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TEXAS COUNCIL ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

ADVOCACY *in* ACTION:

Housing Stability

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Year after year, family violence survivors identify safe and affordable housing as their biggest unmet need. With the passage of SB 1841 (88R), Chapter 51 of the Texas Human Resources Code now requires that family violence centers provide trauma-informed, voluntary advocacy services including those aimed at fostering economic and housing stability for survivors of family violence. These services play a crucial role in helping survivors increase their immediate and long-term safety.

As a family violence advocate, your work in this area can be transformative, offering survivors tools and resources to support their efforts to create a safe and stable home. This tip sheet provides essential information and resources to help you support survivors to address their housing needs and goals. It is imperative that family violence centers focus on housing advocacy. For survivors, there is no path to long-term safety and stability that doesn't pass through the front door of a safe, affordable home.

What is Housing Advocacy?

Housing Advocacy is an umbrella term for the work of supporting a survivor to create the safest possible living situation. It may include:

- Strategies to increase safety while residing with an abusive person;
- Planning and carrying out a plan to leave the abusive relationship;
- Identifying and accessing safe places to stay during a crisis or emergency;
- Planning for how to stay safe when returning to an abusive home;
- Exploring and securing new housing; and/or
- Budgeting and safety planning to maintain safety and stability in new housing.

Housing advocacy addresses the spectrum of housing safety needs from crisis planning, through short, medium, and long-term housing options.

It is collaborative work between survivors and advocates.



It is important to not assume that a survivor will have options for safe places to stay or access to resources. Rather ask and explore options so you can brainstorm together. Research and share the information and resources available to you. Be honest about barriers and limitations, but don't avoid the topic just because it is difficult or because you cannot offer easy solutions. Housing advocacy is considered an essential service because creating the safest possible living situation is at the core of all survivor advocacy work.

Intersections of Homelessness and Abuse

Often, survivors must choose between staying in (or returning to) an abusive home or facing homelessness. Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness, and people experiencing homelessness are at an increased risk for assault and abuse. Below we outline statistics both for you as well as for use to educate community members about this intersection.

- 87.4% of survivors surveyed experienced homelessness or displacement from their homes (e.g., emergency shelter stays, sleeping outside, or relying on friends or family members for temporary housing).[1]
- 81.7% of family violence programs reported housing costs including rent as the top reason survivors request financial assistance.[2]
- 58.4% of family violence programs reported utility expenses as the second leading reason survivors request financial assistance.[3]
- 44% of family violence programs in the state offer non-shelter housing assistance to survivors.[4]
- 21.4% of family violence programs in the state offer scattered-site transitional housing and 19.1% offer project-based transitional housing to survivors.[5]
- 31% of family violence programs in the state offer rapid rehousing to survivors.[6]
- Only 8.4% of family violence programs in the state offer permanent supportive housing to survivors.[7]

How Financial Abuse Impacts Access to Housing

Economic abuse is a form of family violence and involves controlling someone's finances, assets, and their access to these resources, often resulting in that person's intentional economic dependence. Financial abuse severely limits survivors' ability to secure housing. Abusive partners will often directly target finances to maintain control over their partner and prevent them from leaving. Financial abuse frequently results in negative credit, negative rental history, and criminal history for survivors.

The shortage of affordable rental units in Texas further challenges survivors' efforts to secure stable long-term housing.

