and other client systems
- Developing comparable data bases for survivors



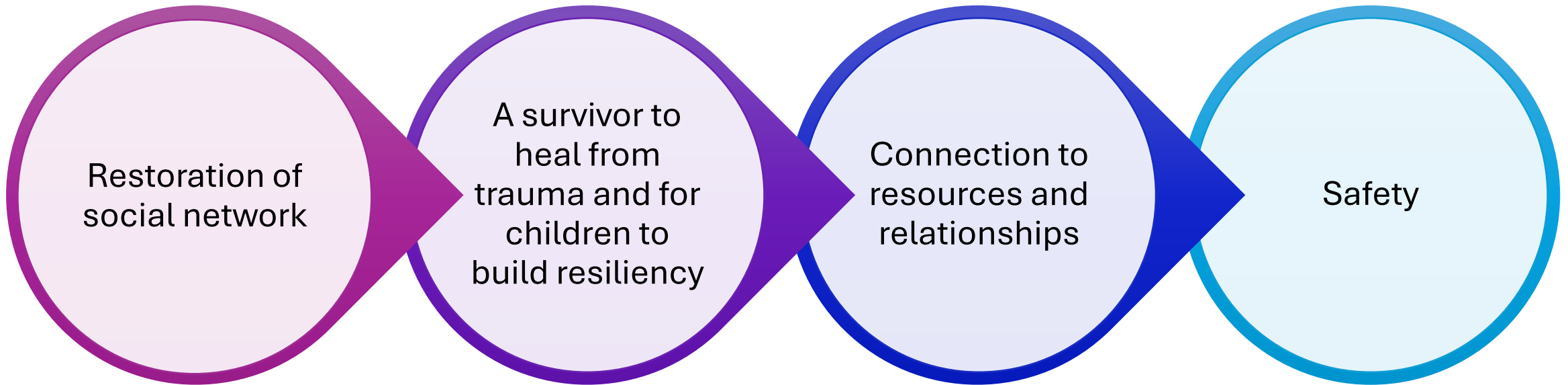
Enhancing Partnerships with DV/SV Service Providers

