Pathway to Permanent Housing
For Victims of Domestic Violence

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An overview of the housing needs of domestic violence victims in Colorado and strategies for developing pathways to permanent housing for survivors.

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1. Introduction

Compared to industrialized nations around the world, the U.S. has the highest number of homeless women and homelessness among women is at the highest level since the Great Depression.[1] Housing is a particularly critical issue for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Fleeing an abusive relationship is often a precursor to homelessness for many women.[2]

Purpose of this Report

The contours of the problem of homelessness and domestic violence are daunting but the opportunities to address these issues are available in most communities if approached with creativity and in partnership with other organizations. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the issues, a description of how these issues are playing out in Colorado, and highlight pathways to permanent housing for domestic violence survivors from experimentation happening across the country.

Data for this report was drawn from several sources, including important input from agencies serving domestic violence victims in Colorado. All domestic violence programs in the state were invited to participate in a survey gathering information about the populations they serve and the services offered. This data is summarized in Section 5 of the report, with particular focus on programs that offer transitional housing. Interviews were also conducted with stakeholders across the state and with national level experts trying new approaches to addressing the housing needs of domestic violence victims.

High Rates of Trauma

The trauma of an abusive relationship significantly impacts a survivor's likelihood of becoming homeless. Domestic violence victims can struggle with anxiety, panic disorder, depression, and substance abuse while also trying to find or maintain safe and stable housing. In addition to domestic violence being an immediate cause of homelessness for many survivors, a very high proportion of homeless women have experienced violence in the past even if it is not the immediate reason they are facing homelessness. Depending on the study and region, up to 100 percent of homeless women have experienced domestic or sexual violence at some point in their lives.[3]

Permanent Housing is Critical

Without access to housing, a survivor may be forced to stay or return to an abusive partner or live in inadequate or unsafe conditions. A variety of resources are needed to meet the individual needs of domestic violence survivors. Emergency shelter is an important temporary safe place for survivors in need of relief from an immediate crisis situation. Transitional housing may also serve an important need for some survivors to get support and buy time to find permanent housing. Other survivors may need other types of assistance that require less involvement from programs because they are closer to being stably housed. Ultimately, all survivors need access to permanent housing, although the path may be different depending on individual needs of the survivor. Permanent housing is the key for domestic violence survivors to restore safety and stability and reclaim their lives.

Barriers to Permanent Housing

Domestic violence exerts significant barriers to permanent housing. The dynamics of domestic violence often leave victims isolated from friends and family who could serve as a support network. Victims also report not having access to the means that would allow them to easily escape an abusive relationship like bank accounts, a car, a phone, rental references from a landlord and good credit. In addition to these hurdles that are personal to the survivor, many communities have a lack of affordable and available permanent housing.

Shared Populations, Shared Solutions

Women on the brink of homelessness have high levels of physical and sexual abuse and risk further victimization if they become homeless.[4] These women come to homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters and rape crisis centers with overlapping issues: they are attempting to escape violence in their lives and they have no where to go and thus are at risk for being homeless.[1] They need safety and support but also need assistance in addressing their economic problems because they often lack resources like a job, marketable skills and money to keep them afloat while they find their footing.

These families seek the door that is most readily available to them—that could be a domestic violence shelter, a hotel stay or safe house or to the local homeless shelter. Domestic violence shelters and homeless shelters are often dealing with the same women who are grappling with the same problems. Partnership between the domestic violence service community and the homelessness service community will ensure that survivors get the assistance they need.

Report Roadmap

This provides some basic context for the issues confronting domestic violence survivors and the communities seeking to support their efforts to restore peace and find permanent housing. The report contains five sections, including this introductory section.

- **Section 2** provides more context about the complex intersection between domestic violence and homelessness. Housing is an issue for all people living in poverty or at the cusp of poverty. Survivors face additional barriers in securing permanent housing making it imperative for domestic violence advocates to be at the table when communities are talking about the shortage of affordable housing.

- **Section 3** provides an overview of data on the availability of affordable housing in Colorado. Statewide, there is shortage of affordable housing to meet the need. Some communities have an even greater mismatch between availability and need.

[1] Housing is also a critically important issue for victims of sexual assault. This report focuses on victims of domestic violence. However, many of the same problems are experienced by sexual assault survivors and many of the same solutions can be implemented by advocates and communities working to support the housing needs of victims of sexual violence.

- **Section 4** discusses the ways domestic violence programs have been assisting survivors with securing safety and addressing housing needs. This section also describes how the homelessness advocacy community has shifted its approach from housing readiness (transitional housing) to housing first and the lessons that can be drawn from that experience for the domestic violence advocacy community.

- **Section 5** summarizes findings from the statewide survey of the service provider community with particular emphasis on programs providing transitional housing.

- **Section 6** provides a summary of lessons learned from domestic violence programs experimenting with innovative approaches and partnerships to assist survivors in securing and maintaining permanent housing. This section is intended to give the domestic violence community in Colorado strategies that can be pursued at the local level or through a coordinated regional or statewide plan.

2. Intersection of Domestic Violence & Homelessness

Quantifying the Problem

Domestic and sexual violence are leading causes of homelessness nationally, particularly among women. Data describing the precise dimensions of domestic violence-related homelessness is limited.[5] Estimates range from one-quarter to nearly 60 percent of homeless women report that domestic or sexual violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness, depending on the region and type of study.[6]

Homeless women have tremendously high rates of lifetime experience with abuse. Over 92 percent of homeless mothers have experienced severe physical and/or sexual abuse during their lifetime and 63 percent report that the abuse was perpetrated by an intimate partner.[7] Among homeless and very poor housed women, rates of violence were high but higher among homeless women. One study comparing the rate of violence among homeless women and very poor housed women, found that homeless women experienced violence at a higher rate (63.3 percent) than very poor housed women (58 percent).[8] Nearly 27 percent of homeless women and 19.5 percent of poor housed women reported needing medical treatment because of violence.

The National Network to End Domestic Violence conducts an annual one-day census of clients and services that provides important documentation of the problem:

- In 2012, 35,323 domestic violence victims were provided a safe place to stay either in the form of emergency shelter or transitional housing by domestic violence service providers across the country.[9]

- Another 6,818 requests for emergency shelter or transitional housing could not be accomodated by domestic violence service providers in 2012, an increase of 23 percent since 2009.

While this annual census provides an important measure of the extent of the need for housing assistance among domestic violence victims, it is almost certainly an undercount. Domestic violence survivors have a variety of housing needs depending on their particular situation and likely seek assistance from a number of systems. They may not always connect with a domestic violence service provider and may pursue the door most readily available to help, including homeless shelters.

Host of Challenges

The intersection of domestic violence and homelessness is complex and fraught with a host of challenges. There is no single solution or path to safety and stability. Domestic violence survivors present a variety of situations that directly impact their needs for housing and financial assistance. Some survivors become homeless and need immediate emergency shelter when fleeing a dangerous partner. Others may be evicted from a rental unit because their batterer damaged property, engaged in criminal behavior, failed to pay rent or was disturbing other tenants. Even if the victim manages to remain in the unit after the abuser has been removed or evicted, she may not be able to continue to afford the rent.

This could be because she does not earn enough or due to actions by the abuser to undermine her economic stability, such as sabotaging her credit or withholding child support payments. She also may not feel safe staying in the home she shared with her abusive partner.

In addition to the challenges of leaving an abusive relationship, securing and maintaining housing implicates a host of other societal issues such as availability of jobs that pay a livable wage and affordable housing. Available and affordable housing is an issue for many people across the country. While the scope of the problem facing domestic violence victims may seem daunting due to the host of challenges, there are also an array of opportunities to partner with other groups to develop systemic changes in affordable housing and financial assistance.

Poverty Rates Among Women Remain High[10]

The economy has rebounded but still has a long way to go. Overall, only about six in ten of the jobs lost during the recession have been regained in the recovery. Women suffered significant job losses and while the recovery is apparent, female-headed households still continue to struggle economically compared to men.

- More than one in seven (or nearly 18 million) women lived in poverty in 2011. About 1 in 15 women (nearly 8 million) lived in extreme poverty, defined as income at or below 50 percent of the federal poverty level.
- The poverty rate for women is 14.6 percent compared to 10.9 percent for men. The extreme poverty rate for women is 6.4 percent compared to 4.7 percent for men.
- The poverty rate for female-headed families with children was 40.9 percent, compared to 21.9 percent for male-headed families with children, and 8.8 percent for families with children headed by a married couple.
- Poverty rates for women with children also varied by race and ethnicity: 53.8 percent of Native American female-headed families live in poverty; 49.1 percent of Hispanic female-headed families; 47.3 percent of black female-headed families; 33 percent of white, non-Hispanic female-headed families; and 26.3 percent of Asian female-headed families.
- More than 600,000 (13.3 percent) of single women with children who worked full time, year round in 2011 lived in poverty.

Rental Market Vacancy Rates are Down, Rents are Up

The rental housing market is booming across the country.[11] Renters comprise 35 percent of all households nationwide in 2011 or 40.7 million households. Renter households increased by one million in 2011, the largest single-year jump since 1980. The increased demand for rental housing has resulted in lower vacancy rates and high rents. The vacancy rate dropped to 8 percent immediately after the financial crisis and by 2012 it had dropped to 4.5 percent. Monthly rent increased an average of 3.8 percent between 2011 and 2012. The poorest households are being locked out of the rental market. Nationally, for every 100 extremely low income renter households, there are only 30 affordable and available units.[12]

Households with Housing Cost Burdens Continue to Grow

A housing cost burdened household is one in which housing costs (rent or mortgage plus utilities) exceed 30 percent of income. The economic downturn has impacted both the cost of housing and income levels.

