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HOMELESSNESS AND  
SUPPORTIVE HOUSING



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# Community Needs Assessment for Survivors of Violence





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# Agenda

- Brief Overview of the Community Needs Assessment
- Data Analysis
- Themes from Stakeholder Interviews
- Themes from Survivor Listening sessions
- Safe Housing Survey Findings
- Recommendations

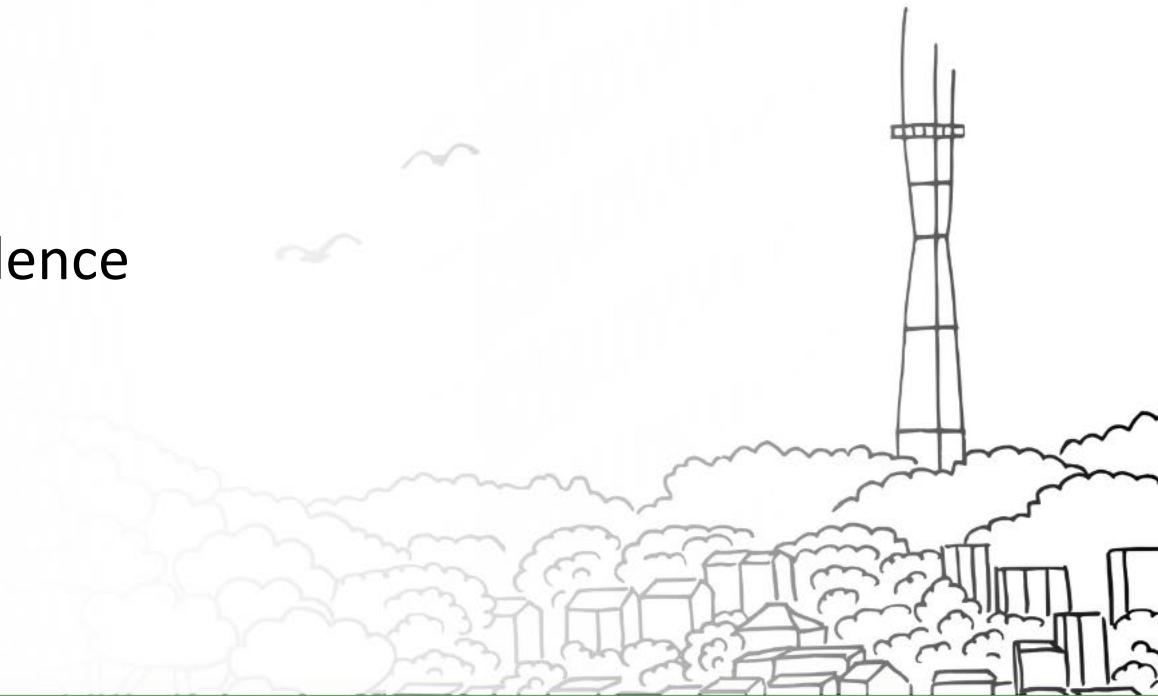




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# Brief Overview

Community Needs Assessment for Survivors of Violence



# Overview

- Survivors are defined as an individual or family that is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, **domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking**, or other **dangerous** or life-threatening conditions.
  - Example- Human Trafficking (HT)
- Community Needs Assessment is a Coordinated Entry (CE) planning process that **centers survivors' rights, voices, and perspectives** via a collaborative **design process** for the Homelessness Response System (HRS).
- Goals:
  - Improve survivor **access, safety, choice**, and **privacy** to services from Homelessness Response System.
  - Improve **coordination** between Victim Service Providers and Homelessness Response System.
- Desired Outcome:
  - Survivors can **access housing** in ways that are **safe** for them.

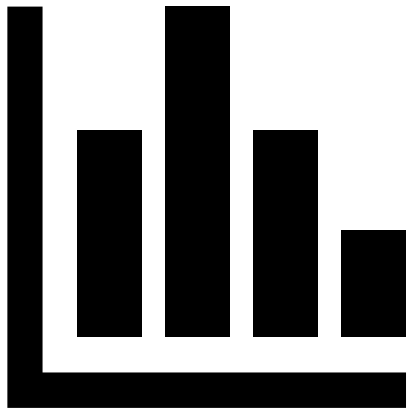
# Overview





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# Data Analysis



# Demographics

Survivors of violence who participated in victim services systems in San Francisco from 2019-2020:

- 71% identified as female
- 78% identified as person of color
- 9% identified as transgender
- 19% identified as LGBTQ+