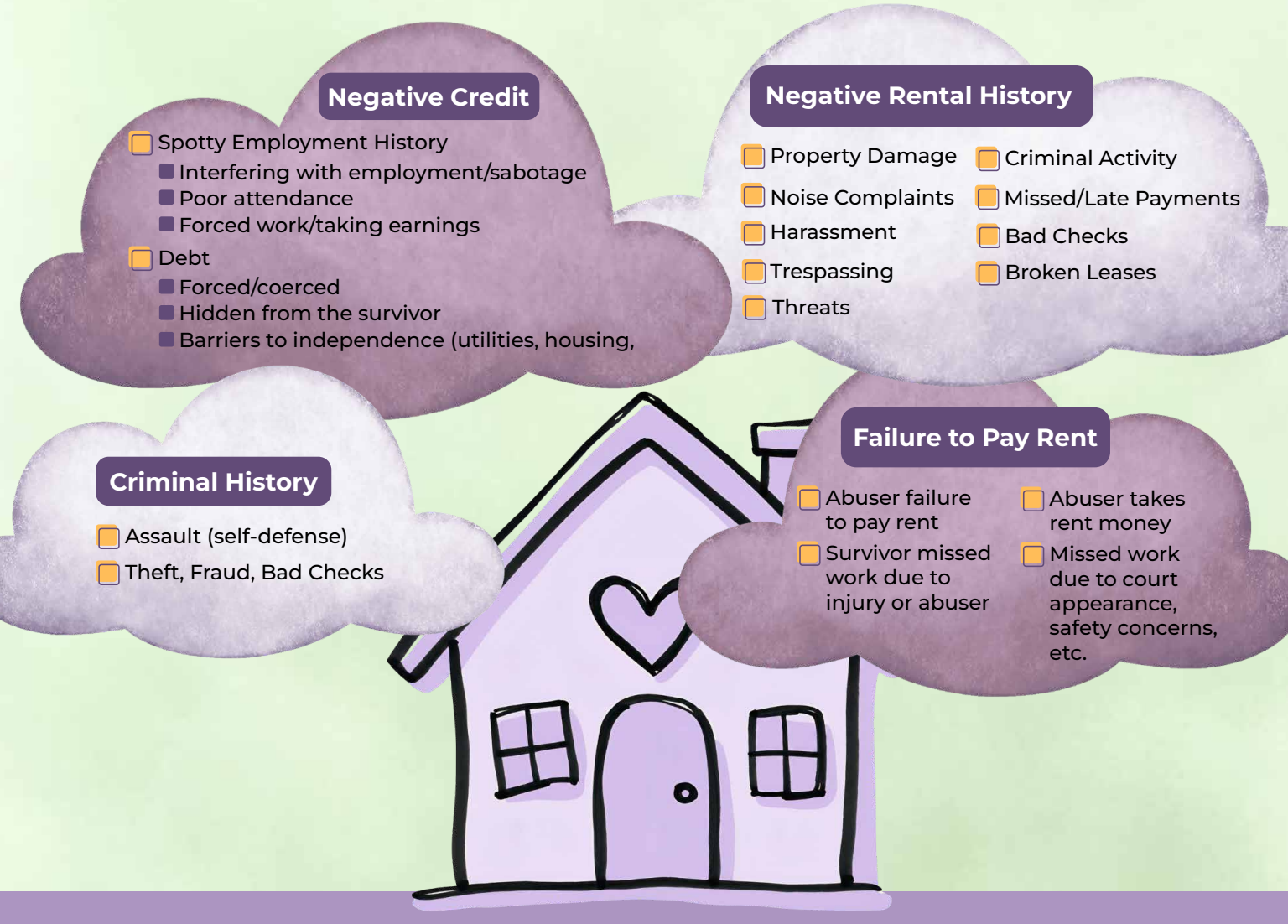


Rent and utilities for two-bedroom units fall within a fair market range of $973 to $1,931, with an average monthly cost of $1,261.[9]

Even when survivors manage to secure housing despite the harm economic abuse had done to their credit and rental history, they may still struggle to stay housed when trying to cover rent without a stable source of income. Texas recorded 276,882 landlord-tenant eviction cases in FY 2025, which highlights the extent of housing instability across the state. This can leave survivors especially vulnerable when economic insecurity leads to missed rent or utility payments. The extent of housing advocacy becomes clear when considering the range of survivors' needs when seeking non-shelter housing support.

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[1] Wood, L., Cusano, J., Voth Schrag, R., McGiffert, M., Temple, J.R., & Baumler, E. (2026). Health conditions and service use among intimate partner violence shelter residents. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence.*
[2] Wood, L. McGiffert, M. Texas Violence and Injury Prevention Research Center. (2025). Survey of Availability of Texas Family Violence Programs. UT Health Houston.
[2-7] Ibid
[8] Emmanuel, D., Harati, R., Colón-Bermúdez, E., Eutsler, T. (2026, March). *The gap: A shortage of affordable homes.* National Low Income Housing Coalition. https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/gap/2026/gap-report_2026_english.pdf
[9] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research. (2026). *The FY 2026 Texas FMR summary* [Dataset]. HUD User



As our movement focuses on supporting survivors of economic abuse, we must also work on bolstering survivors' access to supports like flexible fund assistance, direct client assistance, affordable housing, childcare, and food security.

As this tip sheet demonstrates, a financial literacy course may be helpful for some, but it is insufficient to address the systemic barriers survivors face. These materials are designed to help advocates build a critical understanding of how economic justice is integral to supporting survivors and combating gender-based violence.