- Households paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing (moderate burden) totaled 42 million (or 37 percent) in 2011.
- The number of households spending more than half of their income on housing (severe burden) totaled a staggering 20.2 million in 2011, and increased by 6.4 million households between 2001 and 2010.
- The economic recession has been particularly difficult for low-income households. Households earning less than $15,000 a year (the full-time equivalent of the federal minimum wage) and spending more than half of their income on housing rose by 1.5 million between 2007 and 2010.
- Renters account for the majority of severely cost-burdened householders, outnumbering owners 10.6 million to 9.6 million. The share of all renters who are severely cost-burdened totaled 27 percent, more than twice the share of severely cost-burdened homeowners.

Severe Shortfall in Affordable Housing Units

At a median income of $30,700, an affordable rent (defined as 30 percent of income) would be $770 per month. For someone earning the full-time equivalent of the federal minimum wage ($15,000 a year), an affordable rent would be just $375 per month. There is a severe shortage of affordable housing units to meet the growing demand.

- In 2001, 8.1 million renters earning less than $15,000 a year competed for 5.7 million affordable housing units, resulting in a gap of 2.4 million units. By 2010, the shortage of affordable housing units had more than doubled to 5.1 million units.
- Most new construction of rental units adds housing at the higher end of the rental market, with median monthly rent for new apartments exceeding $1,000 a month.
- Currently, the only significant growth in subsidized rental housing is from the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program, which helps add an estimated 100,000 affordable units a year.

Housing Assistance Not Keeping Pace with the Need

Federal and local housing assistance program are at capacity leaving many eligible individuals and families unassisted. Median wait list time for housing assistance programs is two years, with wait lists closed in many communities.[13] An estimated 4 percent of all households in the United States and 12 percent of all renter households receive some type of federal housing assistance. The number of households who receive assistance is far fewer than the number who are eligible. Only 1 in 4 households eligible for federal housing assistance receive it.[14]

3. Housing Costs in Colorado

Rental housing is often the most viable option and quickest path to permanent housing for domestic violence survivors. Colorado, like many states across the country, has a sizable number of households who are rent burdened (paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing) and a shortage of affordable rental units. There are more than 1.9 million households in Colorado and more than 622,000 of those households are renters. About one-quarter of renter households (166,729 households) are extremely low-income, meaning they make less than $22,121/yr for a family of four.[15] This section provides an overview of the level of rent-burdened households across the state and availability of affordable housing.

State Housing Wage[16]

The state housing wage is the amount a renter household must earn per hour to afford a two-bedroom unit at the HUD-determined Fair Market Rent (FMR).[17] In Colorado, an individual must earn $17.26 per hour (for an annual income of $35,898) to afford a 2-bedroom apartment at the Fair Market Rent of $897 per month. A person earning the federal minimum wage ($7.25 per hour) would have to work 2.2 full-time jobs to afford a 2-bedroom apartment at the FMR in Colorado.

Rent Burden[18]

Households that are rent-burdened are those spending more than 30 percent of income on housing (rent and utilities). Of the 622,000 renter households in Colorado, nearly half spent 30 percent or more of income on housing costs. (See Table 1 below.) Nearly 40 percent of all renter households pay 35 percent or more of their income on rent and one-quarter are severely rent-burdened spending 50 percent or more of their income on rent.

Table 1. Number and Percent of Rent Burdened Households in Colorado

Percent of Income Spent on Housing	Number	Percent of all Renters
30 percent or more	298,000	48%
35 percent or more	243,000	39%
50 percent or more	150,000	24%
All Renters	**622,000**	

Table 2 below shows the share of moderately rent-burdened households (spending 35 percent of income on housing) and severely rent-burdened households (spending 50 percent of income on housing) across the state by metro area. The metropolitan areas with highest share of moderately and severely rent-burdened households were Boulder and the Fort Collins-Loveland area. The metropolitan areas with lowest share of moderately and severely rent-burdened households were Grand Junction and Colorado Springs.

Table 2. Percent of Rent-Burdened Households by Metro Area

Metro Area	% of Moderately Rent-Burdened Households (35%)	% of Severely Rent-Burdened Households (50%)
Boulder	46.7	30.8
Colorado Springs	37.6	22.4
Denver-Aurora-Broomfield	39.2	23.6
Fort Collins-Loveland	44.5	30.1
Grand Junction	36.3	20.5
Greely	39.1	23.4
Pueblo	44.8	29.4
Colorado	**39.1**	**24.1**

Lack of Affordable Housing[19]

Statewide, there is an estimated shortage of 128,674 units of affordable and available housing for extremely low-income renters. As Table 3 below shows, the mismatch between available affordable housing and renters is greatest at the lowest income levels. Across the state, there were about two households earning $20,000 or less per year for every affordable rental unit. Households with incomes of at least $35,000 will generally be able to find rental housing affordable at that income level.

Availability of affordable housing varies by region. (See Table 3 below.) In the Denver metro area, there were 2.5 households earning less than $20,000/year for every affordable rental unit. Fort Collins-Loveland had very similar availability to the Denver metro area. Boulder had the greatest gap in available affordable housing to meet the community need. In Boulder, there were 3.5 households earning $20,000 or less for every unit of available affordable housing. Grand Junction, Greeley and Pueblo had more availability of affordable housing at lower income levels: there were about 1.5 households earning less than $20,000 for every affordable rental unit. Colorado Springs had similar level of availability at the $20,000/year income level but less availability for households earning less than $15,000/year.

Table 3. Availability of Affordable Rental Units in Colorado

		Number of Renter Households per Affordable Rental Unit							
Income Level	Maximum Affordable Rent[20]	**CO**	**Boulder**	**Colorado Springs**	**Denver-Aurora-Broomfield**	**Fort Collins - Loveland**	**Grand Junction**	**Greeley**	**Pueblo**
$10,000	$250	1.8	3.0	2.2	2.3	2.3	1.3	1.3	1.8
$15,000	$375	2.2	3.5	2.7	2.8	2.7	1.7	1.8	1.8
$20,000	$499	2.0	3.5	1.8	2.5	2.5	1.6	1.6	1.5
$25,000	$624	1.4	2.7	1.2	1.7	1.7	1.2	1.1	1.1
$35,000	$875	0.9	1.3	0.9	1.0	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9
$50,000	$1,250	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.8

4. Forms of Housing Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors

Safe and stable housing is essential for domestic violence survivors to escape the abuse in their lives and avoid becoming homeless. This section describes housing assistance most typically provided by domestic violence service providers, namely emergency shelter and a growing number of programs providing transitional housing. The homeless advocacy community also often serves domestic violence victims and can provide some lessons from its experience in developing an approach to helping homeless families. This section describes how homeless service organizations have moved from a "housing readiness" to a "housing first" approach to supporting homeless families.

A few domestic violence programs across the country have adopted the housing first approach and have partnered with homeless advocates in their community. It is this intersection between domestic violence organizations and homeless advocates where some innovative work is being done to improve housing assistance for survivors. (Section 6 discusses these innovative approaches and lessons learned in more detail.)

Housing Supports for Domestic Violence Survivors

Domestic violence assistance began with grassroots organizations providing survivors with emergency shelter. Safety and respite are at the very heart of domestic violence assistance. Most agree that an emergency shelter stay, ranging from a few days up to 90 days, is often not enough time to secure permanent housing. Domestic violence organizations have developed transitional housing programs to meet the needed for longer term housing assistance. Typically, survivors move through the shelter to transitional housing for up to two years before moving into permanent housing.

Emergency Shelter

Emergency shelter provides immediate short-term housing for survivors escaping an abusive home. Stays tend to be short from a few days up to 30 days. Some programs offer an extended stay of up to 90 days. The setting is usually a group living and services include crisis counseling, safety planning, assistance filing for a protection order and perhaps some help finding a place to stay after the shelter. Emergency shelter is an important part of the safety net for survivors of domestic violence but there are some problems. Shelter is not an option for everyone. There may not be a shelter within a accessible distance. Some shelters do not allow teenage children (especially boys) to stay. The short stay often does not provide an adequate amount of time to find permanent housing.

Transitional Housing

Transitional housing is a bridge to self-sufficiency and permanent housing, typically provided after a short-term shelter stay. People can stay in transitional housing up to 24 months while engaging in a variety of support services designed to help establish stability before moving into permanent housing. Best practice aims to move a resident as quickly as possible into permanent housing.

There are several models for providing transitional housing for domestic violence survivors. Some programs have designated units within the shelter for transitional housing clients. Another model is scattered site where a client finds housing in the private market and receives a rental subsidy or the unit is owned by the program.

Most transitional housing programs for domestic violence survivors include a variety of services such as childcare, financial assistance, clinical therapy, counseling in life planning and job development and case management. Best practice is that services should be voluntary and not required. (The final section includes a longer discussion on this point.)

Evolution of the Homelessness Assistance Services

Some domestic violence programs have been experimenting with partnerships with homeless advocates in their communities and new approaches to housing assistance for domestic violence survivors. As discussed previously, there is tremendous overlap in the populations being served by domestic violence organizations and the homeless support community. Domestic violence survivors can be found in both systems.