Survivors of violence who engaged in services through the Homelessness Response System in 2020-2021

- 55% identified as female
- 54% identified as person of color
- 3% identified as transgender
- 17% identified as LGBTQ+

# Demand for services

- **900** survivors were reported to have received placement in victim-specific programs in 2019 – 2020 with **532** (60%) in emergency shelters and **368** (40%) in transitional or permanent housing programs.
- **2,684** survivors were turned away from Victim Service Provider- Emergency and Transitional Housing during this period, demonstrating that for every survivor who received safe housing that year, at least another **three did not**.
- Victim Service Programs (VSP) have a total of **77** shelter beds for survivors and their children in the city, with approximately **80%** of survivors who seek shelter being turned away.
- 2020 - 2021, **5,084** individuals out of 23,019 who engaged in services through the Homelessness Response System (HRS) reported being survivors of violence (although the type of violence is unknown).
- 39% of adults, 68% of families, and 67% of youth identifying as survivors were prioritized for housing (i.e., placed in Housing Referral Status), and this is an initial step in the housing process.





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# Themes from Stakeholder Interviews



# Stakeholder Interview Themes

- There is notable **confusion** among both providers and survivors about how the housing system works.
- Survivors are **not doing well** in the CE system – or are avoiding it entirely.
- Access barriers are multiplied for **BIPOC, LGBTQ+, immigrant, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) survivors**, and people with **disabilities**.
- There's little indication that the survivor population is a focal point in Homeless Response System, and survivors of sexual assault are often **left out of the conversation altogether**.
- Survivors often feel **unsafe** in access points and shelters
- CE was designed **without VSPs input**, and more must be done to better ensure adequate training and cross-systems planning essential to effective response to survivors.



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# Themes from Survivor Listening Sessions



# Survivor Listening Session Themes

- Contact with the housing system often doesn't result in a pathway to housing, with yearslong waiting lists and a **circular referral process**.
- Navigating the housing and victim services systems takes numerous attempts and is difficult and confusing—especially **without an advocate**.
- Survivors experienced barriers to accessing victim services programs, including **exclusion** based on type of **abuse, how recently it occurred, and the need to have a police report as proof of abuse**.
- Survivors experienced discrimination, including **transphobia, xenophobia, anti-Blackness and racism**, disability-based, victim-blaming, minimization of abuse, and **stigma** around past experiences of homelessness.
- There is disparate treatment based on **language and immigration status**, with inadequate information and services in other languages and exclusion from services that require documentation
- Survivors named other housing-related challenges that stem from the impact and aftermath of abuse.
- Survivors received support from outside the VS and HRS systems— especially **from other survivors**.



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# Safe Housing Survey Findings



# Survey Findings

## • Housing types

- Shelter is the most common option for survivors in both Victim Service Provider system and the Homelessness Response System.
- Some VSP shelters have specific requirements re: recency and type of violence

## • Policy Reviews

- Across Victim Service Providers and the Homelessness Response System there is a lack of consistency in reviewing policies through the lens of:
  - Survivor impact
  - Racial Equity and Cultural appropriateness
  - LGBTQ+ - specific issues

## • Diversity Equity & Inclusion

- Both the Victim Services Providers and Homelessness Response System are committed to DEI.
- Language access is a higher priority among victim service providers

# Partnerships & Entering Services

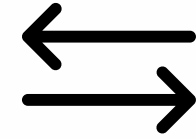
## • Providers Uncertain What Happens After Referral

- Broad awareness of entry points, but little understanding of “inner workings”
- Few opportunities to exchange ideas or information across victim service providers and the Homelessness Response System.

## • Entering Services

- Some best practices (early risk assessment in a safe environment) have been incorporated by H/SH organizations.
- 73% said that a danger/risk assessment is conducted as part of the assessment process
- 91% said their intakes/assessments are conducted in a safe environment

# Cross-Training & Legal Protections



- VSPs want to learn about Coordinated Entry and the HRS system, rapid-rehousing, and other housing-related topics.
- HRS providers want more training on trauma-informed care, screening for DV/SA/HT, and safety planning.
- Respondents were at least somewhat familiar with most legal protections for survivors, with higher levels of familiarity with federal protections than state protections. Ex. VAWA (Violence Against Women Act)
- Employing these protections on behalf of survivors does not seem to be a commonly implemented practice.