> No one can budget their way out of poverty, especially when a person who uses violence attempted to systemically remove their resources and autonomy.

Survivors' Housing Rights and Protections

There are a range of state and federal housing rights and protections available to family violence survivors. It is essential that advocates familiarize themselves with these rights and protections so they can support survivors in navigating through complex and imperfect systems as effectively as possible.

Federal Protections



The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) includes housing protections for survivors applying to, or living in, federally assisted housing (Public Housing, Section 8, tax-credit apartments, homelessness programs, and more). Survivors:

- Cannot be denied or evicted from federally assisted housing because they have been a victim of abuse, or for reasons directly related to their status as a victim, including criminal background, evictions, or bad credit.
- Have a right to an emergency transfer to a safer unit if they believe they are in immediate risk of further harm.
- Have the right to bifurcate their lease to have an abuser removed and remain in the unit.
- Landlords and program staff are required to protect survivors' confidentiality and status as survivors.

✻ **Note:** If you are working with a survivor living in federally assisted housing (site-based, voucher, or rental assistance provided by a federal source), VAWA offers a number of protections to help them safely remain in the unit or transfer to a safer unit without losing the housing subsidy: Know Your Rights: Domestic and Sexual Violence and Federally Assisted Housing https://www.nhlp.org/wp-content/uploads/VAWA-Brochure-English-and-Spanish-combined.pdf

Texas Protections

- Right to call for emergency assistance. Landlords may not discriminate or retaliate against survivors for calling for help.
- Right to terminate a lease without penalty in order to relocate for safety reasons (lease termination).
- Ability to work with the legal system to have the abusive party leave the home.
  - To learn more about this right and more, head to Texas Law Help.
- Ability to terminate a lease.
  - To better help survivors exercise their right to break a lease in Texas, please see the Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV) Advocate Guide to Lease Termination at: https://tcfv.org/wp-content/uploads/TCFV-Advocate-Guide-To-Lease-Termination-2020.pdf.

Finally, it is important to research local rights and resources that may be available to survivors in your community so that you can share all relevant information. Please check to see if your local Public Housing Authority (PHA) offers preferences to survivors; if your city or county has established any local laws to protect survivors, as well as any additional resources or financial supports. You can locate your local PHA at: https://www.hud.gov/contactus/public-housing-contacts.

Housing Options

Effective housing advocacy requires advocates to build knowledge of local housing stock, average rental costs, assistance programs available, and to be aware of options for accessing transportation, childcare, economic opportunities and more. An individualized housing plan will take into account the survivor's needs and priorities in relationship to the local conditions and resources available.

For example, it may be more affordable to rent in a rural community, but it may be nearly impossible to keep the location secret. In a large city, a survivor might be able to relocate to a different part of town but then struggle to get to work without a car. Supporting a survivor with safety planning, linkage to resources, and problem-solving help before, during, and after relocation can help to keep them safer and stable in housing.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVOR-FOCUSED HOUSING SERVICE MODEL OPTIONS



Transitional Housing (TH) provides a free or reduced-rent apartment or rental unit for 12-24 months, along with supportive services, allowing survivors time to work on any barriers they face to securing permanent housing and to heal from the trauma they have experienced. Can be on-site (clustered in independent apartments in a single complex or in one or more communal living facilities) or scattered sites throughout the community.

Rapid Rehousing (RRH) focuses on getting people into permanent housing of their choice in the community as fast as possible and addressing any issues after they are stably housed, with rental assistance from 1 month to 2 years. May or may not include supportive services.

Domestic Violence Housing First (DVHF) provides flexible services and financial assistance to help survivors rapidly find and stay in permanent affordable housing. Three pillars of DVHF are survivor-driven trauma-informed mobile advocacy, flexible funding assistance, and community engagement.

Permanent Housing examples include housing vouchers, public housing, other federally subsidized housing (such as tax credit properties), mortgage assistance, and permanent supportive housing.

Homelessness Prevention examples include emergency funding, housing advocacy, and support.

If these services are available through your agency, or in your community, they are a great place to start.

HUD allocates homeless assistance grants to organizations that participate in local homeless assistance program planning networks. Each network is called a Continuum of Care (CoC). CoCs allow local organizations to coordinate their efforts to address housing and homeless issues in their service area.

- Each large metro area in Texas has its own CoC. You can find your CoC at: https://www.hudexchange.info/grantee/contacts/.
- Smaller communities and rural areas can participate in the Balance of State CoC through the Texas Homeless Network (THN): https://www.thn.org/texas-balance-state-continuum-care/.