The approach to providing assistance to homeless individuals and families has evolved over the years in ways that can inform the approach for helping domestic violence survivors become stably housed. The major lesson over the past several decades is the importance of being stably and permanently housed before true progress on other fronts can be realized. In a word, housing is foundational.

Homeless Shelters - - Starting in the late 1980s, a movement began to more systematically respond to family homelessness by building shelters. These shelters were initially developed as group living quarters with few services and intended primarily as a temporary place to stay during a crisis. Soon it became clear that shelters were not an appropriate place for families, especially children.

Transitional Housing - - A new program model emerged to better meet the needs of homeless families. Transitional housing was designed to provide more privacy for families and longer stays that gave families time to work toward permanent housing. Eventually, it became clear that the families staying in transitional housing had service needs so services were added.

Housing Readiness - - Starting in the 1990's, the "housing readiness" approach to services for homeless families became prevalent. This concept is based on the notion that families are homeless because they are dysfunctional and need assistance before they will be able to maintain permanent housing. Housing readiness has families spending up to two years receiving services in a controlled transitional housing setting to prepare them for permanent housing. Although this approach to housing assistance remains prevalent today, advocates for the homeless have noted significant problems that have emerged from research and practice.

- *Poverty is the primary reason for homelessness* - - Research has shown that the primary reason families are homeless is because they are poor or have some other barrier to the housing

market and not that they have unmet service needs. In fact, poor homeless families look remarkably similar to poor housed families.

- *Housing remains unaffordable even after a transitional housing stay* - - While services may be needed, they rarely addressed the primary problem facing homeless families, which is that they simply cannot afford the cost of housing. Although families in transitional housing may experience an increase in earnings during their stay, it often is not enough to afford suitable permanent housing.

- *Services were missing the mark* - - Typically, the services offered while in transitional housing focused on child care, parenting skills, budgeting, educational goals and behavioral issues—all worthy and needed services but none of which directly addressed securing permanent housing. Most programs did little to help families secure housing like identifying landlords, negotiating leases or providing deposits.

- *Clients were not using transitional housing as it was intended to be used* - - Transitional housing was designed to provide intensive support for homeless families over a two-year period in an effort to prepare them for sustained permanent housing. A recent Congressional report on homelessness reported that more than 60 percent of transitional housing clients stayed for less than six months. In fact, most families use transitional housing as a short-term place to stay while they work on securing permanent housing on their own.

- *Transitional housing is expensive because it is service intensive* - - A recent study by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development found that in comparing the cost of interventions for first-time homeless families, transitional housing was much more expensive than shelter and permanent supportive housing.[21] Many have concluded that the service-heavy nature of transitional housing may be better suited to high-need families.

- *Transitional housing is not an ideal setting for services* - - Finally, it has become clear that services are not as effective when delivered in a transitional housing setting because it feels temporary to clients. The temporary nature leaves families still feeling unstable and that stress is not conducive to participating in services.

Housing First - - The most recent iteration of an approach to responding to homeless families is grounded in the notion that it is more effective to get people into stable, permanent housing as quickly as possible and then provide needed services. The idea is that people do better once they are settled in housing rather than prolonging the state of feeling homeless with temporary shelter. This approach is also client-driven in that services are voluntary; families pick the services that make sense to them and meet their individual needs thereby increasing the incentive to participate. The Housing First approach takes many forms but typically involves helping homeless families secure permanent housing in the private rental market and rental assistance for up to 24 months. There is a wide range, and typically broad discretion, on the type, length and depth of services provided.

Transitional Housing vs. Housing First

Transitional housing seems to work well for families in need of more intensive support before they are ready to secure and maintain permanent housing. As it turns out, transitional housing is an effective approach for high-need families, those with serious substance abuse, mental health or safety needs. But often the most acute need among domestic violence survivors is first ensuring safety and then getting into permanent housing.

Therefore, transitional housing (or a housing readiness approach) may not be the best option for families with less complex needs. The continuing temporary nature of transitional housing can make moving forward more difficult for some. Housing stability is essential for doing the work required to heal and create economic stability and a sense of well-being for families.

Research and experience in the field also revealed that services delivered to people in transitional housing were not as effective. The temporary nature of transitional housing leaves people feeling unsteady and less able to focus on the work of stabilizing their lives. Families experience continued underlying stress from living in a temporary situation with the prospect of having to move again.

Finally, transitional housing can be significantly more expensive than other housing support options. As described above, a cost study by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development concluded that for first-time homeless families providing a housing subsidy for one year can cost significantly less than a year of transitional housing.[22]

The Housing First approach is built on the learning that has taken place in the field, including the following:

- Overall well-being is tied to stable, permanent housing.
- A prolonged period of homelessness or temporary housing is stressful for individuals and families and it can be expensive.
- Services may be more effective when a family is settled into a permanent housing situation.
- Families want to live in housing, not facilities.

These lessons are intuitive. Generally, people feel more relaxed and are better able to function when they have a stable place to call home. Temporary housing, no matter how supportive, is still unstable and therefore inherently stressful. Focusing on long-term planning and locking in solutions is more effective once survivors are settled into a safe and stable place to live. Once there, they can focus on getting their kids enrolled in school, signing up for job training, finding a job and figuring out transportation. Housing is the necessary foundation for instituting solutions that will promote long-term success and well-being.

5. Survey of Domestic Violence Service Providers

In February 2013, a statewide survey was distributed to organizations providing services to domestic violence victims about the need for housing assistance. The web-based survey was sent to a wide distribution list that included all domestic violence programs, sexual assault service providers, law enforcement coordinators and victim witness assistance staff in district attorney's office across the state.

The survey focused on three broad areas: the availability of emergency shelter and extended stay, the availability of transitional housing assistance, and needs and opportunities for expanding housing assistance. The survey responses confirmed the recurring anecdotal story heard across the state that there is tremendous need for housing assistance for domestic violence survivors in Colorado.

Housing Needs

Survey respondents were asked to describe the most pressing housing related challenges facing their clients. There were several common themes that emerged from the survey data. (Quotes from the survey are in italics.)

Emergency shelter is limited or non-existent in some areas of the state

- *We need more safe houses. From our perspective they have no place to go so they can leave their offender. That issue needs to be resolved before we can talk about transitional housing.*

Emergency shelter stays are too short to develop a long-term housing plan

- *We offer a short-term emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. The greatest challenge we see is expecting an individual to have new plans and housing in 45 days.*
- *After leaving an abusive relationship and being housed short term, survivors don't have enough time to "get on their feet" so that they are able to gain employment, childcare, etc.*

Availability of jobs that pay a living wage

- *Many domestic violence victims don't have the skills to find jobs that will pay enough to afford to live on their own without the batterer.*
- *Mostly, if they are complying with criminal justice requirements and not performing sex work, they are not able to find or pay for housing on their own which can result in them defying probation requirements to work. This is especially true of male or trans workers who may have a criminal record for prostituting while HIV+ and cannot get jobs outside of sex work. Also, if they are performing sex work, there can be difficulty obtaining/maintaining housing because income may be difficult to prove.*

Limited or non-existent availability affordable housing.

- *It is very hard to find affordable housing in our community, and we are very focused on helping put our client somewhere that is going to be sustainable for the long term. So, it takes some time to help find the client the best situation for each of them.*
- *Section 8 waiting list is so long it may as well be non-existent. Other affordable housing is not really affordable unless there are two people working. One low income is not enough to afford rent and utilities. Child support is not a dependable source of income. Back in the day, a woman could stay in shelter, get a job, obtain an affordable apartment, and almost make it. Today, the options for affordable housing are slim, and we have a greater number of people moving in with family members to share expenses.*
- *Housing is too expensive in our county for clients earning minimum wage or low wages, especially when they are transitioning out of a shelter situation.*

Money for security deposits.

- *The biggest challenge I see our clients facing is coming up with the money for security deposits, and first and last month of rent.*

Bias against renting to domestic violence victims.

- *We serve a small community and landlords sometimes will not rent to people they know have been in domestic violence situations.*

Public transportation is limited, especially in smaller mountain communities.

- *Low income housing is on the outskirts of town so it is difficult without a vehicle and public transportation is limited to only business hours.*
- *Public transportation is limited so the distance they can travel for a job may be limited. Many don't have working vehicles.*

Undocumented victims face additional hurdles to self-sufficiency.

- *A lot of the clients we serve are undocumented. These victims face an added hurdle in their plight for self-sufficiency because of their inability to find work, not being able to qualify for certain county services due to their illegal status and not being able to speak English.*

Availability of Emergency Shelter

There are 33 domestic violence programs across the state offering emergency shelter beds. In 2012, these programs had about 700 emergency shelter beds, that is 255,500 bed nights per year for domestic violence survivors in Colorado. (See Table 10 in the Appendix for a complete list of programs providing emergency shelter and transitional housing.) As shown in Map 1, there is fairly wide geographic coverage of programs providing non-residential services to domestic violence survivors. Fewer programs offer emergency shelter. Map 2 shows that shelter beds are concentrated in the most populated counties of the state, along the central corridor. (The maps can be found in the Appendix.)

Shelter Clients and Exits

The number of domestic violence survivors provided emergency shelter in Colorado has been steadily increasing since 2009. After declining slightly between 2007 and 2009, the number served by emergency shelter increased 15 percent from 4,611 in 2009 to 5,319 adults served in 2012. As shown in Table 4, the number of shelter nights has also been steadily increasing since 2007. Between 2007 and 2012, the number of shelter nights provided domestic violence survivors has increased by 24 percent. The overall result of these trends is that the average number of emergency shelter nights per client has increased from 19 nights in 2007 to 22 nights in 2012.