# Survivor Experience with Coordinated Entry

- Access Points struggle to address survivor needs especially **BIPOC, LGBTQ+, immigrant, Limited English Proficiency (LEP)** survivors, and people with **disabilities**.
- There's **little indication** that the survivor population is a **focal point** in Homeless Response System.
- **Safety concerns** at access points and in housing programs
- Survivorship **not weighted** as a factor in prioritization.
- Access Point staff **are not trained** on survivor safety needs and privacy protections
- **Little inclusion** in CE of best practices when working with survivors.

# Examples of inconsistent use of Best Practices with survivors

- Lack of a **robust informed consent** process and “opt-in” procedures
- Lack of clear guidance on data storage and data-sharing that **ensures confidentiality**
- Inconsistent referral procedures that help **identify survivors** and connect them with services
- Inconsistent approaches to **trauma informed, survivor-centered services** and processes
- **People with lived experience** and content experts are rarely **involved in development** and feedback.

# Survivors needs poorly met by CE

• Suggestions for change include:

- **Increase** the range of **housing options** available to survivors including affordable housing.
- **Recognize** survivors as a **priority population**
- Increase **coordination** and **communication** between victim service providers and housing providers
- Make assessments and screening procedures **trauma informed** and **survivor-centered**.

# Barriers & Challenges to Accessing and Maintaining Housing

- Housing waitlists **closed or too long**
- **No income or cannot work** -not related to disability
- Survivor **cannot** realistically **afford** available housing option
- Survivor has an **animal companion/pet** -not connected with a disability
- Survivor is an **immigrant or is undocumented.**
- Survivor has **poor credit/poor rental history**
- Housing provider refuses to provide **reasonable accommodation** in restoring or improving security and safety measures
- Survivor does not feel/is **not safe** in the housing
- Housing assistance is **not long enough**
- Housing provider has **mandatory services**

# System Strengths & Assets

- HSH has developed a HUD-compliant comparable database that will include confidentiality protections for survivors
- In 2021, a certain amount of Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) through the American Rescue Plan in 2021 were dedicated to survivors
- Urgent Accommodation funds for survivors during COVID helped house survivors in hotels when unable to access or safely use emergency shelters
- HSH has made successful application to HUD for DV Bonus and RRH funds for survivors.