Considerations for Safety and Confidentiality

As advocates, we need to assist survivors in planning for their safety. A safety plan is not static; it must change as conditions change. Safety planning should be completed for both short-term and long-term safety needs. Help the survivor identify specific concerns and recognize strategies that have helped promote safety in the past. It can be helpful to ask the survivor about any past barriers to getting and staying out of the abusive relationship. Ask what might be needed to overcome those barriers in the future and try to create action steps to meet those needs.

- Survivors can create an interactive, individualized safety plan online through the National Domestic Violence Hotline (NDVH) at: https://www.thehotline.org/plan-for-safety/create-your-personal-safety-plan/ or the TCFV personalized safety plan at: https://tcfv.org/wp-content/uploads/tcfv_personalized_safetyplan_2021.pdf.
- Survivors and Advocates can explore safety planning scenarios, strategies, and tips at: https://www.womenslaw.org/safety-planning.
- Advocates can train more deeply on safety planning within housing programs at: https://safehousingpartnerships.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Safety-Planning-for-Survivors-of-Domestic-and-Sexual-Violence-A-Toolkit-for-Homeless-Programs.pdf.

Confidentiality is the fundamental component of advocacy. Confidentiality policies exist to protect the safety and privacy of those we serve.

It is vital you explain the limits of confidentiality and the circumstances in which confidentiality would have to be broken (reporting child abuse, specific court orders) under the law. Inform survivors their personal information is theirs to control, and it's their decision when, how and with whom they will share information. If survivors would like for you to disclose information about them, you should talk with survivors about the specific information to be disclosed, how the information will be shared, and the risks of disclosing any information.

- TCFV offers advocate training on Privacy, Confidentiality, and Privilege and you can request that at: policy@tcfv.org.

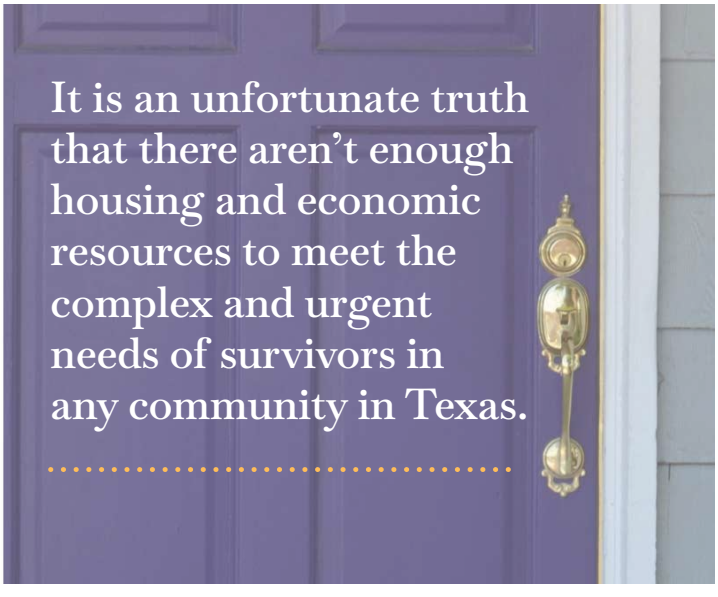
- For more tools and guidance on technology and safety planning review the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) Safety Net Project at: https://www.techsafety.org/resources/.

- The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) contain strong confidentiality provisions that limit the sharing of victims' personally identifying information, including entering information into public records and databases. Learn more: NNEDV Confidentiality: VAWA and FVPSA Fact Sheet.

- Keep in mind that survivors will have different needs based on their own experiences, identity, and background. TCFV offers the Recentering Housing Training Series focused on better meeting the needs of diverse survivors at: https://tcfv.org/housing-beyond-shelter/.

- Safe Housing Partnerships Resource Library can link you to a range of target population specific guidance and trainings at: https://safehousingpartnerships.org/resources/.

Systems Advocacy and Funding Opportunities



Individual housing advocacy requires you to do the best you can with what's available and collaborate with survivors to make it work. Systems advocacy requires you to work collaboratively to create housing resources to address the unmet needs of the survivors you serve.