Table 4. Adults Provided Emergency Shelter, 2012

	Adults	Nights	Avg. Nights per Client
2007	5,117	96,172	19
2008	5,087	98,044	19
2009	4,611	97,616	21
2010	4,760	109,507	23
2011	4,913	107,064	22
2012	5,319	119,120	22

Source: Domestic Violence Program, Colorado Department of Human Services

Of the domestic violence programs providing emergency shelter in the state, about 70 percent participated in the statewide survey in February 2012. Among the domestic violence programs that completed the statewide survey, they reported that an average of 60 percent of adults came to the shelter with children. Several programs indicated that they provide an extended stay option for clients but typically only for a total stay of 90 to 120 days. As reported in the previous section, housing is a critical issue facing domestic violence survivors. Yet, the majority of programs (70 percent) noted that less than half of their shelter clients left shelter with safe and stable housing. About 30 percent of programs indicated that over half of clients left shelter without safe, stable housing.

Survey respondents were also asked where their shelter clients went after leaving shelter. Table 5 below summarizes the results. About 40 percent of shelter clients transitioned into a presumably stable situation by either going to stay with friends or securing rental housing in the private market or qualifying for rental assistance. Another 20 percent moved into some of type of temporary housing in the form of relocating to a different domestic violence shelter, moving to transitional housing or a homeless shelter. Not quite a quarter of shelter clients either returned to their prior home or returned to live with their partner. An encouraging finding was that only about two percent of shelter clients reported not having anywhere to go upon leaving the shelter. About 9 percent of clients were unaccounted for and 5 percent went other places, such as a motel, substance abuse treatment or simply left town.

Table 5. Where Shelter Clients Went After Leaving Shelter, 2012

Where Survivor Reported Going After Shelter	Percent	Totals
Stayed with friends or relatives	17%	**41%**
Private market rental housing	12%	
Subsidized rental housing	12%	
Transitional housing	7%	**20%**
Another domestic violence shelter	10%	
Homeless shelter	3%	
Returned to prior home	10%	**23%**
Returned to live with their partner	13%	
No place to go	2%	**16%**
Not sure	9%	
Other	5%	
	100%	100%

Availability of Transitional Housing

Eleven domestic violence programs that participated in the statewide survey indicated that they offer some form of transitional housing services. In 2012, there were approximately 100 units of transitional housing available for domestic violence survivors. (See Table 10 in the Appendix for a complete list of programs providing emergency shelter and transitional housing.) Much like the geographic availability of emergency shelter services, transitional housing programs are also mostly concentrated in the more highly populated counties in the central part of the state. (See Maps 1 and 2 in the Appendix.) This section provides descriptive information about those 11 transitional housing programs.

Transitional Housing Units and Clients

As shown in Table 6 below, programs providing transitional housing in Colorado had a total of 1 to 31 units for a total of about 92 units statewide. In 2012, transitional housing programs served 187 adults and 268 children. As with shelter clients, the vast majority of survivors accessing transitional housing had kids.

Table 6. Transitional Housing Programs, Number of Units and Clients Served, 2012

				Transitional Housing			
Program Name	**Town**	**County**		**TH Units**	**Adults**	**Kids**	**% w/ Kids**
Bright Future Foundation	Avon	Eagle	Rural	6	7	22	100%
Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence	Boulder	Boulder	Urban	13	28	49	80%
Crossroads Safehouse	Fort Collins	Larimer	Urban	31	34	43	50%
SHARE, Inc.	Fort Morgan	Morgan	Rural	6	7	15	85%
Latimer House	Grand Junction	Mesa	Rural	1	24	30	95%
Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley	Longmont	Boulder	Rural	2	26	12	30%
Alternatives to Violence	Loveland	Larimer	Urban	8	17	30	90%
Tri-County Resources	Montrose	Montrose	Rural	6	5	10	90%
YWCA Family Crisis Center	Pueblo	Pueblo	Urban & Rural	9	8	4	38%
Help for Abused Partners	Sterling	Logan	Rural	6	24	38	100%
Advocates Against Domestic Assault	Trinidad	Las Animas	Rural	4	7	15	100%
			Totals	**92**	**187**	**268**	

Transitional Housing Models

There are several models for providing transitional housing for domestic violence survivors. The most common models include the following:

- **Designated Building**
  A transitional housing facility is owned and operated by the service provider agency and used exclusively for transitional housing clients. This could either be in the form of group living quarters or single-family units.

- **Combined Transitional Housing & Emergency Shelter**
  Transitional housing and shelter clients share physical space that is owned and operated by the service provider agency.

- **Partnership**
  The domestic violence service provider agency partners with a housing provider for the physical space and the service provider provides case management.

- **Rental Subsidy**
  The client finds her own housing in the private rental market and the service provider enters into a lease with the landlord and covers all or part of the rent.

- **Sublease**
  The service provider enters into a lease with a landlord and then sublets to the client.

Table 7 below summarizes the various models for providing transitional housing being used in Colorado. As seen in the table, these models are not mutually exclusive but are often used in combination with one another. The majority of programs offer some sort of rental assistance either by having the client enter into her own lease in the private rental market or by entering into sublet with the program. Some programs across the country have noted that the sublease arrangement can present challenges as it places the program staff in the dual role of being landlord and advocate. The remaining programs have a designated building with transitional housing units, with a smaller number of programs combining transitional housing and emergency housing units.

Table 7. Transitional Housing Models

Program Name	Town	Designated Building	Combined TH & ES	Partner w/ Housing Provider	Rental Subsidy	Sublease
Bright Future Foundation	Avon					X
Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence	Boulder			X		X
Crossroads Safehouse	Fort Collins			X	X	X
SHARE, Inc.	Fort Morgan				X	
Latimer House	Grand Junction	X				
Safe Shelter of St. Vrain	Longmont		X	X		
Alternatives to Violence	Loveland	X		X	X	
Tri-County Resources	Montrose					X
YWCA Family Crisis Ctr	Pueblo	X	X			
Help for Abused Partners	Sterling					X
Advocates Against Domestic Assault	Trinidad	X				

Available Services & Programs

Domestic violence programs providing transitional housing to their clients offer a variety of support services. As shown below in Table 8, nearly all programs offer support groups to help clients continue to recover from the emotional trauma of abuse. Fewer programs provide clinical therapy to clients. Nearly all programs also offer a package of services and support that help clients stabilize their lives, such as parenting skills and child care, financial assistance to meet the daily costs of living and job and life skills training.

Table 8. Services & Programs Available to Transitional Housing Clients

Program	Parent Skills	Child Care	Child Develop-ment	Financial Assistance	Clinical Therapy	Support Groups	Counseling in Life Planning	Job Skills Training
Bright Future Foundation	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Crossroads Safehouse	X	X		X		X		
SHARE, Inc.	X	X		X		X		X
Latimer House						X	X	
Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley	X		X			X	X	
Alternatives to Violence, Inc.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tri-County Resources	X					X	X	X
YWCA Family Crisis Center	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Help for Abused Partners	X			X		X	X	X
Advocates Against Domestic Assault	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Length of Stay

Table 9 below summarizes information on the length of stay for both emergency shelter and transitional housing beds. Allowable stay in emergency shelter ranges from 30 to 180 days. Several programs offer the possibility of an extended shelter stay if bed space allows and the clients needs more time in shelter. Some programs treat shelter stays as preparation for moving to transitional housing; others will move clients to transitional housing if the shelter stay was not enough time to put a client on a path to safe and independent living.

The typical allowable length of stay in transitional housing is 24 months. One program allows clients to stay for up to 36 months and one program has a significantly shorter stay of 4 to 6 months. A trend seen nationally is that transitional housing clients leave before reaching the end of their allowable stay. This is an indication that clients are using transitional housing as a temporary place until they can find stable, independent housing rather than treating it as a program that must be completed to the end. Nearly half of the transitional housing programs reported that the average length of stay is less than the allowable maximum stay.

Table 9. Length of Stay (Days) in Emergency and Transitional Housing

	Emergency Shelter				Transitional Housing	
Program	Shelter Beds	Allowable Stay	Avg. Length of Stay	Extended Stay	Allowable Stay	Average Length of Stay
Bright Future Foundation	21	45	21	- -	24 months	18-24 months
Safehouse Progressive Alliance	27	45	24	60	36 months	24 months
Crossroads Safehouse	78	42	30	- -	6 to 24 months	17.3 months
SHARE, Inc.	12	60	15	- -	24 months	24 months
Latimer House	16	30	14	60	4 to 6 months	- -
Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley	29	42+	21	- -	24 months	- -
Alternatives to Violence, Inc.	0[23]	2 nights	2 nights	- -	24 months	18 months
Tri-County Resources	15	45	20	365	24 months	24 months
YWCA Family Crisis Center	30	180	45	180	24 months	12 months
Help for Abused Partners	14	90	37	- -	24 months	24 months
Advocates Against Domestic Assault	20	45	14	90	24 months	18 months

Eligibility Requirements and Funding

Most transitional housing programs participating in the survey had fairly standard eligibility requirements for transitional housing. For instance a threshold question was whether the client was facing imminent homelessness as a result of domestic violence. Several programs prefer people to start in the shelter and then move to transitional housing. A few programs indicated that they require clients to participate in services. Best practices focus on voluntary services for clients. Some programs work with clients to set goals and then allow the client to select which services will help her achieve those goals.