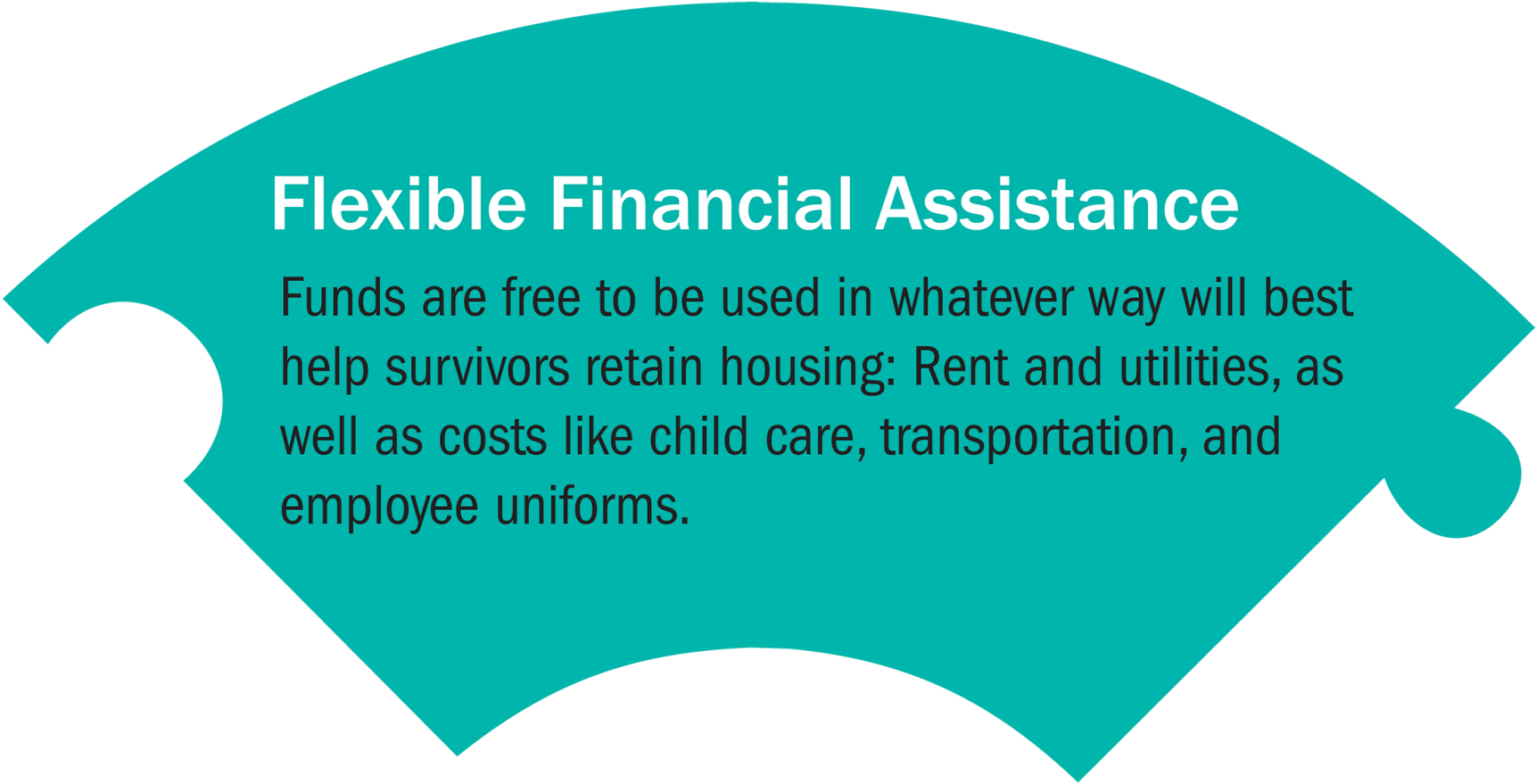
- DV/SV experts and the survivor determining which household needs the safety and privacy afforded by DV/SV providers
- Making accessible the full range of housing resources and tools within the homeless system to the DV/SV system
- DV/SV programs providing ongoing input as to how HH system is working for survivors
- Understanding what victim service providers can and can't disclose



Restoring Connection

Abusive people isolate survivors to gain control.
Re-connecting to community is vital!



A large teal fish-shaped graphic with a white outline, pointing to the right. It contains the title and a paragraph of text.

