

Finding a Way

Innovative housing solutions of Latin@ survivors of domestic violence and successful practices of culturally specific community-based organizations

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
METHODS.....	2
FINDINGS	2
Summary of Themes According to Report Objectives	3
Objective 1: Understand housing needs and barriers that Latin@ survivors of domestic violence and their families face.....	4
Diversity within the Latin@ community	4
Barriers due to rural area location.....	4
Family size variations and composition	4
Latin@ men and LGBTQ survivors	5
Latin@ survivors face unique barriers	5
Objective 2: Identify strategies that survivors and domestic violence advocates utilize to fulfill housing needs	8
Create housing alternatives and options	8
Rely on faith-based organizations for support.....	9
Employ Housing Assistance Specialists	9
Allocate private funding.....	9
Provide direct housing to immigrant survivors.....	9
Utilize informal networks amongst peers and community members	10
Foster formal collaboration among partner organizations.....	10
Advocacy Tips	11
Objective 3: Generate recommendations for informing legislative policies and community-based program practice.....	12
Considerations for Legislative Policy.....	12
Considerations for community-based program policy and practice.....	14
RESOURCES	19
REFERENCES	20

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the Latin@¹ population in the United States reached 57 million, with almost half (47%) living in suburban and rural areas (Krogstad, 2016). Latin@s are not a monolithic group. Approximately 65% of Latin@s are born in the U.S., whereas 35% are foreign-born, having immigrated to the United States. This community encompasses a wide variety of experiences that affect gaining access to safe, affordable and stable housing. Issues such as immigration status (including mixed status families), English language proficiency, and family size and composition can affect the ability of many Latina survivors and their families to access and benefit from the housing in their communities (Reyna & Lohman, 2015).

For many survivors of domestic violence, access to safe, affordable and stable housing constitutes one of the most important resources to live free from violence (Clough, Draughon, Njie-Carr, Rollins, & Glass, 2013). Yes, housing remains a scant resource, and despite the federal and state governments' efforts to provide a variety of housing programs, domestic violence survivors still face major difficulties in accessing and obtaining support from these housing programs. In the case of Latina immigrant survivors, many find themselves dealing with a system that is new to them and difficult to navigate. In addition, their experience of domestic violence creates an additional layer of complication when seeking housing; barriers such as the social stigma of domestic violence, misunderstandings of protective laws, and the need for safety.

In an effort to gather information, and identify promising practices and successful advocacy strategies that serve Latin@ survivors, the National Latin@ Network research team conducted a series of listening sessions across the country with community-based advocates who work with Latin@ immigrant survivors. The purpose of this project was threefold: 1) to expand the understanding of **housing needs and barriers** that Latin@ survivors of domestic violence and their families face; 2) to better understand **strategies** that survivors and domestic violence advocates take to address the housing needs of survivors; and 3) to generate **recommendations** that inform future policies and community-based practice. This report is intended to support the work of advocates by expanding the knowledge and tools for advocates, survivors and policy makers who work to guarantee access to housing for Latin@ survivors of domestic violence and their families, especially immigrant survivors.

¹ Casa de Esperanza has chosen to use "@" in place of the masculine "o" when referring to people or things that are either gender neutral or both masculine and feminine in makeup. This decision reflects our commitment to gender inclusion and recognizes the important contributions that both men and women make to our communities.

METHODS

This study received institutional review board (IRB) approval for protection of human subjects from Solutions IRB. The information gathered from participants was obtained through a series of four listening sessions with community-based advocacy organizations across the United States. Twelve participants, each representing an organization, took part in the study. They represented a mix of urban, suburban and rural locations that included the following states: Delaware, Ohio, California, Alabama, Minnesota, New York, Colorado, Pennsylvania, and Texas.

The listening sessions were facilitated using guided questions. As advocates who work on these issues in the community, participants were able to speak to the needs of survivors, as well as best practices in the area of housing. In order to provide opportunities for a diverse set of organizations to participate from across the United States, the listening sessions were conducted through an online video-conferencing platform. Three of the listening sessions were conducted in English and one in Spanish. The listening sessions occurred in May 2016, during dates and times that were most convenient to interviewees. Researchers used a thematic analysis method to synthesize and analyze the data (Braun, & Clarke, V., 2006).

FINDINGS

Despite varied geographic locations (e.g., urban, rural, and suburban), the advocates reported facing similar challenges providing basic housing services for Latin@ immigrant survivors and their families.