Transitional housing programs reported a variety of budgets to support their programs ranging from a low of $21,000 to a high of $300,000 annually. Total budgets are influenced by a number of factors that were too numerous to capture in this survey. Programs typically pieced together a combination of funding from local and statewide funders. Five programs are receiving funding from the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless. One organization is receiving federal funding. (Tables summarizing this data are included in the Appendix.)

6. Strategies & Lessons Learned from the Field

Domestic violence service providers and advocates for the homeless can learn much from one another and capitalize on the considerable overlap in clients, funding streams, problems and solutions. Homelessness among women is often precipitated by domestic violence and an even greater number of homeless women have a history of domestic violence or sexual assault. Finally, homeless women are at extreme risk of becoming a victim of violence. Housing stability is to key to family well-being. It is the building block that is critically important before all other service issues can be dealt with effectively.

This section outlines strategies and lessons learned drawn from programs across the country providing housing assistance to domestic violence victims. Programs should develop a comprehensive approach to account for the various housing needs of survivors. Some may have a home already but are in jeopardy of losing it because they have fallen behind on their rent or the abuser has placed the survivor at risk of being evicted. Others need more comprehensive assistance that may begin with a shelter stay or temporary placement with a family member or friend followed by advocacy and assistance in finding permanent housing and support in maintaining that placement.

These strategies and tools for avoiding homelessness or quickly re-housing a survivor can help programs more efficiently target their resources. Expensive emergency shelter beds are reserved for women most in need of an immediate safe and confidential placement. Quickly establishing permanent housing also minimizes the stress and trauma that results from periods of homelessness or temporary shelter stays at a time when survivors are also attempting to heal.

Varying Types and Intensity of Assistance

The variety and intensity of needs among survivors will vary. This will be very apparent from a client-driven approach to housing assistance. While some clients will need help finding housing or assistance with rent in a new apartment, others will need assistance that would allow them to stay in housing they already have. For instance, the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV) reported helping women pay for a nursing license so she could work and for a car repair for another survivor so she could drive to a new job that would pay her rent. Clackamas Women's Center reported the same approach. They meet women where they are and address the issue that is presented. (See Figure 1 in the Appendix for their program model of the various ways they respond to a survivor's housing needs.)

In addition to varying the types of needed services, survivors will also present with varying intensity of needs. The Washington State Coalition came up with a method for classifying the intensity of needed services: light touch, medium touch, and high need.[24] Interestingly, they found that over half of survivors fell into the light touch category.

- **Light Touch** - - This included clients with relatively simple, discrete needs that can be addressed quickly such as paying for one month of rent, childcare or utilities, installing locks, a relatively

minor car repair or paying a professional licensing fee. Clients in this group may not need assistance beyond the discrete need.

- **Medium Touch** - - Clients in this group also have discrete needs like the light touch group with an additional need to be connected with some other service such as a support group or legal advocacy. WCADV found that housing can be identified and obtained fairly quickly for this group.

- **High Need** - - Clients in this group need all the services of the light and medium touch groups, plus long-term engagement with an advocate to obtain housing, improve their financial situation, and achieve safety.

Strategies for Homeless Prevention

Domestic violence survivors come to programs with a range of housing situations and needs. With assistance, some survivors can avoid a shelter stay and possible homelessness by staying in their existing home. A fully integrated program addressing the housing needs of survivors includes providing assistance and advocacy to help women stay in their current home if that is appropriate.

Assistance with Housing and Other Costs

Some survivors may have a safe and stable place to live but are at risk of losing their home because they have fallen behind on rent or utilities. The Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV) has been experimenting with flexible funding that allows domestic violence programs to ask survivors what they need to stay in their current home if that is what she wants to do. This may also include providing financial assistance that allows the survivor to continue working so she can afford her rent. WSCADV has helped women with minor car repairs and professional licensing fees, for instance. Sometimes, homelessness can be prevented with relatively minimal financial assistance that helps a survivor address a discrete issue.

Advocacy and Education on Tenant's Rights

Victims of domestic violence have legal protections under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Fair Housing Act and, in some jurisdictions, state and local legislation protecting survivors. Victims and their landlords may not be aware of the laws that provide protection for survivors of domestic violence against discrimination in publicly assisted housing or allow women to break a lease and move to a new unit. Private landlords may also be subject to provisions that require them to make a unit safe. Domestic violence victims and landlords can work together for mutual benefit: the woman will maintain her housing and avoid eviction while the landlord will be in compliance with housing protections, retain a tenant and minimize lost rent revenue.

Domestic violence programs can facilitate this outcome by providing advocacy and education. This could include educating landlords about legal protections for domestic violence victims and safety concerns with the property while also helping the victim address the landlord's concerns. In many cases, a landlord may be willing to help a victim by improving the physical safety of the unit, allowing a payment

plan so the survivor can get caught up on back rent or pursue a no trespassing court order for the entire property against the abuser. Programs have found that many landlords appreciate the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the community. By developing relationships with landlords, programs are in a much better position to provide advocacy for survivors. Landlords may be more willing to work with survivors if a respected service agency is involved and facilitating the dialogue between the survivor and landlord.

Essential Components of Housing First

Women not able to stay in their current home may turn to an emergency shelter or transitional housing program as a stepping stone to permanent housing. As highlighted previously, women may face a host challenges in securing safe, adequate and affordable permanent housing. Research and experience of homeless advocates has shown that quickly establishing permanent housing rather than lingering in a temporary arrangement leads to better outcomes.

Programs adopting this approach to housing assistance for domestic violence survivors focus on helping their clients quickly get established in permanent housing by offering housing search assistance, advocacy with landlords, and rent assistance. The housing assistance is coupled with additional services that help survivors recover from the impact of abuse. The essential components of a housing first approach to housing assistance for survivors include the following:

1. **Crisis Assessment and Resolution: Deciding Who to Serve**
   Programs interested in implementing a housing first approach to housing assistance need to decide who to serve and when the survivor will be ready for permanent housing. Housing first originates from the homeless advocacy community. When implemented for domestic violence survivors, assessing safety needs of survivors and their children is the first priority. A woman who is still in crisis is not ready to focus on developing a permanent housing plan; her immediate safety, emotional and physical needs must be resolved first. Once the immediate crisis situation has been resolved, she can begin to focus on a plan to move swiftly toward permanent housing. This includes a means to independently afford rent at some point so clients need to be in a place where they can focus on establishing their financial stability.

2. **Housing Search Assistance**
   A housing advocate is critical to getting a survivor quickly into permanent housing. The housing advocate begins the housing search process by first conducting a thorough assessment of the client's housing history to get a sense of her strengths, resources and supports and barriers that will need to be addressed in the process. Background on previous evictions or unpaid utility bills will prepare the housing advocate to address those challenges in the search process. The housing advocate can also help the client find housing that meets a survivor's most important criteria (such as access to schools, transportation, etc.) and assess the security of available units. Safety planning is an important part of the process.

Another essential element of the housing advocate's role is to engage in proactive outreach to landlords. Developing relationships with landlords throughout the community will pave the way for more effective housing search efforts. Advocates can experiment with strategies for educating landlords about services and support available for victims and allay their fears or misperceptions about domestic violence survivors. Programs engaged in this work have reported that providing information on the dynamics of domestic violence and building mutually beneficial relationships has helped landlords become more amenable to offering reduced rent or waiving credit checks. Some programs have offered to put up a guarantee fund to cover repairs if the unit is damaged or provide funds toward security upgrades.

3. Rental Assistance

In addition to assistance finding and securing housing, most programs implementing a housing first approach also provide financial assistance to help survivors pay for rent and/or other housing related costs. In determining how much assistance to provide, programs will consider the local economy and the availability of jobs that will allow survivors to eventually afford the rent independently. Providers need to be sensitive to structuring assistance in a way that empowers clients rather than unintentionally creating a situation reminiscent of ways in which an abuser controlled her with money. Programs can start with a pre-determined amount of assistance and then work with the survivor on how to allocate it over time. The bottom line is that the experience and relationship should serve to empower the survivor.

There are many ways to allocate rental assistance. Allocation determinations are important because they will determine how many families can be served and how successful they are over the long term. Clackamas Women's Services, a domestic violence service provider in Oregon City, Oregon, began offering rental assistance according to a formula that took into account several factors, including fair market rents in the community and household income. Over time, it became clear that the economy was making it difficult for survivors to find jobs. Clackamas now works with each survivor to develop a personalized plan for financial resources based on the market factors and her individual situation.

Programs vary in how long and how deeply they subsidize rental costs for clients. The overall allocation will determine how many families can be served over the course of a year. Some examples include the following:

- *Length of assistance* - - Some families may need long-term assistance (typically 18 months or longer) or short-term help (a few months of rent or just a security deposit).

- *Subsidy Amount* - - Some families may need a full subsidy covering the entire monthly rent while others may need a smaller subsidy, based on a percent of the rent or a flat subsidy. Some programs require clients to pay a certain percentage of the rent (typically 30 percent). This could be coupled with a step-down approach where the assistance decreases over time so the client slowly adapts to assuming the full cost of housing.

4. **Advocacy and Support Services**

In addition to rental assistance, programs provide a variety of supportive services either directly or in partnership with other community organizations. Domestic violence programs are very skilled at providing trauma-related services but may have to develop the resources, expertise and/or partnerships to address issues related to housing retention and financial stability. Redevelopment Opportunities for Women in St. Louis, Missouri has a three-part housing assistance program. The first part focuses on helping clients find housing. The second phase focuses on helping clients increase their employment income by addressing barriers to employment such as criminal records and identifying opportunities for improving earning potential. The last phase focuses on resolving credit problems.

