

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS



*Understanding the intersections of sexual violence with
housing and homelessness*

Length of time for complete module content: 1 Hour

Module learning goal: Advocates understand root causes and dynamics of violence;
Advocates connect survivors to resources.

Competency Learning Objectives Covered:

Advocates understand root causes and dynamics of violence:

- Describe the ways oppression and inequality impact survivors and communities.
- Demonstrate culturally relevant advocacy skills.
- List at least three considerations for providing advocacy and support to victims of sexual assault.

Advocates connect survivors to resources:

- List at least three local resources relevant to potential survivor needs.
- Describe the process of providing a referral to local resources.

OPENING EXERCISE



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Facilitators may opt to do an icebreaker activity.



WHAT'S THE CONNECTION?



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

Describe the ways oppression and inequality impact survivors and communities.

Facilitator notes:

- Housing and shelter is one that can be overlooked by sexual violence advocates.
- In order for a survivor to heal, they must feel safe in all aspects.
- Foundation of feeling safe is having a home—somewhere the person feels comfortable and secure.
- If someone doesn't feel safe in their home, this can hinder the healing process for survivors and lead to further victimization.

HOUSING CONCERNS

Unsafe home

40% of all assaults occur at survivor's home

Reasons for relocating

Feel safer

Avoid triggers

Barriers

Financial concerns

Risk of homelessness



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

Describe the ways oppression and inequality impact survivors and communities.

Facilitator notes:

- Approximately 40% of all sexual assaults occur in a survivor's home
- May want to move to feel safer, avoid triggering, etc. but unable to do so due to financial limitations
- Survivors may lose their housing as a result of the attack
 - May be struggling to cope with the trauma of their assault and find it difficult to do day-to-day activities such as going to work or paying bills
 - Can lead to losing a job and/or being evicted
- Intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) – survivor may be dependent on the abuser for financial support, including shelter; may choose to remain in the situation to keep shelter, especially if there are children involved
- If the survivor decides to leave with no financial support, this may lead to difficulty in finding affordable housing or shelter
- Some may be denied housing because of their status as a survivor
- These barriers can lead to homelessness

HOMELESSNESS

Sexual violence as a precursor

92% of homeless mothers

43% reported sexual abuse in childhood

Rates of victimization

97% for homeless women with mental illness

27% of homeless men

Increased risk for those at intersecting oppressions



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

Describe the ways oppression and inequality impact survivors and communities.

Facilitator notes:

- Sexual violence is often a precursor to homelessness
- Risk of sexual violence increases once a person becomes homeless
- 2006 study—92% of a racially diverse sample of homeless mothers had experienced physical or sexual violence at some point in their life; 43% reported sexual abuse in childhood
- Homeless women experience higher rates of violent victimization compared to women who have housing.
- Lifetime risk for violent victimization for homeless women with mental illness is **97%**. For this population, **sexual violence in a normative experience**.
- Homeless men are also at an increased risk for experiencing violence—2003 study revealed that a little over 27% of homeless men were sexually or physically assaulted while they were homeless
- Intersections of oppression: Women, POC, runaway or throwaway youth, LGBTQ, people with disabilities, and rural resident face higher risk of victimization when experiencing homelessness due to barriers socially and economically



CONSIDERATIONS



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

Describe the ways oppression and inequality impact survivors and communities.

Facilitator notes:

- Multiple oppressions can amplify the likelihood of being targeted and present barriers to healing and safety
- Obtaining affordable housing at multiple intersections of oppression can be difficult even *without* experiencing sexual violence
- Marginalized groups are overrepresented in affordable housing programs (This mean they're also at a higher risk for sexual victimization.)

PEOPLE OF COLOR



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

Describe the ways oppression and inequality impact survivors and communities.

Facilitator notes:

- Poverty disproportionately affects people of color—this leads to less access for safe and affordable housing for anyone who is a person of color
- Native American women specifically are 50% more likely to experience violence than any other ethnic group; often experience high rates of poverty and geographical isolation without adequate transportation or access to services. If sexually assaulted in or near their homes, Native survivors' isolation and lack of confidentiality within communities can exacerbate their victimization
- African American or Black survivors
 - The majority (76%) attributed their sexual assault to their lack of a safe living situation
 - Black/African American people make up 45% of the residents in public housing, despite only making up 12.8% of the population (This highlights the disproportionate representation of Black people living in public housing facilities = oppression)

LGBTQ POPULATIONS

LGB adults

24% of lesbian and bisexual women

Barriers for trans folks

1 in 5 trans folks need or are at risk of needing shelter
Potentially rejected from shelters



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

Describe the ways oppression and inequality impact survivors and communities.