The themes identified through the four listening sessions are organized under the three objectives of the study:

- 1) to expand the understanding of housing needs and barriers faced by Latin@ survivors of domestic violence and their families;
- 2) to identify the strategies that both the survivors and domestic violence advocates utilize to fulfill housing needs; and
- 3) to generate recommendations to inform future policies and community-based program practice.

Summary of Themes According to Report Objectives

Objective 1. Understand housing needs and barriers that Latin@ survivors of domestic violence and their families face.

Latin@ survivors **need** housing options that consider:

- Diversity within the Latin@ community
- Rural area limitations
- Family size variations and composition
- Latin@ male and Latin@ LGBTQ survivors

Latin@ survivors face **barriers** related to:

- Immigration status
- Language access
- Rules and restrictions
- Landlord practices
- Gentrification
- Social stigma

Objective 2. Identify strategies that survivors and domestic violence advocates utilize to fulfill housing needs.

Advocates identified a series of **strategies** to working with survivors:

- Create housing alternatives and options
- Rely on faith -based organizations for support
- Employ housing assistant specialists
- Allocate private funding
- Provide direct housing services to immigrant survivors
- Utilize informal networks amongst peers and community members
- Foster formal collaboration among organizations

Objective 3. Generate recommendations for informing future policies and community-based program practice.

Recommendations that address the identified needs and barriers:

- Provide technical assistance, training and educational materials
 - Give access to flexible funding
 - Create less restrictive and more inclusive access to services
 - Implement Limited English Proficient (LEP) plans
 - Develop new collaborations
 - Utilize or adapt service models that educate, advocate, and bridge community gaps (e.g. Promotora model)
 - Create meaningful partnerships with HUD authorities
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Objective 1: Understand housing needs and barriers that Latin@ survivors of domestic violence and their families face

For this study, the term “housing needs” refers to a range of situations, from the need for safety from the vulnerability of becoming homeless to the need for gaining stability in order to thrive (Colorado Office of Children, Youth & Families, n.d). Several sub-themes emerged in this category that revolve around diversity within the culture, limitations of rural areas, family size variations, and how to respond to men and LGBTQ survivors.

Diversity within the Latin@ community

A growing diversity in Latin@ communities across the United States, even in areas with multi-generational Latin@s, requires advocates to learn innovative ways of responding to various sub-populations within the Latin@ diaspora. For example, an advocate in New York discussed changes to practices and strategies her organization made in order to adequately respond to the needs of a newly arriving sub-population of Latin@s looking for services.



“We are [...] trying to make sure that all of our services are also (inclusive in) language and in strategy. [We have to consider] a Central American client who may be undocumented, [...] may have different issues from our traditional client (who) is typically a Puerto Rican.” (Advocate, New York- English speaker).

Barriers due to rural area location

Rural areas have seen a large increase in immigrant populations, which may be due, in part, to the kinds of jobs available and the lower cost of living. However, as advocates reported, many rural communities lack the resources and infrastructure to provide basic services to immigrants; this reality is markedly so for survivors. Limited access to public transportation, which is often nonexistent in rural areas, also emerged as a barrier in our conversations with participants. The repercussions of this barrier become even more significant for undocumented immigrants who, in most states, cannot obtain drivers’ licenses.



“For us immigration status is a huge barrier for the women. Also, we live in a very rural area, so in order to be close to stores, schools, laundromats, which the women need, they would have to be in town and the rents there are more expensive. If they go out of town, the rents are cheaper, but then they do not have the transportation. We have very little to no public transportation here.” (Advocate, Delaware- English speaker)

Family size variations and composition

Many survivors were unable to access housing that would accommodate the size and/or composition of their families. Advocates reported that the number of people in the family and who was included as part of the family (e.g., youth, elderly relatives) played an important role in determining what options were available for Latin@ families.



"We have seen here [...] that there's [sic] not enough facilities that have multi-unit housing for our families. We know that our families have parents, grandparents, family members with them. Sometimes, they don't have the appropriate space/room or it is not supposed to be more than 2 people in a room. That's one of the things that ... Latino families are facing." (Advocate, Ohio- English speaker).

Latin@ men and LGBTQ survivors

Availability of shelter, or similar accommodations, for LGBTQ identified survivors is a barrier, and in some places these services do not exist. Advocates also reported a gap in services for adult cisgender² Latin@ men, given that domestic violence and sexual assault services have mainly focused on women and their children (Adams & Bell, 2016).



