

NEW HOME, NEW START: SERVING SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Moderator - Alexandra Cantrell, Housing Advocacy Specialist

Panelists

- Lori Sywensky, Executive Director, Turning Point of Lehigh Valley, Inc.
- Dr. Dolly Wideman-Scott, Chief Executive Officer, Domestic Violence Center of Chester County
- Tara Day Ulrich, Programs Director, Transitions of PA

December 2, 2021



Overview

Today, you will gain a better understanding of:



How to best support survivor safety



Challenges faced by DV providers during the pandemic



How housing supports for survivors have changed now and into the future

Introductions

Lori Sywensky, Executive Director,
Turning Point of Lehigh Valley, Inc.

Dr. Dolly Wideman-Scott, Chief
Executive Officer, Domestic Violence
Center of Chester County

Tara Day Ulrich, Programs Director,
Transitions of PA



What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behavior used by one person to gain power and control over another in an intimate or familial relationship.

Many terms are used interchangeably to describe and discuss domestic violence. It may also be referred to as: abuse, domestic violence, battery, intimate partner violence, or family, spousal, relationship or dating violence.

According to the CDC, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced physical abusive from an abusive intimate partner

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence can be characterized by many types of abuse. Any or all of these types of violence/abuse may occur in domestic violence situations

- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Violence
- Stalking
- Sexual Violence
- Financial Abuse
- Verbal Abuse

Why Talk About DV?

DV is a leading cause of homelessness for women and children (families) in the U.S.

Survivors often must leave housing to escape DV

May be evicted due to abusive partner's behavior

DV interferes with ability to access housing - bad credit, poor rental histories, safety needs

Abusive partner can sabotage survivor's economic stability - trouble paying deposit, rent and utilities

Housing Insecurity

Homelessness is only one end of a continuum of housing problems faced by DV survivors

- Missed or late payments for rent/utilities
- Compromises: selling belongings or skipping food to make payments
- Ineligibility for housing services due to credit, landlord, or criminal justice problems

Some families face barriers to using emergency shelters

Disproportionate number of survivors of color among homeless

Pennsylvania DV Counts Report Data



1,046 Hotline Contacts Received



195 Unmet Requests for Services in One Day – 20% of all calls received



Approximately 75 percent of these unmet requests were for housing or emergency shelter

Pandemic stats

One immediate need for survivors escaping abuse is safe shelter or housing. The pandemic has forced many survivors to stay in close proximity to abusive partners and has limited access to social support systems, while reduced shelter space has increased the need for affordable, long-term housing. Many survivors have lost jobs and income as a result of closures from COVID-19, further jeopardizing their ability to maintain stable housing.

Survivors frequently face housing waitlists or other significant barriers in their search for permanent housing due to a lack of safe, affordable housing options in their region—shortages that have only been exacerbated by the pandemic.

“During COVID-19, survivors and their children have been forced to stay with abusers or risk their health in shelter. These survivors are overwhelmingly low-income, Black or brown women who often hold essential worker positions and keep the country running but do not have equitable access to housing resources.”

- DV ADVOCATE

Many shelters limited their capacities in order to keep residents safe from the virus.

Due to the pandemic, thirty-six percent of programs reported more than \$25,000 in additional or unplanned spending in order to maintain services.

Survivors’ needs during an immediate crisis vary, but many programs saw a distinct increase in requests for shelter and assistance once stay-at-home orders were lifted.

Survivors May Go to Non DV Services



- DV shelters lack capacity; often prioritize the highest degree of current DV danger (regardless of street danger)
- Over half of the survivors who identify a need for housing services upon fleeing abusive homes don't receive them
- Survivors often faced with choice of return to abuse or coping with chronic homelessness with little hope of housing

How were domestic violence programs affected by the pandemic?

1

What was an immediate takeaway related to survivor housing supports in the first few months of the pandemic?

2

**What were some solutions that were identified?
What funding supported these efforts?**

3

What worked well? What practices or housing supports will you be moving away from?

4

How do you plan to shift your practices moving forward and after the pandemic is no longer a driving factor of the change?

QUESTIONS?



Lori Sywensky, Executive Director, Turning Point of Lehigh Valley, Inc.

loris@turningpointlv.org

**Dr. Dolly Wideman-Scott, Chief Executive Officer,
Domestic Violence Center of Chester County**

DWideman-Scott@dvcccpa.org

Tara Day Ulrich, Programs Director, Transitions of PA

tara_d@transitionsofpa.org

**Alexandra Cantrell
Housing Advocacy Specialist**

717-545-6400 x176

acantrell@pcadv.org