These are the types of services programs will want to make sure they have in place either through direct service or through partnership with other organizations.

- *Housing-Related Support* & Advocacy - - As discussed above, housing-related support and advocacy is an essential element of assisting survivors in making a smooth transition to permanent independent housing. This includes housing search assistance, landlord negotiation and mediation, and budgeting support. These services can be offered as long as may be required for the client to stabilize in her new home, sometimes up to a year. These services may continue as needed even though the program is no longer providing rental assistance.

- *Trauma-Related Support & Advocacy* - - Domestic violence survivors with housing needs may also need services that address violence-related issues. These include support and advocacy for civil or criminal court proceedings, protection orders, support groups and children's services. Programs also refer survivors to other agencies and programs for other needs like education, employment, health care, substance abuse and mental health treatment. Provision of these services and referrals to outside agencies becomes part of a survivor's individualized plan.

- *Income and Employment Assistance* - - Survivors also may need assistance in accessing income as they work to become financially stable. Providers may need to help survivors access public benefits such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, subsidized child care and the Earned Income Tax Credit. Women may also need help in seeking child support. Given the high cost of housing in many communities, program place a priority on assisting survivors with employment related issues. Some programs develop staff expertise to provide job search assistance. Other programs develop partnerships with outside organizations that provide career development services for low-income families.

5. **Individualized & Voluntary Services**

   Domestic violence programs have traditionally offered voluntary, survivor-driven services. The approach to housing assistance for domestic violence survivors is no different: supportive services should be both voluntary and survivor-driven. Home Free, a domestic violence agency in Portland, Oregon run by Volunteers of America provides a host of services through its Housing First program, including support groups, children's services, advocacy with the criminal justice and child welfare systems and employment assistance. Home Free staff work with survivors to develop an individualized plan according to her needs and goals, rather than requiring her to participate in specific services in order to be enrolled in the housing program. They have found that when the client is involved in identifying the services they need, they get more out of the experience and are more engaged in the entire process.

Lessons Learned from the Housing First Pilot in Washington State

The Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV) has experimented with the Housing First approach to assisting domestic violence victims. WSCADV received funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2009 to launch a pilot project based on Housing First. Four community-based domestic violence service providers were selected to implement a two-year pilot project organized around a Housing First model. Communities were given flexibility to design a service model that they felt would best serve their community and clients. In 2011, the program was expanded to nine new domestic violence programs.

To date the program has seen good outcomes. Among clients who received Housing First services for six months, 94 percent remained in their housing for six months after obtaining it. At one year out, 80 percent of that same cohort was still housed.[25] This section highlights the lessons learned by these programs as they implement Housing First strategies to address the housing needs of domestic violence survivors.

1. **Flexible Funding Promotes Survivor Driven Approach**

   A hallmark of the pilot project was that programs could determine how to best use the housing assistance funds. The only expectation was that the focus was on moving clients quickly to permanent housing. Agencies reported that without significant constraints on how to serve their clients, they could more easily engage in "survivor-centered" advocacy. This flexibility allowed program staff to more effectively and efficiently serve their clients because they were addressing the needs she identified. Many clients had needs that could be fairly easily addressed with modest financial assistance like a security deposit for a new apartment, a professional licensing fee so she can work, or a minor car repair.

2. **Meet Victims Where they Are**

   One participating agency reported that they had been telling survivors for years what the program could do for them rather than asking survivors what they need to achieve safety and stability. Without major funding constraints, the intake process shifted to gathering information about what the client really needed. Listening to the client and understanding where she is at

and what she feels she needs to do about her housing situation became a critical element of the project.

A housing partner working with a domestic violence agency in Washington state noted that the Housing First approach is "most groundbreaking in that they take clients where they are. They don't expect clients to have to meet every expectation of an ideal survivor. They really look at wherever that person is, and they develop the whole spectrum of support to meet that person's unique needs." This notion was echoed by another housing provider: "One of the key things that [the domestic violence program] has done is to try to remove barriers to people getting access to permanent housing, and to not require them to go through all of the different preliminary steps in order to get housed."

3. **Dedicated Housing Advocate**

Advocates focused exclusively on providing housing assistance were hired by the pilot sites to serve two roles that were critical to the success of the project. Housing advocates provided direct assistance to clients on housing needs and worked to build relationships with landlords so the advocate could serve as a bridge between clients and housing providers. Programs found that the community advocacy piece of this work was just as important as the direct service element.

Program staff noted that clients working with a housing advocate, who had developed relationships with various housing stakeholders, had an easier time finding permanent housing. This relationship building and credibility in the community had an important impact on increasing the availability of affordable housing for clients. All four communities in the Housing First pilot project had limited availability of affordable housing but the time spent by the housing advocate building relationships and negotiating leases resulted in improved access to affordable permanent housing for domestic violence survivors.

Programs also noted a clear and measurable difference between employing a dedicated housing advocate and serving as housing provider for clients. Some advocates noted that the relationship with clients gets complicated when the organization is playing dual (and often conflicting) roles of advocate and landlord. Having a dedicated housing advocate, however, became an important and valued resource for everyone in agency and in the community. Programs who realigned their work in this way by employing a dedicated housing advocate also found that it shifted their assumptions about housing. They began to view housing as a priority for all clients, whether or not the client approached the agency for housing assistance.

4. **Continued Advocacy**

The focus of housing and other advocacy efforts is on supporting a survivor's efforts in creating stable, safe and permanent home. Because there is no clear exit, as there is with traditional transitional housing, its important to note that a client may continue to need occasional advocacy. Someone in the "light touch" group, for instance, may require some assistance with a discrete need and then return several months later for another issue. Advocates participating in

the Housing First pilot projects in Washington identified continued advocacy as one of the critical elements for fostering successful transition to permanent housing. This periodic assistance to overcome obstacles may mean the difference between maintaining their housing situation and facing the possibility of homelessness.

5. **System-level successes and lessons**
   The Housing First pilot project in Washington also had several system level successes that could be helpful for replication in Colorado.

   - **Confidential database** - - The Washington State Department of Commerce manages the statewide Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database. Information about domestic violence clients can be entered without personally identifiable data so that agencies can maintain the confidentiality of survivors.

   - **Better access to services** - - A state law which requires "informed, written consent" to share personally identifying information with other service providers was amended to allow for verbal consent over the phone to share contact information with another organization to get a survivor enrolled in services. Full written consent is then completed at the first in-person appointment.

   - **Cross-training** - - This initiative highlighted the need to provide training about the dynamics of domestic violence among both housing and homeless organizations at all levels across the state.

   - **Redesigning coordinated entry systems with broad input** - - This initiative increased awareness of the need to include domestic violence agency feedback and survivors' needs and perspective in the development of coordinated entry systems for housing programs at the state and county level.

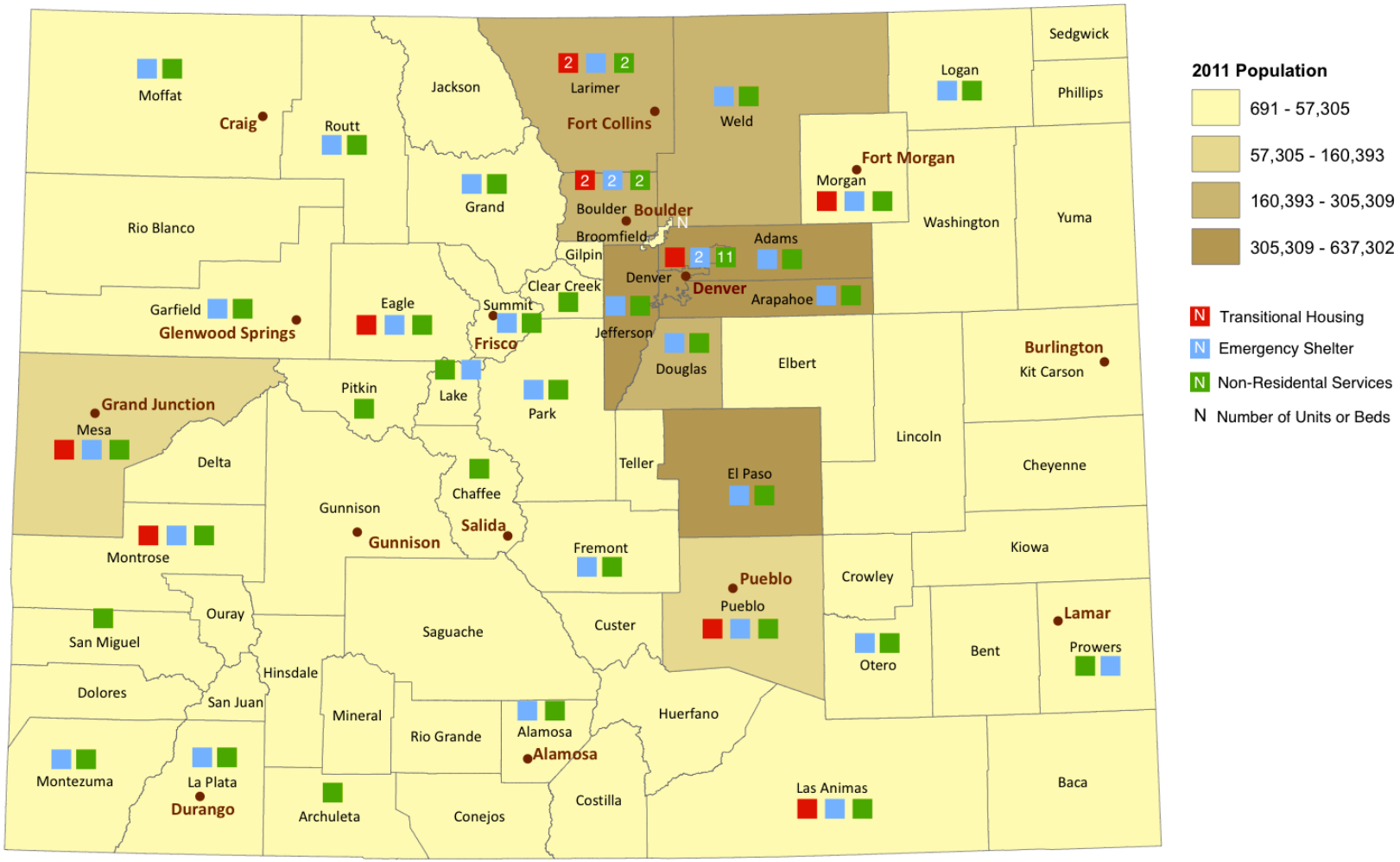
   - **Flexible funding** - - Advocates credit the flexible funding approach as an important component of this pilot. Efforts are underway to educate other funders and service providers about the benefits of flexible funding to make services survivor-centered so that they most effectively and efficiently meet client needs.