"Here in Philadelphia, there are virtually no resources for survivors who are males and even fewer for those who are LGBTQ Latin@s too." (Advocate, Philadelphia, English speaker)



"We have also served adult men; our agency also provides them with services... Yes, for the adult men it is more difficult to get shelter or housing because there are not many programs normally created specifically for adult men; almost all of them have been for women and children." (Advocate, Texas-Spanish speaker)

Latin@ survivors face unique barriers

Overall, advocates reported that Latin@ survivors have similar needs as other survivors from all ethnic groups; however, as is described below, Latin@ survivors also face unique barriers to being Latin@. The barriers grouped into the following themes are: immigration status, language access, rules and restrictions on current programs, landlord practices, gentrification, and stigma in the community.

Immigration Status

Immigration status was the most common and the most significant barrier reportedly faced by immigrant Latin@ survivors, especially those who wanted to access government -funded housing services (federal, state, or local). Advocates also reported barriers related to immigration status for survivors leaving temporary housing programs and trying to access permanent housing, even in the private market. Advocates spoke about various consequences of the insecurity experienced by survivors due to their immigration status. This was true even when the organization was able to provide financial support.



"If they do not have any kind of legal status, they have access to almost nothing, (housing is the) same as with other services." (Advocate, Minnesota-Spanish speaker)

² Cisgender: A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth (Adams & Bell, 2016).



"I think their immigration status is (a) huge (barrier); they feel they don't have a lot of rights when it comes to housing. (Sometimes) their money is given to someone who doesn't have rights to the property themselves; (consequently) they find that their housing is very insecure..." (Advocate, Alabama- English speaker)

Language access

Advocates identified the availability of language-appropriate services for immigrant survivors who are not proficient in English as another barrier.



"Above all, the language barrier, being unable to navigate and understand the system has been a huge barrier that our community has been facing, and continues to face. This is not new, unfortunately." (Advocate, Philadelphia- English speaker)



"We have found this (language barrier), especially with people from the indigenous parts of Mexico. They do not speak Spanish; they speak an indigenous language. It is difficult for them to communicate their housing needs." (Advocate, California- English speaker)

Housing rules and restrictions

Advocates pointed out that other housing programs, such as emergency shelters for the homeless and/or domestic violence shelters, could offer assistance to Latin@ survivors; however, current rules and restrictions created additional barriers to accessing shelter for survivors.



"We have homeless shelters, as well safe houses for victims of domestic violence, but sometimes you cannot stay there for more than 30 days (for example), and that is a problem especially for women trying to obtain their 'U' visa (who need considerably more than 30 days)." (Advocate, Minnesota-Spanish speaker).

Landlord practices

Advocates spoke about landlord rental practices as barriers to survivors attempting to gain housing in the private market. The landlord's fears about domestic violence became limiting (in some cases prohibiting) factors to access housing for survivors. According to advocates, many landlords feared the perpetrators' acts of violence against the survivor and how such acts might affect the landlord's property. Although this is a misconception that has been broadly documented, the advocates noted that this continued to make landlords wary or impeded them from renting to survivors (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2008).

In other circumstances, landlords utilized the immigration status of survivors against them and used their status to exploit them for monetary gain or to impose harsher rental penalties on immigrant tenants than for other tenants. For example, advocates reported a common practice

of landlords imposing large arbitrary or non-contractual fees on immigrant tenants that led to an inability to pay and eventually resulted in eviction.



"I think a lot of landlords ... are fearful that the abuser or perpetrator will come looking for them [survivors], so they don't want to rent them (the survivor) an apartment in their home. Say it is a two family home and the landlord lives there, because of the anticipation of violence being brought to their own home... That has been a barrier for a lot of our undocumented clients who want to live in a private house." (Advocate, New York, English speaker).



"...landlords sometimes charge double or a different fee for people who do not have that documentation [showing immigration status]. Or if they find out that the person doesn't have the documents and they are already living there, once they are late on their rent, the (landlords) say, well, we have to file an eviction on the 5th or 7th day and you are not able to stay." (Advocate, Ohio- English speaker).

Gentrification

Advocates who work with Latin@ communities in major urban cities identified the current state of gentrification as a major barrier. Access to affordable housing, both in the private market and in government-funded programs, proves difficult and generally out of reach for this specific population.