List at least three considerations for providing advocacy and support to victims of sexual assault.

Facilitator notes:

- Poverty rates for LGB adults are equal or higher than rates for heterosexual adults
 - 24% of lesbians and bisexual women are poor, compared to 19% of heterosexual women
 - Homeless LGBTQ people face an increased risk of victimization—often targeted for hate crimes even when they have shelter, thus homeless people who identify as LGBTQ are even less protected from victimization motivated by hate and discrimination
- 1 in 5 trans individuals are in need or at risk of needing shelter assistance
 - More likely to be rejected from shelters who are required to adhere to strict gender identity guidelines (such as a “women’s only” shelter)
 - Trans individuals who identify as a gender different from their birth sex can experience extreme difficulties in obtaining safe, adequate, and/or affordable shelter

LGBTQ YOUTH

Homelessness

35% - 50% of all homeless youth
7 times more likely to experience violence

Leaving home

Negative reactions to coming out to family



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training - Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

Describe the ways oppression and inequality impact survivors and communities.

Facilitator notes:

- Homeless LGBTQ youth ranges from 35% - 50% of all homeless youth
- LGBT homeless youth are 7 times more likely to be a victim of a crime compared to their heterosexual peers
- Family members may react negatively once the individual “comes out” to the family—this may result in physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, or being kicked out of their home; some youth may run away due to the abuse
- Homeless youth in general may turn to survival sex, substance abuse, and prostitution as a means for survival
- Homeless youth who identify as LGBTQ are just as likely to turn to the same behaviors for survival, but their risk of sexual violence is much higher

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Title

34% of residents in public housing
Increased risk for sexual violence

Barriers

Relying on a caretaker
Risk of losing housing or shelter
Lack of accessible housing



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

Describe the ways oppression and inequality impact survivors and communities.

Facilitator notes:

- 34% of residents living in public housing have a disability
- People with disabilities are at an increased risk of sexual violence, regardless of their shelter status
- Women with severe disability impairments are **four times** more likely to be sexually assaulted than women without disabilities
- Many people with disabilities rely on a caretaker (paid caretaker or a family member)—may rely on the caretaker to secure safe housing
- In a study about sexual violence against people with disabilities, it was found that the overwhelming majority of abusers were male caretakers, often paid providers who perpetrate while on the job
- Barriers for people with disabilities when or if they try to disclose the abuse: fear of not being believed, coming forward and NOT being believed, lack of access to resources in general, an impairment that affects their ability to communicate, etc.
- If the perpetrator is a family member, the survivor could risk losing their housing if they come forward about the abuse
- Lack of accessible housing for people with disabilities is another barrier, thus some may choose to remain in an abusive situation due to fear of not finding accessible and/or affordable housing

HOMELESS YOUTH



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

Describe the ways oppression and inequality impact survivors and communities.

Facilitator notes:

- Connections between homelessness and sexual violence are very pronounced when it comes to runaway youth
- Many runaway youth report leaving home because of sexual abuse—61% of homeless girls and 19% of homeless boys
- Many leave due to the victimization they've experienced, but also face a heightened risk of being victimized again once living on the streets
- Youth who leave home at younger ages (such as 13 or 14 years old) are more likely to experience sexual violence on the streets compared to youth who left at a later age (17 years old).
- Homeless youth may turn to survival sex in exchange for basic needs such as clothing, shelter, and food
- Increased risk for trafficking or prostitution
- Homeless youth often see themselves as their only supporter, thus turning to any means to support themselves—this can lead to sexual victimization

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMS



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

Describe the ways oppression and inequality impact survivors and communities.

List at least three considerations for providing advocacy and support to victims of sexual assault.

