

Invest in Services for Domestic Violence Survivors

Fair Budget Coalition in Collaboration with DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Recommendation

- \$9.6 million to respond to the increased prevalence and severity of domestic violence
- \$18.6 million to expand domestic violence housing units

What's At Stake?

For more than 3 decades, the violence service provider community in DC has collaborated with various institutions including, the Mayor's office, the DC Council, courts, law enforcement, and the schools to bring awareness to domestic violence in the District. Through their efforts, they have helped disrupt the cycle of domestic violence by providing trauma-informed housing solutions, legal advice, financial assistance, and policy changes, and even held the Mayor's administration accountable for implementing their own domestic violence policies for staff.

The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey found that 39%, or 104,000, women in DC have been "hit, slapped, punched, threatened, beaten, stalked, or raped by an intimate partner." Also, while awareness is still growing, men can also be victims of domestic violence. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 24.4% of DC men have experienced "intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner sexual violence, and/or intimate partner stalking." More interventions are necessary to meet the needs of survivors of domestic violence. According to the DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence, survivors who have received services have described their experience as life-changing.

Not only are wrap-around services necessary for survivors, but it is also important that wrap-around services are culturally specific. The DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence defines culturally specific services as "services developed by and for a specific community – particularly those that have been traditionally marginalized and/or underserved." Culturally specific services are essential for helping survivors navigate challenges around language barriers or cultural norms. Funding for culturally specific services can provide money for language justice, covering the transportation needs of survivors, operating costs, and outreach and communication efforts.

In addition to wrap-around services, housing is critical to domestic violence survivors gaining stability and helps prevent homelessness. According to the U.S. Conference of Mayors, domestic violence is one of the leading factors of homelessness for women and children. In addition, the National Network to End Domestic Violence, found that roughly 38% of domestic violence victims become homeless at some point in their lifetime. Oftentimes, temporary, congregate shelters are not safe for women due to physical or sexual violence and as non-congregate shelters are losing funding, survivors have few options. When survivors do not have safe options for housing, approximately 45% stayed with their abusers.

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What Is Needed?

Increase Funding for Wrap Around Services

Additional funding for culturally specific wrap-around services is needed to handle the increased severity of the District's domestic violence epidemic. Around the world, there was an increase in domestic violence incidents due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, the United Nations called it a "shadow pandemic." During the pandemic, more survivors have needed life-saving services such as mental health support, crisis response, culturally-specific services, and legal services. In the U.S. some states reported an 18-27% increase in domestic violence incidents caused by the pandemic. While funding and supports to combat the pandemic have dried up, the need has not. DC's domestic violence programs are asked to do more with less which will not meet the volume of survivors requesting services.

Increase Funding for Domestic Violence Housing Units

Additional housing units for domestic violence survivors are also needed. To meet the need, the District should develop a new 20-unit affordable housing project, develop a new 27-unit permanent supportive housing project, create 15 new units of scattered-site transitional housing with supportive services, and expand emergency housing support for an additional two units per week for a year.

DC residents deserve a safe environment and a District that meets the needs of those experiencing domestic abuse.

Citations

- DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Surviving DC: A Domestic Violence Report, <https://www.dccadv.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Surviving-DC-Report-Card-1.pdf>
- DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Domestic Violence in the District of Columbia, https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2497/dc_2019.pdf, 2019.
- National Network to End Domestic Violence. Domestic Violence, Housing, and Homelessness, https://nnedv.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Library_TH_2018_DV_Housing_Homelessness.pdf, 2018.
- National Coalition for the Homeless. Domestic Violence and Homelessness, <https://nationalhomeless.org/domestic-violence/>, n.d.
- The Harvard Gazette, "Shadow pandemic" of domestic violence, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2022/06/shadow-pandemic-of-domestic-violence/>, 2022.