"I'm pretty sure throughout the nation there is a lot of gentrification occurring within the region where normally it was populated by folks that didn't have the means. Now, because it is trendy and there are new transportation systems and new housing, that is increasing the rate of the cost of living in the state ... What we find is that a lot of families are having to move out of the city due to the fact that they cannot afford to live in the city." (Advocate, Colorado- English speaker).

Social stigma

Advocates also spoke about the misconceptions connected to being a survivor of domestic violence. Other reports have also documented the role that this social judgment plays in affecting the survivors' abilities to get support from community members (Baker, Billhardt, Warren, Rollings, & Glass, 2010). This is especially so for survivors living in small, rural communities.



"Here in Delaware, domestic violence is still a huge stigma so the support the women have here is very, very limited." (Advocate, Delaware –English speaker)

Objective 2: Identify strategies that survivors and domestic violence advocates utilize to fulfill housing needs

In terms of responding to survivors' needs and in maneuvering the barriers to safety and well-being in regards to housing, advocates reported a variety of strategies that include: creating alternative housing options, relying on faith-based organizations for support, using housing assistant specialists, allocating private funding toward housing, directly providing housing to immigrant survivors, utilizing informal networks amongst peers and community members, and formally collaborating among different organizations.

Create housing alternatives and options

Many advocates reported expanding their list of housing options in the private market by looking for apartments through avenues the community most utilized. One organization without a shelter participated in board meetings and committees with other organizations that offer housing programs, which helped them connect their participants with opportunities for housing in the community and allowed them to create connections without "outing" clients of the local domestic violence program. This practice addressed both the issues of confidentiality and of social stigma. Another organization took a major step and acquired a house exclusively to provide housing to survivors not eligible for other services in the community due to immigration status.

Advocates indicated that when it comes to serving Latin@s and finding housing options for survivors beyond emergency shelter, the steps and the criteria that they followed with immigrants were different from the work with other populations.



"We ... will not look at places that would normally be looked at if I were looking for an apartment, like going online. We would have to go to places like the laundromat or other community centers to look at bulletin boards. There are postings on the walls for rooms for rent. It is in an area or community that they want to live in."
(Advocate, California-English speaker)



"Some of the strategies that we have made in the initiative are meeting with the local shelters through board meetings and committee meetings."
(Advocate, Ohio – English speaker)



"I think the strategy that we have been able to use to really protect our survivors' confidentiality and identity is that we have a separate face to the external world as far as our helping programs. So that the client who is in our housing program and is a domestic violence survivor does not have to disclose to the landlord at all that they are in a domestic violence program, but rather just this bigger agency."
(Advocate-Philadelphia, English speaker)

Rely on faith-based organizations for support

Advocates mentioned that they have relied on the support of other organizations, especially faith-based organizations, to provide complimentary services that their organizations might not have been able to provide, such as helping with furniture or household supplies.



"We count on many agencies that work closely with us, like churches, which sometimes are good resources to help in our community. For example, churches help us with donations, with furniture, with rent or utility payments. They are great to help us with those kinds of services, and it helps us understand better what is available in our community and in other communities as well." (Advocate, Ohio-Spanish speaker).

Employ Housing Assistance Specialists

A specific strategy mentioned by one of the advocates was the use of a Housing Assistance Specialist. The organization created a position whose primary role was to help survivors in their acquisition of housing.



"We have a nonresidential program and we have a housing specialist that tries to assist the clients in looking for apartments that they can afford." (Advocate, New York- English speaker).

Allocate private funding

Advocates spoke about how private funding has opened alternatives for many survivors. Program funds with flexible requirements to access services has allowed for a greater acceptance policy for the diversity of Latin@ survivors. An advocate spoke about a new program funded by foundations that gave them the opportunity to provide, with greater inclusion, services for immigrant Latin@ survivors who do not qualify for federally- funded programs.



"We just implemented a program to provide rental assistance, which has been very helpful. There are no limitations to whom we can assist with the funding because it is a small foundation grant. We have prioritized this funding for people who have the hardest time finding living (quarters), which is usually this population."
(Advocate, California- English speaker)

Provide direct housing to immigrant survivors

Another strategy, which has already been identified and utilized with success in other studies, consisted of the acquisition of a house by the organization (Baker et al., 2010), but in this case, with the specific purpose of providing housing to survivors who otherwise would not have qualified for regular housing services.



"I can say that for our agency, we took a big step forward in helping our immigrant community with [...]. They did not have to do it, but they thought about this great need that we have in our community and decided to allocate this house for this specific community." (Advocate, Ohio- Spanish speaker).