Facilitator notes:

- There are varying types of subsidized housing
- Advocates should:
 - Understand basics of subsidized housing to support survivors with housing needs
 - Understanding their living situation
 - Be able to provide appropriate resources regardless of the survivor's current shelter status
- Advocacy is most effective when advocates are informed by the intersections of sexual violence, housing/homelessness, and oppressions (such as racism, classism, sexism, ageism, and ableism)
 - Marginalized communities are disproportionately represented in affordable housing

PUBLIC HOUSING

Provide low-income housing

Section 8

Tenant-based voucher program

Project-based voucher program



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

Demonstrate culturally relevant advocacy skills.

List at least three considerations for providing advocacy and support to victims of sexual assault.

Describe the process of providing a referral to local resources.

Facilitator notes:

- Currently approximately 1.2 million households within public housing units, managed by over 3,300 housing authorities
- The **Section 8** program provides access to affordable housing in two different ways:
 - Tenant-based voucher program: provides tenant a voucher to be used to secure housing in the private market
 - Project-based voucher program: provides a subsidy to the property owner as opposed to the tenant. The subsidy stays with the property and not the tenant (If the tenant moves, they lose their affordable housing)
- If a survivor has experienced or is experiencing violence, but is part of the project-based voucher program of Section 8, they will lose their Section 8 benefits if they choose to leave their residency; thus some survivors may choose to stay and endure the abuse out of fear of losing their affordable housing or becoming homeless

PRIVATE HOUSING



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

Describe the ways oppression and inequality impact survivors and communities.

Facilitator notes:

- Some survivors may rely on others (family member or significant other) to support them financially—this can be difficult for those who may want to relocate after their assault, or if they're being assaulted by someone in the household
- Some tenants are subjected to sexual abuse by their landlord or property manager
 - Many survivors reported a range of behaviors by their landlord prior to the assault, such as failing to make the household safe despite the tenant's request (ex. refusing to repair locks or supply heat), sexually propositioning the tenant, stalking the tenant, or engaging in unwanted sexual contact with the tenant
- Majority of survivors who were sexually assaulted by their landlord cite wanting to leave the housing establishment, but were unable to do so due to lack of relocation options or they could not financially support the decision to do so

RURAL HOUSING

Access to services

Difficulty finding employment, transportation, etc.
Lack of support services

Homelessness

Sex offender registries

Offenders pushed to rural areas
Increased likelihood of recidivism



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

Describe the ways oppression and inequality impact survivors and communities.

Facilitator notes:

- Housing problems are heightened in rural communities due to the scarcity of housing and homeless shelter options
- Rural residents also face greater obstacles obtaining employment, finding transportation, and accessing social services; this impacts the likelihood of finding safe housing, particularly due to lower incomes and lower population density
- Rural renters are twice as likely to live in substandard housing,
- Alternative housing (such as outside of the area) may not be an option due to transportation obstacles
- Homeless individuals in rural communities may stay in abandoned farm buildings, fields, vehicles, camping grounds, or may be jumping from couch to couch with family or friends (This can contribute to an increased risk of experiencing sexual violence)
- Survivors in rural communities face barriers to healing as well due to scarcity of or lack of access to services
- When services are available for survivors in rural areas, the lack of basic needs such as housing can act as an additional barrier to healing

- Poverty is also more pronounced in rural areas (Another barrier to healing)
- If a survivor is able to relocate, they may need to move out of their home community, if the perpetrator is a resident of that community
- After survivor relocation from a hometown to a new community, they may experience physical isolation (from being away from friends, family, etc) which can exacerbate social isolation that survivors often already experience
- Sex offender registries—
 - Laws that uphold sex offender registries require perpetrators to reside in a specific area in hopes that this will decrease the likelihood of future perpetration by this individual
 - These laws often push perpetrators into more rural communities
 - Leads to an influx of offenders in rural communities
 - Research indicates that recidivism is more likely to occur when an offender has lack of access to basic support systems and is socially isolated
 - With all of these considerations, rural communities, who are already lacking in resources to deal with sexual violence, could be faced with an increase in sexually violent crimes



Learning objectives addressed:

Describe the process of providing a referral to local resources.

Facilitator notes:

The role of the advocate can be very helpful and important to finding shelter for survivors of trauma. Advocates can:

- Help survivors understand the connection between housing and sexual violence
- Identify specific needs
- Evaluate their available resources and options
- Provide information and educational materials to survivors about their housing rights
- Provide referrals to legal sources; connect with attorneys who can assist them

SCREENING

Steps

1. Determine housing status
2. Determine best type of housing
3. Help obtain appropriate housing
4. Continually assess client's housing needs

Potential screening questions

Do you have a safe place to live right now free from violence and abuse?