Concluding Comments

Permanent and safe housing for domestic violence survivors is critically important. Available and affordable housing is an issue for many people across the state. Partnerships between domestic violence advocates, housing providers, homeless community of advocates and sexual assault service providers can yield better results for survivors. Colorado has a solid support infrastructure in place for domestic violence victims. Advocates can build on this infrastructure by developing new partnerships, engaging new partners, and experimenting with new solutions.

Appendix

Map 1: Housing and Non-Residental Services for Domestic Violence Victims, 2012



Map 2: Transitional Housing and Emergency Shelter for Domestic Violence Victims, 2012

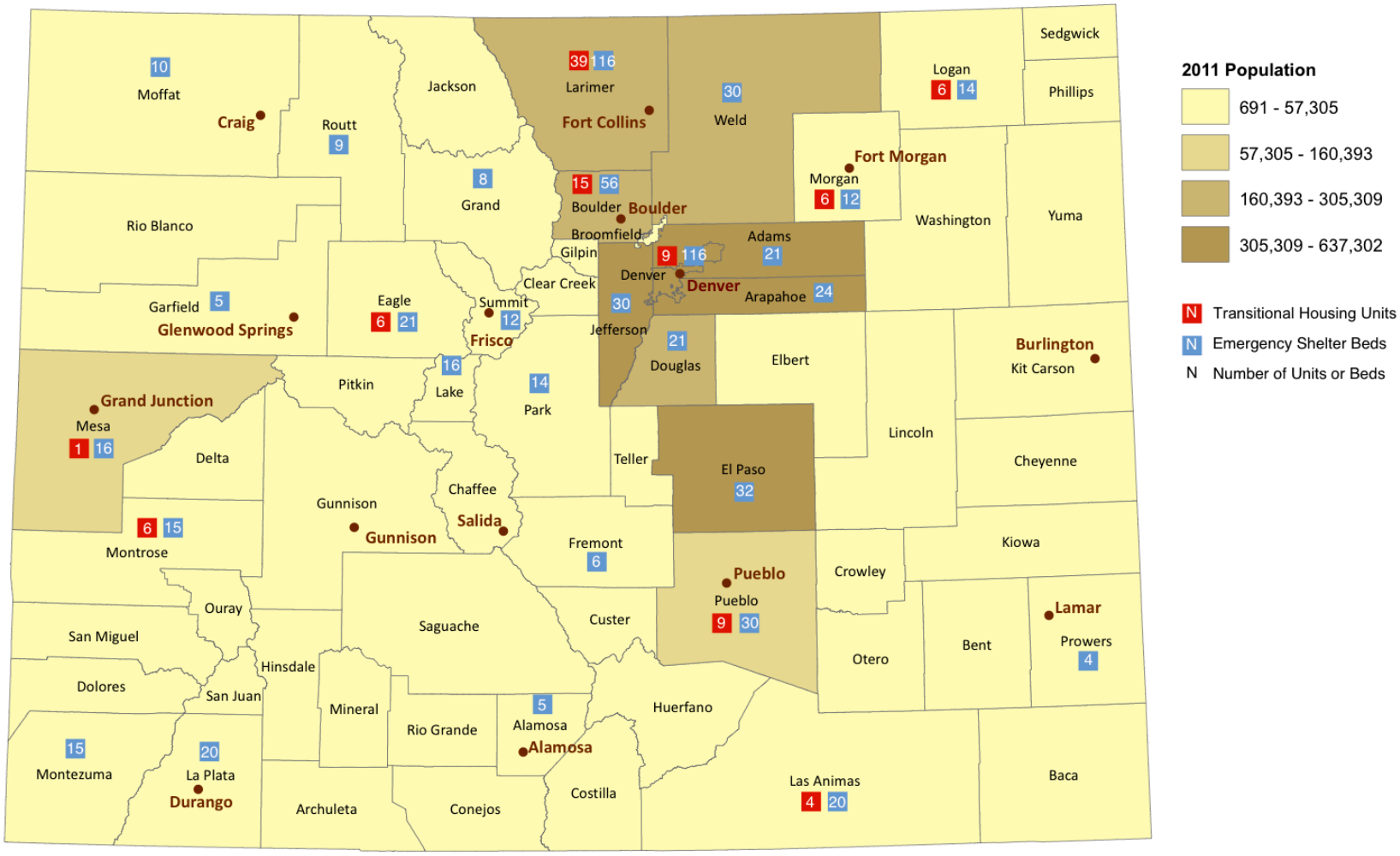


Table 10. Transitional Housing & Emergency Shelter by Judicial District, 2012

JD	Pop.	Organization Name	Location	TH Beds	Shelter Beds	Hotel Vouchers
1	545,473	Family Tree	Wheat Ridge		30	
2	620,917	Safehouse Denver	Denver		26	
		Volunteers of America Brandon Center	Denver		90	
		Catholic Charities - Father Ed Judy House[26]	Denver	9		
3	21,465	Advocates Against Domestic Assault	Trinidad	4	20	X
4	660,680	TESSA	CO Springs		32	X
5	96,101	Bright Future Foundation	Vail	6	21	X
		Advocates of Lake County	Leadville		16	X
		Advocates for Victims of Assault	Frisco		12	X
6	64,673	Archuleta County Victim Assistance Program	Pagosa Springs			X
		Volunteers of America Southwest Safehouse	Durango		20	X
7	99,511	Gunnison/Hinsdale Confidential Advocacy Center	Gunnison		4	X
		Tri-County Resource Center	Montrose	6	15	X
		San Miguel Resource Center	Telluride			X
8	306,675	Alternatives to Violence	Loveland	8		X
		Crossroads Safehouse	Fort Collins	31	78	
		Estes Valley Victim Advocates	Estes Park		9	X
9	80,116	Advocate Safehouse Project	Glenwood Springs		5	X
		RESPONSE: Help for Battered Women	Aspen			X
10	160,393	YWCA Family Crisis Shelter	Pueblo	9	30	
11	85,626	Alliance Against Domestic Abuse	Salida			X
		Family Crisis Services	Canon City		8	X
		Mountain Peace Shelter	Bailey		14	X
12	46,436	Tu Casa, Inc.	Alamosa		5	X
13	80,255	Help for Abused Partners	Sterling	6	14	X
		SHARE, Inc.	Fort Morgan	6	12	X

JD	Pop.	Organization Name	Location	TH Beds	Shelter Beds	Hotel Vouchers
14	51,150	Advocates Victim Assistance of Grand County	Hot Sulphur Springs		8	X
		Advocates Crisis Support Services	Craig		10	X
		Advocates Against Battering and Abuse	Steamboat Springs		9	X
15	19,594	Domestic Safety Resource Center	Lamar		4	
16	30,978	Arkansas Valley Resource Center	La Junta			X
17	508,881	Alternatives to Family Violence, Inc.	Commerce City		21	X
18	905,563	Gateway Battered Women's Services	Aurora		24	
		Women's Crisis & Family Outreach Center	Castle Rock		21-28	X
19	258,448	A Woman's Place, Inc.	Greeley		26	
20	300,383	Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley	Longmont	2	29	X
		Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence	Boulder	13	27	
21	147,753	Latimer House Counseling & Advocacy Center	Grand Junction	1	16	X
22	27,455	Renew, Inc.	Cortez		15	X