Utilize informal networks amongst peers and community members

Discussed in the literature and also identified by advocates in this study as one of the most essential strategies that immigrant Latin@ survivors utilize, was the use of informal networks (Goodman, Smyth, Borges, & Singer, 2009). In many cases, informal networks offered the opportunity to access and share services and resources that organizations were unable to provide. Apart from their communities, survivors also created networks through their jobs or friends.



"I just feel that the women here ... are creating their own safety net, their own network among themselves to help each other. If you have a transportation/ride to go to the grocery store, okay I will give it to you or somebody else, we'll share the responsibilities." (Advocate, Ohio- English speaker)



"When we ask where they see themselves going after the shelter, they say they are going to call their friend or coworker to see if they can live with her. They really use those peer networks that they have here. It is usually not family members; it is a network of people that is the result of friends they have made at work in fields, factories, etc." (Advocate, California- English speaker)

In terms of finding alternatives in the private market, advocates touted how survivors found, among their friends, creative options to access housing.



"The best promoters of what is available in the community are the same clients, and they all talk among themselves. Just a short time ago I had someone that was looking for housing with another client, and honestly, it was the friend of this client that helped her get connected with people that didn't require so much documentation ... to be able to apply for or rent a house." (Advocate, Ohio – Spanish speaker).

Foster formal collaboration among partner organizations

Advocates reported that their organizations also created networks with other organizations, as well as local institutions, to help expand resources for survivors and to create dynamic strategies for finding housing for survivors and their families.



"We are starting a community coordinated response, which is a partnership between city agencies, human service agencies, and the domestic violence agencies, so that we are getting together to think of alternative housing options including those to meet the needs of special populations. We are exploring alternative models such as shared housing, (and) master lease programs." (Advocate, Philadelphia- English speaker)

Advocacy Tips

Due to commitment, ingenuity, and flexibility, domestic violence advocates have long garnered available resources and tapped into diverse and expansive strategies to best support Latin@ survivors, even in the face of significant barriers. Here are some tips for advocates taken from the research findings:



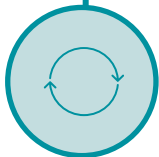
Support survivors to tap into their informal networks so that they can access housing and other necessities, including child-care, transportation, work, and resources and allies who can assist with fostering safety and well-being.



Work with housing assistants and specialists from other organizations, and build relationships to identify housing resources and navigate the housing system.



Offer education to your community partners on identifying domestic violence and on how to serve Latin@ and immigrant survivors.



Reach out, establish, and foster new cross-sector collaborations with other agencies to expand services.



Connect with private donors and/or landlords who can provide housing assistance so that there is more flexibility in the application of available funds and program entrance requirements.

Objective 3: Generate recommendations for informing legislative policies and community-based program practice

OBJECTIVE 3: RECOMMENDATIONS

General themes emerged and indicated that both legislative and program policy can better serve the housing needs of Latin@ immigrant survivors when the policies can:

- Provide technical assistance, training and educational materials
- Give access to flexible funding
- Create less restrictive and more inclusive access to services
- Implement Limited English Proficient (LEP) plans
- Develop new collaborations
- Utilize or adapt service models that educate, advocate, and bridge community gaps (e.g. Promotora model)
- Create meaningful partnerships with HUD authorities

Successfully fulfilling the housing needs of Latin@ survivors and their families requires a multi-pronged approach; at all levels of **public policy making**—local, state, and federal- and coupled with **organizational policy and practice** informed by the innovative **solutions implemented by advocates** on the ground. Legislation is a powerful base on which to build, but without organizational policies, that guide practice and action at the community level, which directly effects people, legislation can lack the intended impact.

When implementing legislative and program policy designed to improve access to safety, it is important to create solutions that respond directly to the identified barriers: documentation requirements, language access, rules and restrictions, landlord practices, gentrification, and social stigma. Ultimately, continued efforts to improve policies should facilitate, rather than hinder, opportunities for all survivors to seek safety, stability, and well-being. As such, we offer the following suggestions to reach across various forms of policy: organizational, legislative and funding; along with maintaining cultural and community integrity.

Considerations for Legislative Policy

Laws are set by legislators, after much deliberation which includes listening to testimony and reviewing related data. Congress people, state legislators, city council or county commissioners, are all elected officials who set legal policy. This policy has everyday impact on survivors and the community organizations who help them achieve safety and stability. The following are suggestions for guiding legislation to create more safety to fill the needs of survivors and their children.

