DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & HOMELESSNESS IN NEW YORK STATE

More than 4.6 million New Yorkers across the state will experience abuse by an intimate partner in their lifetime. At its worst, this violence can result in death: one out of every seven homicides in the state are domestic homicides. According to the National Network to End Domestic Violence’s 2021 data, New York State had the highest demand for domestic violence services in the country, with requests for emergency shelter and housing assistance as the most solicited. Across the state calls for residential programs were almost 5 times higher than for non-residential services.

This is supported by a wealth of research documenting that access to safe and affordable housing is one of survivors’ biggest, most urgent concerns and it often determines whether they leave their abuser. Survivors who can flee may spend years in shelter before securing appropriate housing and then face a myriad of challenges to keep it. In New York City, where domestic violence is the number one driver of family homelessness, survivors with children in Human Resources Administration (HRA) domestic violence shelter are nearly 8 times more likely to move to another shelter than to an apartment of their own upon reaching the state-mandated limit of 180 days.

Power and control are at the center of abusive relationships. While physical violence and sexual assault are the most apparent forms of domestic violence, batterers utilize various tactics to exercise their dominance, such as coerced debt and isolation. More than 94% of survivors report enduring financial abuse and being stripped from their social safety nets, directly impacting their ability to heal and regain self-sufficiency. The dearth of affordable housing only heightens the barriers for survivors. There is not a single county or locality in the state where a renter earning minimum wage can afford a one-bedroom apartment. Seventy percent of extremely low-income renters, whose incomes are at or below the federal poverty guideline, spend more than half their income in rent and there are only 36 affordable and available rental units per 100 households at or below extremely low income.

Meanwhile, the cost of living continues to rise dramatically. Over the last 12 months, the Consumer Price Index for the Northeast Region of the country increased 6.4%. For survivors of color, survivors with a disability, non-citizen and survivors from marginalized communities, the challenges are even greater due to systemic discrimination and lack of equitable access to resources.
PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

New Destiny is grateful to Governor Hochul and the State Legislature for including a five-year housing plan focused on affordable housing and mitigating barriers to access public assistance in the FY2023 enacted budget. These, plus the 2021 increase of state rental subsidy to the federal market rate (FMR), are laudable steps. Yet, it is imperative to take additional steps to ensure housing stability. The state must invest adequately in existing supportive housing programs, expand rental assistance, and increase public assistance benefits to unlock a sustainable path for survivors to break the cycle of homelessness and abuse.

**PROTECT FAMILIES IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING: INCREASE THE NYS SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROGRAM RATE**

Permanent supportive housing is among the safest and most cost-effective housing solutions for survivors of domestic violence. Created in the 1980s, the New York State Supportive Housing Program (NYSSHP) is the oldest supportive housing program in the state and the first to pay for services, including critical on-site trauma-informed services and community re-building programs for survivors who have lost everything, including their support networks. Yet, NYSSHP rates have remained virtually the same for 30 years, providing $2,700 a year for single adults and $3,700 for families with children. On average that covers 1-1.5 direct service staff for an entire building and zero security. Close to 20,000 households are supported by NYSSHP programs in New York State, including hundreds of families in New Destiny’s oldest 5 buildings. The chronic underfunding of the program leaves organizations like New Destiny with painfully limited services for our vulnerable tenants, and a heavy reliance on donations and foundation funding for even the most basic of services – namely building security and case management. **New Destiny urges the Governor and the State Legislature to raise NYSSHP funding by $148 million so that it covers the health and safety services it is supposed to for our tenants.**

**FUEL HOUSING PRODUCTION: INCREASE THE EMPIRE STATE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING INITIATIVE**

The more recently created Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI) is the engine for new supportive housing across the state. Unlike NYSSHP, ESSHI provides both operating and service funding to support operating costs. ESSHI rates are five times the NYSSHP rate for social services and help cover rent costs for a total of up to $25,000 per household annually statewide. Yet, the rates have not increased since the program’s inception in 2016. Given rising costs of living, ESSHI must be raised to ensure the sustainability of the program and to protect the thousands of individuals and families who depend on it for stability. **New Destiny urges the Governor and the State Legislature to increase ESSHI to $35,000 per unit in New York City and $30,000 in the rest of the state.**
New York State public assistance programs, overseen by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, provide financial help to thousands of survivors of domestic violence who meet the eligibility criteria. Public assistance benefits are intended to cover food, utilities, and housing expenses, while clearing a path to economic stability. Yet, the amount of the benefits, which depend on the household’s available income and the standard of need, has not kept up with rising inflation and fails to meet the needs of recipients. Unlike Social Security benefits, which are indexed to inflation and increased by the federal government annually, public assistance benefits have not been raised for years, with some remaining stagnant for decades: the basic allowance, intended to cover food and other necessities, was last increased in 2012; the home energy allowance, which pays for electric and heating utilities, has not increased since the 1980s; and the shelter allowance has remained the same for adult–only households since 1988 and for families with children since 2003. Today the median monthly rent in New York City is $3,267 yet, a single mother with two children residing in Manhattan is only receiving a shelter allowance of $400 per month.

In 2022, the State Legislature introduced two bills that would amend the social service law to increase public assistance. A9130/S9513, sponsored by Assembly member Rosenthal and State Senator Persaud, would raise the standards of monthly need and home energy allowances to account for inflation, while A8900A/S8632, sponsored by Assembly member Rosenthal and State Senator Kavanagh, would ensure that individuals can access safe and stable housing by allowing those receiving shelter allowance to receive up to 100% of the FMR for their area. New Destiny urges members of the State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign A9130/S9513 and A8900A/S8632 to increase housing and economic stability for New Yorkers in need.

Rental subsidies, such as Section 8, can be life-saving resources for survivors and for the millions of New Yorkers experiencing housing instability. Yet, only 1 in 4 eligible households receive Section 8,[iii] and for non-citizen New Yorkers, including survivors of domestic violence, access to housing resources is even more limited. New York State can take at least two legislative actions to provide this much needed housing assistance to all individuals and families in need. The Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) A4021/S568 is a proposed legislation that would create a permanent, statewide Section 8-like rent subsidy available to all New Yorkers who meet the eligibility criteria, regardless of immigration status. At least 50% of the resources would be designated for homeless New Yorkers and the remainder would go towards eviction prevention. Similarly, the State Legislature introduced S1631, a bill that would authorize New York City to expand eligibility of CityFHEPS, a city rental assistance program, to non-citizen New Yorkers who qualify. New Destiny urges the State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign HAVP and S1631 and take much needed steps to expand equitable access to housing for domestic violence survivors and non-citizen New Yorkers.
**SOURCES**


**ABOUT NEW DESTINY**

New Destiny’s mission is to end the cycle of domestic violence and homelessness for low-income families and individuals by developing and connecting them to safe, permanent, affordable housing and services. To achieve its mission, New Destiny builds and manages housing with on-site services; offers innovative programs that assist survivors in finding and retaining affordable housing; and works to expand access to permanent housing resources for survivors. Founded in 1994, New Destiny is currently the largest provider of supportive housing for domestic violence survivors in New York and a leading advocate in the effort to obtain the resources needed to end family homelessness in New York City.

New Destiny is a member of the Supportive Housing Network of New York and a co-convener of the Family Homelessness Coalition.