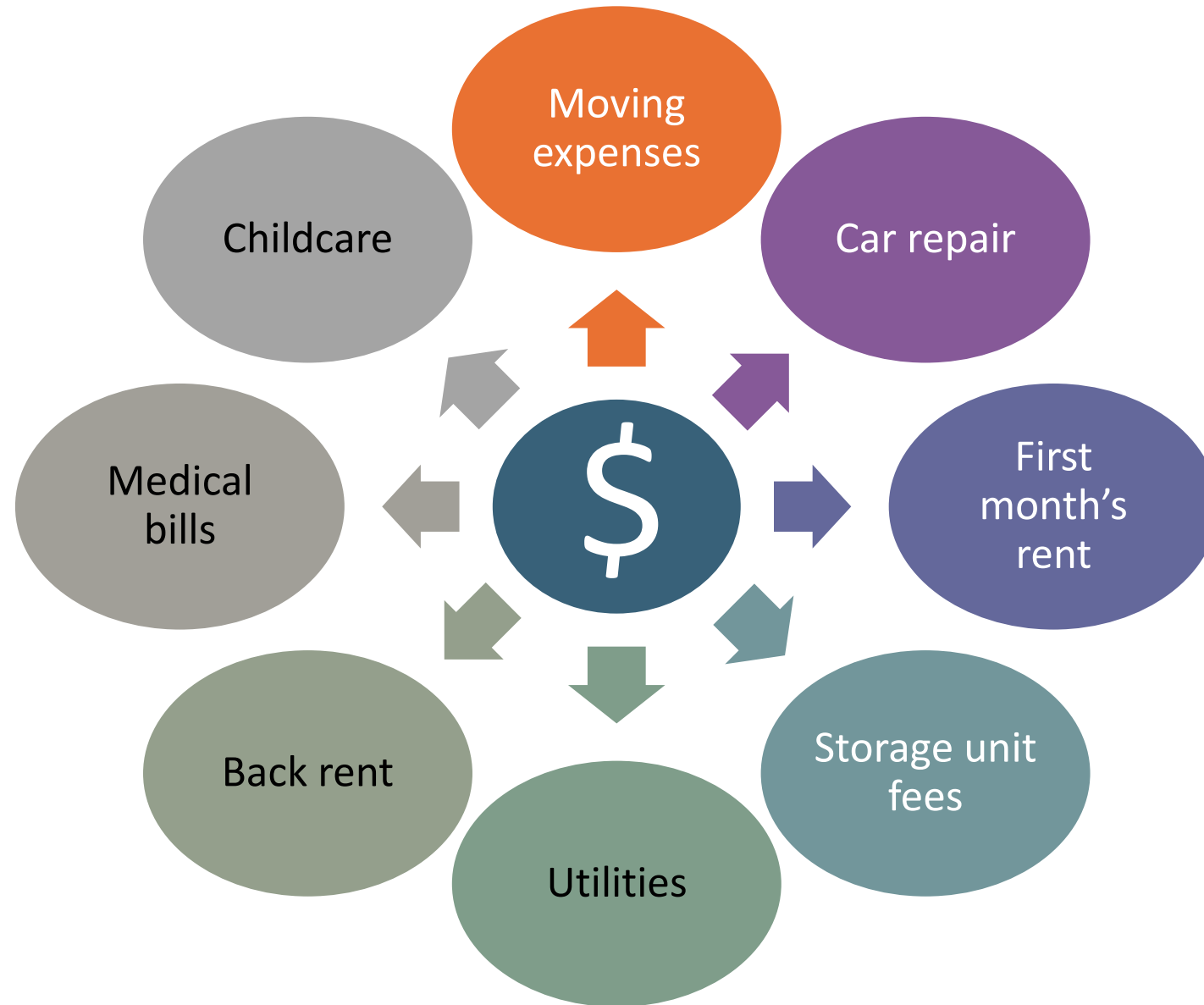
Flexible Financial Assistance

Funds are free to be used in whatever way will best help survivors retain housing: Rent and utilities, as well as costs like child care, transportation, and employee uniforms.

Many survivors *can avoid homelessness* if they have *access to immediate funds*, coupled with housing advocacy and support.

Evaluations have shown that *direct funds* to those in need have *immediate* and *long-term positive impacts*.

Examples of Flexible Funding



Study Summary of Flexible Funding Over Time

First 6 months

- **45% of survivors received flexible funding; average amount \$1,949**
- 24% toward rent; great deal of flexibility in spending

6-12 months

- **13% received; average = \$3,170 (45% for rent)**

12-18 months

- **9% received; average = \$3,151 (43% for rent)**

18-24 months

- **5% received; average = \$2,040 (61% for rent)**

Core Components of Flexible Funding Programs for Survivors

Low Barrier Access

Survivor-Driven Advocacy

Flexibility & Flexible Engagement

Swift Dissemination of Funds

Learn More

wscadv.org/dvhf



DVHF
TOOLKIT



DVHF
RESEARCH
RESULTS



Domestic Violence
Housing First Toolkit

Building Dignity: From Sheltering to Housing
@ buildingdignity.wscadv.org



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