Give access to flexible funding

Increase access to flexible funding, both for organizations and for survivors. At present victim assistance funds are restricted to certain approved expenditures. For example, an advocacy organization can provide a ride for a therapy appointment or a taxi to attend a court proceeding, but cannot provide a bus pass for a survivor that might be used for a ride outside of immediate victim related activities. This is an example of restrictions in the requirements by

fundors that can prohibit a wider range of self-sufficiency activities by the survivor and their ability to respond to the collateral effects of the abuse, such as attending a child's school, or grocery shopping, or maintaining employment.

Providing urgent, flexible assistance that fits the individual needs of the survivor's situation has been shown to decrease homelessness and to have a lasting stability (Sullivan, Bomsta, Hacskeylo, 2016). By increasing access to supportive funds, that could be used for a wider variety of options like rent and/or a deposit, and/or back rent, or mortgage, or splitting rent, etc. in response to direct housing needs the greater flexibility can help to reduce barriers by allowing a survivor to maintain stability for them and their children whether they choose to stay in their home or start a new chapter. Survivors need support and resources that respond to survivor-defined, real-life-relevant and immediate needs that have shown to have a lasting impact on safety.

Create less restrictive and more inclusive participation requirements and access points to services

Create initiatives that promote and fund comprehensive programs or partnerships that expand access to housing by simplifying requirements to service, that include related collateral services and supports and have multiple geographic locations. Survivors face multiple challenges in accessing safe housing. Some challenges that can impact where a person may live include: wages and employment, child care, health care, mental health care, transportation options, legal services, and others. In order to help, not hinder, these need to be safe, affordable, and geographically accessible and willing to accept survivors as participants. Often times when confronting domestic violence, a person adds to daily responsibilities appointments and obligations to a variety of social service supports, and each of those services has an agency specific case manager, and agency-specific requirements for acceptance into the program. While well intended to support and help victims, these varying criteria can create competing challenges for a family. Considering these dynamics, it is recommended that policies encourage meaningful collaboration and communication across service providers, requiring minimal and alternative documentation, promote a higher ceiling for entrance, and that services be located where people live and work.

Ensure that immigration status is not a deterrent to housing services for survivors. Help decrease the barriers to housing, safety, and well-being by increasing the knowledge of advocates, immigrant survivors, and legal advocates about the protections provided by VAWA to facilitate access for survivors who do not have documented status.

Fund the Implementation of Limited English Proficient (LEP) plans

Provide funding for Limited English Proficiency Language Access Plans. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act requires that recipients of federal funding take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to services for individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Most organizations receiving federal funds will have LEP plans, but can find that the lack of funding

specific to the implementation of the plan can be a barrier to enacting it. Earmarking funds for language access can enhance and facilitate the effective implementation of existing policy.

Develop new collaborations

Develop funds and guidance to foster opportunities to partner community-based advocates with local housing authorities in order to provide all encompassing services. When it comes to ingenuity and advocates, models for cross-system advocacy exist and can be powerful lasting solutions (see resources for more information). Work duties can be integrated into regular work plans and budgets leading to integrated solutions that can last beyond a pilot phase, and become the standard for service.

Considerations for community-based program policy and practice

All organizations from for-profit companies to non-profit community-based organizations must follow the law, but each organization has the ability to choose how they conduct business to fulfill the stated mission. This happens through the board of directors adopting operational policies. Emphasizing the importance of programmatic policy is that this shapes the practice and how the staff interacts with the participants. Program policy and practice also has an everyday impact on the lives of survivors and their children. Here we discuss how organizations could develop policies and implement actions to reduce barriers to safety and stable housing for survivors of domestic violence, with special consideration for Latin@ survivors.

Provide technical assistance, training and educational materials

Train both housing advocates and advocates about VAWA remedies for immigrant survivors. Build networks of knowledgeable advocates and attorneys. Create a procedure by which to refer survivors for assistance. Since the enactment of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994, VAWA has always included vital protections for immigrant survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Congress recognized that the abusers of immigrant survivors often use their victims' dependent immigration status or lack of immigration status as a tool of control, domination and abuse, leaving the survivor too afraid to seek services or report the abuse to law enforcement. As a result, Congress created the VAWA self-petition process to assist survivors married to abusive spouses who are U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents and who use their control over survivors' immigration status as a tool of abuse (e.g., by failing to petition for them and thus intentionally leaving survivors without legal immigration status and without legal work authorization). Subsequently, when VAWA was reauthorized in 2000, it passed in conjunction with the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), which was established to assist non-citizen victims of certain eligible crimes (including domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and trafficking) who are willing to assist the investigation or prosecution of a crime. Additionally, the T visa was established to assist victims of human trafficking. It is important to ensure that advocates are familiar with these immigration remedies and can refer survivors to knowledgeable advocates and attorneys for further screening and assistance in applying for these remedies.