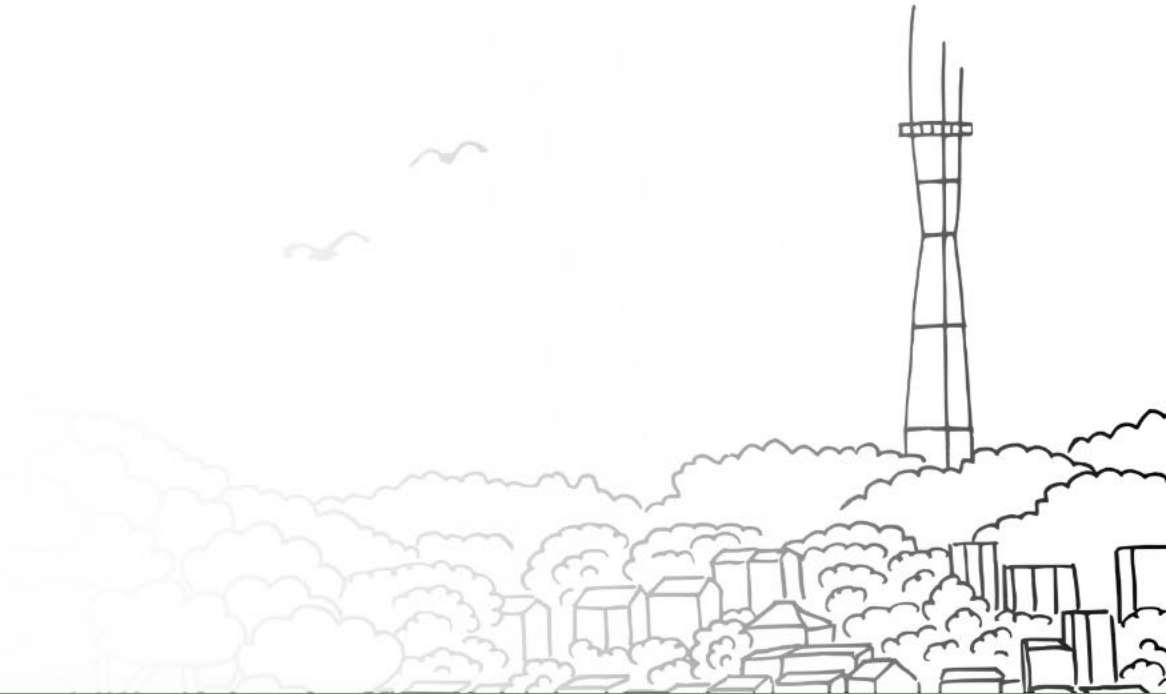
# System Gaps and Challenges

- **Safety concerns** at Access Points and in shelter/housing programs
- **Minimal collaboration** across systems
- **Inadequate language access**
- **Lack of training** for staff in both systems
- **Low rate of referral** to housing for survivors
- **Lack of clear information** about how the **system works**
- **Lack of consistent** assessment process that screens for DV/SA/HT or accounts for survivors' unique vulnerabilities



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# Recommendations



# System wide recommendations

- With the Safe Housing Working Group as its foundation and people with lived expertise at its core, HSH and DOSW should **establish an ongoing cross-system committee** or coalition to guide and **advise implementation of systemic change**.
- HSH should extend the practice of incorporating **meaningful participation by survivors** and VSPs into HRS meetings and decision-making processes.
- HSH, DOSW, and VSPs should work together to develop a **training project plan** that includes curriculum, schedule, and evaluation process that encompasses the content needs identified by both systems.
- HSH and DOSW should work with legal services providers (such as BAYLA, NHLP, etc.) to conduct system-wide training on federal, state, and local housing law and **legal protections**.



# System wide recommendations

- HSH and DOSW should work together to develop mechanisms to ensure that **information** about safe housing pathways for survivors **is available and accessible**.
- HSH and DOSW should develop strategies to invest in **enhancing staff capacity**, with strong emphasis on **hiring people from impacted communities**.
- HSH should invest in fulfillment of its **Equity Goals**.
- HSH and DOSW should develop and provide resources to assist VSP and HRS providers with a **review of policies and procedures** through a **survivor safety, equity, language access, and LGBTQ+ lens**.
- HSH and DOSW should work together to encourage and **institutionalize partnerships**, joint problem-solving, and cross-referral between Victim Service and HRS providers, including through co-advocacy and co-location.

# Access Point Recommendations

- HSH should ensure that **all** Access Point staff are trained on:
  - Trauma informed approaches
  - Screening for DV/SA/HT
  - Safety planning
  - Informing Survivors of their privacy rights
- HSH should implement an “**opt-in**” policies and robust informed consent.
- HSH should examine Access Point **design & location** to address:
  - Neighborhood Safety
  - Privacy during intake and assessment
  - Survivors’ unique needs

# Assessment Recommendations

## Universal Screening

- For DV/SA/HT as a part of the Coordinated Entry assessment

## Alternative Assessments

- Or process for use with survivors accessing CE

## Prioritization

- Elevate the weight of DV/SA/HT in the prioritization process

# Access to Shelter Recommendations

- DOSW should support VSPs to examine how current funder requirements restrict them from **broadening** emergency housing **eligibility to include sexual assault and human trafficking survivors**.
- HSH should address **safety concerns** in general population shelters.
- HSH and DOSW should address **language access** concerns in shelters.

# Access to Housing Recommendations

- As part of its multi-year funding strategy, HSH should continue to identify CoC funds that can **expand the availability of survivor-specific housing**.
- As part of its multi-year funding strategy and in collaboration with VS providers, city departments (including HSH, MOHCD, and SFHA) should continue to seek funds to **increase the overall amount of funding** allocated to survivor-specific housing.
- City departments (HSH, OEWD, OFE) should examine standards on **length of rental subsidy in RRH programs** across both the VSP HRS systems and explore ways to **provide supports for income development**.
- Use data from a re-envisioned CE process to **assess housing gaps in greater detail**.
- HSH, DOSW, and VSPs should conduct an **evaluation of termination policies** to improve transparency and understanding for housing participants and staff.

# Problem Solving Recommendations

- HSH should invest in **increasing the availability of systems navigation and advocacy services for survivors** not matched with housing.
- DOSW and VSPs should explore funding options to **increase availability of flexible financial assistance** to help fill gaps left by funding restrictions and eligibility requirements.

# Next Steps

- **Adoption** of the recommendations by the Local Homelessness Coordinating Board.
- **Develop** an implementation plan using recommendations as a foundation.
- **Establish** the Safe Housing Working group as an ongoing cross-system committee.
- **Consider** the relocation needs of survivors of community violence.



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# Questions?

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