Did the sexual violence that you experienced occur in or near your home?

Are you in need of relocating right now?



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

List at least three considerations for providing advocacy and support to victims of sexual assault.

Describe the process of providing a referral to local resources.

Facilitator notes:

The steps an advocate can take to assess their shelter situation include:

1. Determine their housing status—homeless? Live in a private or govt facility? Military base? Residential care facility? Etc
2. Help the survivor determine what type of housing will best meet their needs.
3. Help the survivor obtain appropriate housing.
 - Do they need to terminate their lease?
 - Relocate?
 - Need temporary emergency shelter?
4. Continually assess client's housing needs throughout all advocacy efforts

Screening questions to ask:

- Do you have a safe place to live right now free from violence and abuse?
- Did the sexual violence that you experienced occur in or near your home?
- Are you in need of relocating right now?

AGENCY SUPPORT

Provide advocacy on:

- Breaking a lease
- Negotiating a new lease
- Recovering security deposits
- Section 8 housing options
- Additional public benefit programs (SNAP, WIC, etc.)



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

List at least three considerations for providing advocacy and support to victims of sexual assault.

List at least three local resources relevant to potential survivor needs.

Describe the process of providing a referral to local resources.

Facilitator notes:

Agency and advocate should be able to provide advocacy and information on housing issues:

- Breaking a lease if the survivor wants to move
- Negotiating a new lease
- Recovering security deposits (if breaking lease is necessary or if apartment was damaged during the violence)
- Understanding Section 8 housing options
- Other public benefit programs: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Medicaid, Medicare, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formally Food Stamps), WIC (Women, Infants, and Children Program), etc.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

Demonstrate culturally relevant advocacy skills.

List at least three considerations for providing advocacy and support to victims of sexual assault.

Facilitator notes:

- Advocates should also be knowledgeable about the survivor's culture and specific cultural needs
- Example: Native Americans require room for the spirit, which can affect their housing needs
- Cultural accessibility is just as important as the physical safety of the home
- Advocates should strive for cultural humility and ensure they're listening to all the needs of the survivor

COLLABORATION



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

Describe the process of providing a referral to local resources.

Facilitator notes:

- Dual programs are at an advantage—already have access to emergency shelter for domestic violence survivors; *may* be able to utilize the shelter for sexual violence survivors as well
- Stand-alone sexual violence support programs can collaborate with their local domestic violence service program to enhance partnership and one another's services—MOUs can be put in place to establish referral protocols and policies for working with the DV agency to provide shelter to sexual violence survivors



Learning objectives addressed:

Describe the process of providing a referral to local resources.

Facilitator notes:

There are legal protections for survivors of sexual violence who are in need of housing. It's important that advocates understand the housing protections in order to effectively advocate for survivors who need shelter.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

VAWA 2013

New protections for SV survivors
Cannot discriminate based upon victim status
Emergency Transfer Assistance
Lease bifurcation
Notice of rights to survivors



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

List at least three local resources relevant to potential survivor needs.
Describe the process of providing a referral to local resources.

Facilitator notes:

- In 2013, VAWA added new protections for survivors of sexual violence in addition to the already existing protections for survivors of DV and stalking
- Under VAWA 2013, a survivor who is a tenant of public housing may not be denied admission or assistance from the housing; They're not allowed to be evicted due to their survivor status

HUD (Dept of Housing and Urban Development) Programs covered:

Public Housing
Section 8 vouchers
Project-based Section 8
Supportive Housing for the Elderly
Supportive Housing for People with Disabilities
Multifamily rental housing
BMIR (Below Market Interest Rate)
HOME
Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS
McKinner-Venter (Homelessness Programs)

Department of Agriculture
Rural Development (RD) Multifamily
Department of Treasury/IRS
Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)