VAWA Housing Protections

[National Housing Law Project \(NHLP\), webinar material on housing and VAWA.](#)

[Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013: Implementation in HUD Housing Programs.](#)

[HUD Final Rule on VAWA Housing Protections for Domestic Violence Survivors.](#)

[NHLP webinar on HUD's Final Rule on VAWA Housing Protections.](#)

[Protections Delayed: State Housing Finance Agency Compliance With The Violence Against Women Act.](#)

Provide training and materials that reflect the current housing policies and legislation.

Assure that advocates, domestic violence and others are well trained on the laws and about survivors housing rights. Along with the basics for all people and survivors, be sure to provide a purposeful emphasis about information to assist immigrant survivors. This information should be available in the language(s) that the survivors speak and read.

Housing Policies and Legislation

[Safe Housing Partnerships: developed through the national Domestic Violence and Housing Technical Assistance Consortium, this website provides access to many resources.](#)

[Protections Delayed: State Housing Finance Agency Compliance With The Violence Against Women Act.](#)

Provide training for housing advocates and victim advocates focused on trauma-informed approaches that support survivor-centered advocacy. With a greater understanding of how trauma affects survivors and their children, programming and housing options can effectively integrate approaches that create healing space and support for survivors that also benefit all participants.

Resources on Addressing Housing Issues for Survivors

[National Network to End Domestic Violence Census on Access to Services.](#)

[NNEDV Tools on Confidentiality.](#)

[National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty.](#)

Create less restrictive and more inclusive access to services

Provide safe opportunities for survivors to rent rooms within a larger house, as an option, particularly for immigrant survivors. Recognize that the combination of lack of documentation and limited resources leaves immigrant survivors at increased vulnerability. It is important to close the gaps by increasing access to dignified, safe options for survivors in ways that make sense to the survivors. As a reputable organization it is possible to provide smaller affordable spaces, like a room as opposed to an apartment, that also has access to trauma-informed supports, and is connected to advocates and a community of other women and their families.

Resources on Addressing Housing Issues for Survivors³

[*Immigrant Crime Victims Access to Federally Assisted Housing, webinar and materials developed by the National Housing Law Project and the National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project.](#)

[*DOJ/HUD/HHS guidance letter to federal funding recipients on access to services for immigrants.](#)

Implement Limited English Proficient (LEP) plans

Ensure full access to services for individuals with limited English proficiency. It is important for all service providers to be proactive in developing language access plans and implementing those in practice to ensure meaningful access to services for Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals. Best practice would indicate that an organization should have staff member that reflect the populations of the community being served. A good language access plan should include bilingual and bicultural staff.

It is important for all service providers to be proactive in developing language access plans and implementing those in practice to ensure meaningful access to services for LEP individuals. Best practice would indicate that an organization should have staff that reflects the community, and a good language access plan should include bilingual and bicultural staff.

Material for limited English proficiency survivors

[Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network toolkit on developing language access plans to ensure meaningful access for individuals with limited English proficiency.](#)

[Information and resources regarding the rights of individuals with limited English proficiency.](#)

³ The resources noted with an asterisk (*) are directly applicable to immigrants regardless of status.

Develop new collaborations

Collaborate with other organizations working on access to affordable housing, as well as culturally specific community-based organizations. Domestic violence advocates can play an important role by sharing their knowledge and ideas, by building bridges with other organizations that focus on housing and homelessness, as well with culturally specific community-based organizations. This helps to increase access to housing and diminish the stigma related to working with domestic violence organizations and engaging survivors.

Materials to guide cross collaborations among sectors

[Information on models for collaborations that can be adapted to housing efforts.](#)

[Information on partnership models.](#)

Utilize or adapt service models that educate, advocate, and bridge community gaps

Develop community-based solutions that are easily accessible and adaptable. Involve the community in the development of solutions directly related to housing and that address collateral issues (example: collaborate in the community to create shuttle transportation to and from certain apartment complexes or provide domestic violence education for landlords). Invite survivors and their families to provide input as to the problems and identify possible solutions for accessing safe and affordable housing for all survivors. The act of engaging survivors and their families augments their social network and strengthens informal supports. This necessarily needs to include providing more options for survivors in rural areas and for those who have larger families in all areas.