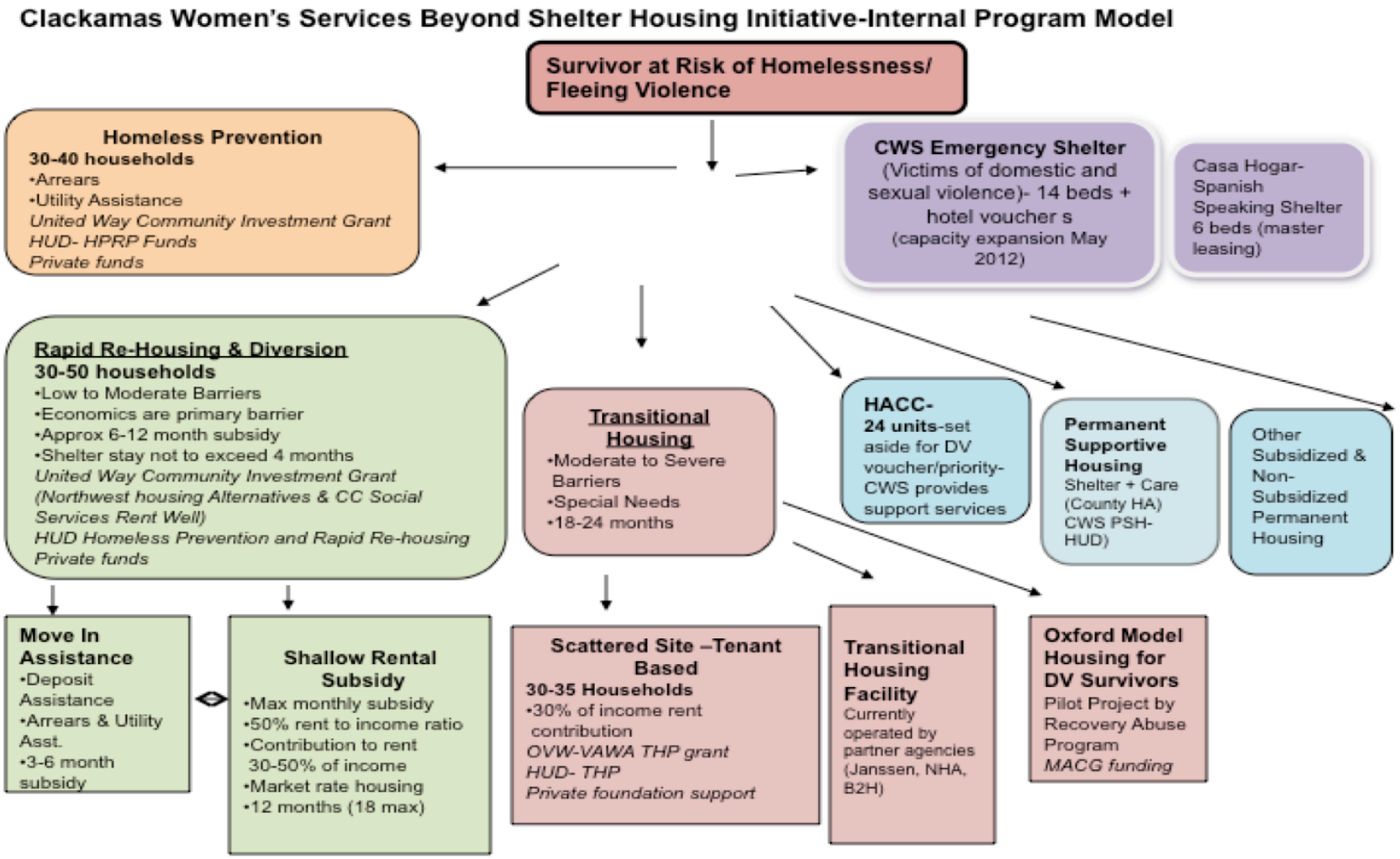
Table 11. Eligibility Requirements for Transitional Housing, 2012

Program Name	Eligibility Requirements Established by Funders	Eligibility Requirements Established by the Organization
Bright Future Foundation	• Imminent homelessness	• Must be domestic violence or sexual assault survivor.
Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence	• HUD-funded units are not available to undocumented immigrants, adults without children (unless they qualify as "seniors" or "disabled"), folks with particular drug offenses or other criminal convictions, or have been evicted from previous affordable housing programs.	• Interested in participating in case management and support services.
Crossroads Safehouse	• OVW requires that clients are survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking • Must be 18 years old.	• Must be homeless because of domestic violence. • Interested and committed to participation in the program; commit to maintaining confidentiality of other participants; and interested in spending 6 month to 2 years in the TH program.
SHARE, Inc.	• Must be a domestic violence victim and have some form of income. Does not have to be working; income can be TANF or child support, etc.	None
Latimer House	• Must be a citizen. (Program will use another source of funding, if necessary.)	• Typically, clients transition from the shelter to the transitional housing. Clients must develop a service plan and show progress in meeting goals.
Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley	None	• Must be victim of domestic violence • Older clients may be victims of abuse at the hands of familial or non-familial caregivers who have access to their living space and are exerting control over their lives.
Alternatives to Violence, Inc.	None	• Must be displaced by domestic violence and express willingness to work the program towards self-sufficiency, seek employment and/or schooling, attend therapy and or support groups for Mom and children who have witness DV.
Tri-County Resources	• Homeless due to domestic violence or sexual assault	None
YWCA Family Crisis Center	None	• Must live in the shelter first and then transition to transitional housing. Must have some form of income (work, TANF, SSI) and pay 20 percent of income toward program costs. • Transitional housing is communal so clients are screened for fit with the current residents.
Help for Abused Partners	• Homeless due to domestic violence • Agree to adhere to program rules. No drug use.	None
Advocates Against Domestic Assault	• Must have children. • Must be domestic violence victims.	• Must sign contract and meet with case managers and work toward achieving goals

Table 12. Transitional Housing Budgets and Sources of Funding, 2012

Program	Town	TH Units	Total TH Budget	Sources of Funding
Bright Future Foundation	Avon	6	$157,750	• Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence	Boulder	13	$173,235	• OVW Grant • City of Boulder • Boulder County
Crossroads Safehouse	Fort Collins	31	$300,095	• OVW Grant
SHARE, Inc.	Fort Morgan	6	$30,000	• HUD Funding • Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
Latimer House	Grand Junction	1	- -	
Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley	Longmont	2	- -	• Boulder County Worthy Cause Funding
Alternatives to Violence, Inc.	Loveland	8	$124,000	• Colorado Coalition for the Homeless • City of Loveland • Allstate Foundation • United Way
Tri-County Resources	Montrose	6	$78,000	• Colorado Coalition for the Homeless • Hilltop House
YWCA Family Crisis Center	Pueblo	9	$31,325[27]	• Spanish Peaks (MH program) • United Way
Help for Abused Partners	Sterling	6	$21,904	• Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
Advocates Against Domestic Assault	Trinidad	4	$54,849	• HUD Funding

Figure 1. Model of the Various Ways to Address Housing Needs



Endnotes

[1] The National Center on Family Homelessness. (2011). The Characteristics and Needs of Families Experiencing Homelessness. Available at http://www.familyhomelessness.org/media/147.pdf.

[2] U.S. Conference of Mayors. (2005). Hunger and homelessness survey: A status report on hunger and homelessness in America's cities, a 24-city survey. Washington, DC.

[3] National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. (2010). Some Facts on Homelessness, Housing, and Violence Against Women. Available at http://www.nlchp.org/content/pubs/Some%20Facts%20on%20Homeless%20and%20DV.pdf.

[4] Lisa Goodman, Katya Fels, and Katherine Glenn. (2006). No Safe Place: Sexual Assault in the Lives of Homeless Women. See also, National Sexual Violence Resource Center. (2010). Housing and Sexual Violence: Overview of National Survey.

[5] Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 2005 prohibited VAWA grant recipients from submitting personally identifying client information to the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the primary database used nationally to get an unduplicated count of homeless people.

[6] See note 3.

[7] Bassuk, EL et al. (1996). The characteristics and needs of sheltered homeless and low-income housed mothers. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 276(8): 640-646

[8] *Ibid*.

[9] Reports on the national domestic violence census by the National Network to End Domestic Violence can be found here: http://www.nnedv.org/resources/census/2012-report.html.

[10] National Women's Law Center. (2011). National Snapshot: Poverty Among Women and Families, 2011. Available at http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/povertysnapshot2011version2.pdf.

[11] National Low Income Housing Coalition. (2013). Out of Reach. Available at http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/2013_OOR.pdf.

[12] National Low Income Housing Coalition. (2013). Housing Spotlight: America's Affordable Housing Shortage and How to End it. Available at http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/HS_3-1.pdf.

[13] *Ibid*.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] The Fair Market Rent (FMR) is the 40th percentile of gross receipts for typical, non-substandard rental units. FMRs are determined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on an annual basis, and reflect the cost of shelter and utilities. FMRs are used to determine payment standards for the Housing Choice Voucher program and Section 8 contracts.

[18] Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Division of Housing. (2012). Housing Need and Rent Burden in Colorado and its Metropolitan Areas. Available at https://dola.colorado.gov/app_uploads/docs/mismatch_2010_revised.pdf.

[19] *Ibid*.

[20] Affordable rent is calculated at 30 percent of income.

[21] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2010). Costs Associated with First-Time Homelessness for Families and Individuals. Available at http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/Costs_Homeless.pdf

[22] *Ibid*.

[23] Alternatives to Violence provides vouchers for motel nights.

[24] Strategic Prevention Solutions. (2013). The Missing Piece: A Case Study Analysis of the Washington State Domestic Violence Housing First Project, September 2011. Available at http://www.wscadv.org/docs/DVHF-Case-Study-Analysis-2011.pdf

[25] *Ibid*.

[26] The Ed Judy House is not included in the transitional housing break out tables in the report because they could not be reached to respond to the survey.

[27] This is the budget for 2013-14. The Family Crisis Center in Pueblo is increasing their transitional housing units from 4 to 9 in the coming year with a new building. The program will be staffed by volunteers and current staff until additional funds can be raised.