Effective collaboration and partnerships can help to increase survivors' access to housing opportunities and resources; reduce barriers; raise awareness; and promote best practices for survivor choice and safety. This may include:

- Outreach and networking with private landlords
- Partnerships with local Public Housing Authority
- Cross-training and collaboration with homeless service providers
- Serving on local homeless coalitions
- Get connected with your local Continuum of Care (CoC) and Coordinated Entry (CE)

Domestic violence agencies can play an important role in working with a CoC to represent the interests of survivors in policy and program development; gather information necessary to link survivors to needed housing resources; build awareness of domestic violence issues among other homeless service agencies; and to consider applying for Domestic Violence Bonus Funds through the CoC Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) competition in order to create housing programs dedicated to domestic violence survivors.

Systems advocacy and effective community collaboration must begin with careful communication and planning within your program and agency. Please ensure that all your efforts are guided by your program/agency leadership.

Contact: For any inquiries on this tip sheet, reach out to: **policy@tcfv.org**

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TEXAS COUNCIL ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

INDIVIDUALLY WE POWER CHANGE.
TOGETHER WE POWER A MOVEMENT.

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TCFV.ORG

Appendix: Helpful Websites with Additional Housing Resources

Resource	Website
TCFV Housing Beyond Shelter webpage	https://tcfv.org/housing-beyond-shelter/#
National Alliance for Safe Housing (NASH) The Intersection of Domestic & Sexual Violence and Homelessness webinar	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKjttMZ4DAI
National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) – Housing Policy Overview	https://nnedv.org/content/housing-policy/
Safe Housing Partnerships – Resource Library	https://safehousingpartnerships.org/resources/
Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV) – Domestic Violence Housing First Toolkit	https://wscadv.org/projects/domestic-violence-housing-first/toolkit/

Survivors' Housing Rights and Protections

Resource	Website
Texas Law Help's Housing Rights for Family Violence Survivors	https://texaslawhelp.org/article/housing-rights-for-family-violence-survivors
TCFV Housing Rights and Options for Survivors of Family Violence Training	https://tx.coalitionmanager.org/eventmanager/onlinetraining/details/1539

Survivors' Housing Rights and Protections

Resource	Website
TCFV Advocate Guide to Lease Termination	https://tcfv.org/wp-content/uploads/TCFV-Advocate-Guide-To-Lease-Termination-2020.pdf
Deposit waivers for utilities such as gas, electricity, and telephone services	https://texaslawhelp.org/article/how-to-get-a-utility-service-deposit-waiver-for-victims-of-family-violence-and-other-victims-of
Overview of Protections & Rights: Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Housing (federal housing rights and protections)	https://safehousingpartnerships.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Overview-of-Protections-and-Rights-Addressing-GBV-and-Housing-112025.pdf
NHLP Housing Rights of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Survivors, A State and Local Law Compendium	https://www.nhlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024-NHLP-Compendium-of-Housing-Rights-for-DVS.pdf
Know Your Rights: Domestic and Sexual Violence and Federally Assisted Housing	https://www.nhlp.org/wp-content/uploads/VAWA-Brochure-English-and-Spanish-combined.pdf

Systems Advocacy

Resource	Website
Texas Tenant Advisor (Search for affordable or subsidized housing programs in your area)	https://www.texastenant.org/resources-1/find-housing
Locate your local CoC (larger metro areas)	https://www.hudexchange.info/grantees/contacts/
Texas Homeless Network Resources	https://www.thn.org/

Privacy and Confidentiality

Resource	Website
TCFV Privacy, Confidentiality, and Privilege webpage (password protected for family violence programs only)	https://tcfv.org/privacy-confidentiality-privilege/
NNEDV Fact Sheet	NNEDV Confidentiality: VAWA and FVPSA Fact Sheet
NNEDV's Safety Net Project	https://www.techsafety.org/resources/
TCFV Recentering Housing Training Series	https://tcfv.org/housing-beyond-shelter/

Safety Planning

Resource	Website
National Domestic Violence Hotline (NDVH) Interactive & Individualized Safety Plan	https://www.thehotline.org/plan-for-safety/create-your-personal-safety-plan/
TCFV Personalized Safety Plan	https://tcfv.org/wp-content/uploads/tcfv_personalized_safetyplan_2021.pdf
Safety Planning Scenarios, Strategies, and Tips	https://www.womenslaw.org/safety-planning
Safety Planning within Housing Programs	https://safehousingpartnerships.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Safety-Planning-for-Survivors-of-Domestic-and-Sexual-Violence-A-Toolkit-for-Homeless-Programs.pdf
NNEDV's Safety Net Project (Tools and guidance on technology and safety planning review)	https://www.techsafety.org/resources/