Resources on Addressing Housing Issues for Survivors

[NNEDV Toolkit on Housing for Domestic Violence Survivors \(includes comments on HUD interim rules\).](#)

Utilize survivors' existing informal networks and peer to peer modalities (e.g., promotora model) to provide information and resources. As with flexible funding, the peer-to-peer models are powerful intervention and prevention tools. Promotoras or community leaders can gain access to groups and places which organizations often can't; they bring a breadth of knowledge about the on-the-ground resources and the reality of the application of those resources in ways that might not be visible in organizational collaboration spaces. Long known to provide education and recruiting success, Promotoras or community leaders also have the power for community organizing and leadership on urgent and current issues, when backed up by a reputable organization and fortified with the proper resources. Successful programming needs appropriate funding as well as flexible and supportive implementation. The success in developing community capacity to raise awareness and connect survivors to resources is worth the investment.

Resources on Peer to Peer Innovations Addressing Homelessness along with Other Social Problems

[Community Healthy Workers in Health Care for the Homeless by The National Health Care for the Homeless Council talks about the integral role Community Health Care workers played in providing health care after housing to homeless people and filling the gap.](#)

[The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless ran a culturally specific program utilizing Promotoras \(Community Health Workers\) to help navigate resources and to accompany participants in accessing resources.](#)

Create meaningful partnerships with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) authorities

Participate in local HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) and Coordinated Entry initiatives in your local community, which focus on preventing, coordinating services for, and ending homelessness. The creation of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act eventually led to the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH Act) which created the Continuum of Care (COC) planning process for communities across the country. These COC's are designed to offer a higher level of coordination of community response to housing needs. Through participation in the local Continuum of Care, advocates can help raise awareness and address issues of access for Latinas and confidentiality for survivors that can impact domestic violence survivors. Applications from CoC to HUD are required to be one application for the whole community. This means it is important for advocates to represent for the needs of survivors and their children. This is of critical importance when the community is allocating housing monies from HUD to highlight the needs of survivors and assure that safety, access and well-being are taken into account.

Related to the CoC, is an important aspect to note called the Housing Management Information System (HMIS) point-in-time census. Domestic violence and sexual assault shelters and survivors' transitional housing providers often participate in the census within the limitations of confidentiality. Be sure to talk through safety planning with survivors and actively respect their decisions as to the demographic and citizenship information that participants may or may not want to share on record.

Resources on Local Continuum of Care (COC) Gatherings

[HUD Continuum of Care Toolkit on explaining the purpose and partners for a COC. Also talks about the financial aspect and resource distribution.](#)

RESOURCES

RESOURCES

These resources aim to help advocates, survivors and legal advocates to learn more on current and specific information on housing programs, services and legislation⁴.

Resources on Addressing Housing Issues for Survivors

[Safe Housing Partnerships: developed through the national Domestic Violence and Housing Technical Assistance Consortium, this website provides access to many resources.](#)

[Protections Delayed: State Housing Finance Agency Compliance With The Violence Against Women Act.](#)

[NNEDV Toolkit on Housing for Domestic Violence Survivors \(includes comments on HUD interim rules\).](#)

[*Immigrant Crime Victims Access to Federally Assisted Housing, webinar and materials developed by the National Housing Law Project and the National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project.](#)

[*DOJ/HUD/HHS guidance letter to federal funding recipients on access to services for immigrants.](#)

[Housing Protections for Survivors of Violence.](#)

[National Network to End Domestic Violence Census on Access to Services.](#)

[NNEDV Tools on Confidentiality.](#)

[National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty.](#)

VAWA Housing Protections

[National Housing Law Project \(NHLP\), webinar material on housing and VAWA.](#)

[Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013: Implementation in HUD Housing Programs.](#)

[HUD Final Rule on VAWA Housing Protections for Domestic Violence Survivors.](#)

[NHLP webinar on HUD's Final Rule on VAWA Housing Protections.](#)

[Protections Delayed: State Housing Finance Agency Compliance With The Violence Against Women Act.](#)

Material for limited English proficiency survivors

[Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network toolkit on developing language access plans to ensure meaningful access for individuals with limited English proficiency.](#)

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