Emergency Transfer Assistance

- HUD required to adopt a model emergency transfer plan for use by Public Housing Agencies (PHAs), owners, managers, or other providers participating in covered programs
- Under the plan:
 - allows a survivor to self-certify their need for an emergency transfer, ensuring documentation is not a barrier to protecting their immediate safety;
 - allows the survivor to determine what is a safe unit for purposes of the transfer, ensuring that the survivor has control over their own safety planning;
 - requires housing providers to allow for a resident to move immediately if there is another safe and available unit that does not require the survivor to undergo an application process as a new tenant, ensuring quicker access to safe housing;
 - requires housing providers to explain the efforts they will take when there is not a safe and available unit available for an emergency transfer and encourages housing providers to partner with victim services and advocates and other housing providers to assist a survivor; and,
 - requires housing providers to document requests for emergency transfers, including the outcome of the request, and to report annually to HUD.
- Survivors must be allowed to transfer to another available unit in the assault occurred within the past 90 days on the premises
- HUD also required to establish policies and procedures under which victims receive tenant protection vouchers

Lease bifurcation

- If perpetrator is evicted from residence due to their violent behavior, the remaining tenant may remain in the housing as long as they are eligible, or must be given adequate time for establish eligibility

Notice of rights to survivors

Landlords or property managers are required to give survivors notice of their VAWA rights:

- When they are denied housing
- When they are admitted to public housing
- When they are notified of eviction or termination

IN NJ

NEW JERSEY: [N.J. Stat. § 46:8-9.6](#) through § 46:8-9.12; § 46:8-21.1.

Allows a tenant to terminate a non-seasonal lease upon provision of “written notice that the tenant or a child of the tenant faces an imminent threat of serious physical harm if the tenant remains on the leased premises” and documentation of the violence via one of the following: a certified copy of a permanent restraining order from a New Jersey court or a court of another jurisdiction, a “law enforcement agency record,” medical documentation of domestic violence by a health care provider, a certification from a “certified Domestic Violence Specialist,” or documents from a licensed social worker relating to the domestic violence. The lease terminates thirty days after such notice is provided, and any co-tenants’ leases also terminate on that day. Landlords shall keep confidential information learned through this process. The landlord should return any advance rent and unused security deposit, plus the interest earned thereon, to the tenant within fifteen days after the lease terminates.



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

List at least three considerations for providing advocacy and support to victims of sexual assault.

Describe the process of providing a referral to local resources.

Facilitator notes:

In NJ, a tenant will need to provide written notice to their landlord stating that they are in imminent danger if they stay in their current residence. The survivor will also need to provide documentation of the violence from any of the following:

- Certified copy of a permanent restraining order
- Law enforcement agency record
- Medical documentation of the violence
- Written documentation by a certified crisis intervention service, such as a DV or SV agency
- Or documents from a licensed social worker.

Landlords are required to keep all of this information confidential, and will return any advance rent or unused security deposit.

RESOURCES

[Guide to Affordable Housing in NJ](#)

[Find your local PHA](#)

[HUD's final rule](#) (rules and regulations for VAWA)

[Housing & Sexual Violence Info Packet](#) (NSVRC)



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

Learning objectives addressed:

List at least three local resources relevant to potential survivor needs.

Describe the process of providing a referral to local resources.

Facilitator notes:

- Guide for Affordable Housing in NJ – state govt website provides an overview for affordable housing in NJ by county
- Link to a list of all the Public Housing Agencies in NJ by town—good resource when providing information to a survivor
- Link to the HUD's final rule under VAWA—this details the regulations for the HUD under VAWA 2013
- NSVRC's Housing & Sexual Violence Info Packet—lots of additional information and links on the intersection of SV and housing/homelessness

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness

REFERENCES

Bein, K. & Hurt, C. (2011) *Strong Foundation for Healing: Shelter & Sexual Violence*. National Sexual Assault Coalition Resource Sharing Project. Retrieved from: http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications_RSP_Strong-foundation-for-healing-shelter-and-sexual-violence.pdf

National Sexual Violence Resource Center. (2010). *Opening the Door: An Advocate's Guide to Housing and Sexual Violence*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/opening-door-advocates-guide-housing-and-sexual-violence>

National Sexual Violence Resource Center. (2010). *Housing and Sexual Violence Overview of National Survey: January 2010*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/housing-and-sexual-violence-overview-national-survey>

National Alliance to End Sexual Violence. (2013). *VAWA 2013 Sexual Assault Housing Protections*. Retrieved from: <http://endsexualviolence.org/files/NAESVvawa13HousingProtectionsFinal.pdf>



Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate Training – Housing & Homelessness