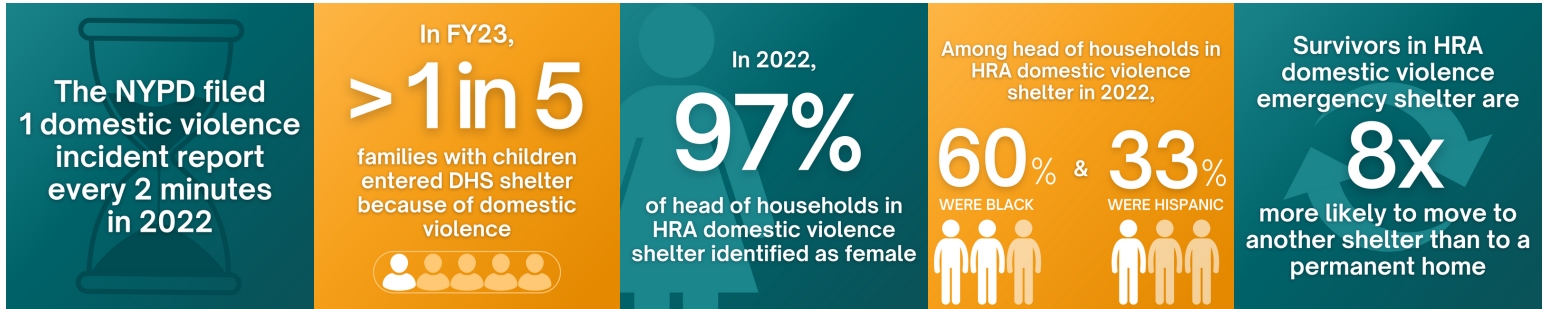




NEW DESTINY HOUSING 2024 NEW YORK CITY POLICY PRIORITIES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND HOMELESSNESS IN NEW YORK CITY

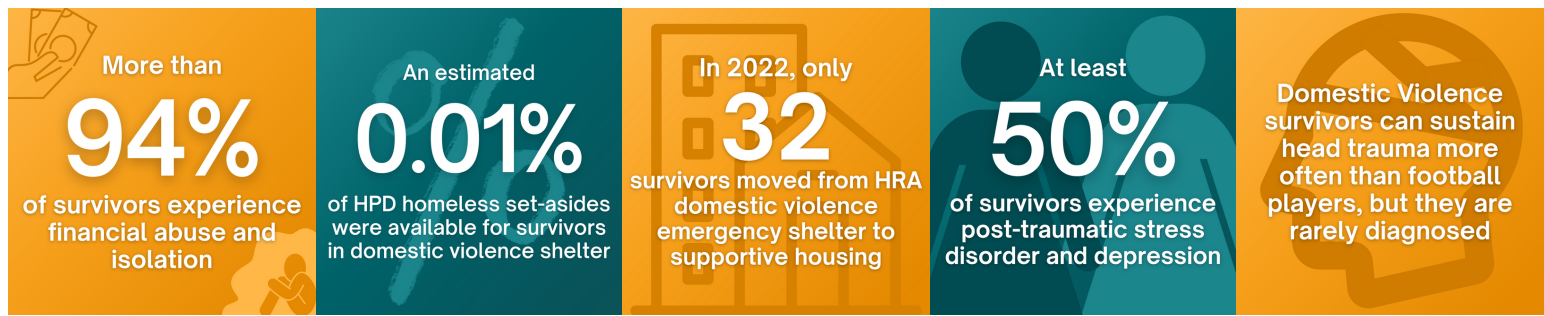


Even though only about half of all domestic violence instances are reported,^[i] the NYPD filed 1 domestic violence incident report every 2 minutes in 2022.^[ii] Access to safe and affordable housing is one of survivors' biggest, most urgent concerns and it often determines whether they leave their abuser.

Domestic violence continues to be a main cause of family homelessness in New York City. More than 1 in 5 families with children who entered the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter system identified domestic violence as the reason for their homelessness in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023.^[iii]^[iv] Additionally, 10,640 survivors sought refuge in the separate Human Resources Administration (HRA) domestic violence shelter system in calendar year 2022, 96% of whom were families with kids.^[v]

Once in domestic violence emergency shelter, survivors are 8 times more likely to move to DHS or another shelter than to a permanent home upon reaching the state-mandated six-month limit.^[vi] Moving to DHS means that survivors lose the anonymity and specialized services of the domestic violence shelter system. Moreover, their time spent in domestic violence shelter does not count toward time in shelter in the DHS system, a marker used to prioritize households for housing. In 2022, more than 1 in 2 survivors left shelter for shelter and only 6% were able to secure permanent housing. Hundreds of other survivors were reported as *making their own arrangements, unknown, or other*. With a vacancy rate of only 1.4% in New York City,^[vii] it is very likely that many of them left shelter to return to their abuser. According to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, survivors go back to their abusive partners an average of seven times before they leave for good.^[viii]

Survivors sleeping in shelter make up only a fraction of survivors without a safe home to go. The New York City domestic violence hotline received 92,410 calls in 2022,^[ix] and in 2023 more than 16,000 survivors made nearly 50,000 visits to the city's Family Justice Centers.^[x] While anyone can be affected by domestic violence, women of color, in particular Black and Hispanic, are disproportionally impacted. In 2022, 97% of head of households in HRA domestic violence shelter identified as female, 60% were Black, and 33% were Hispanic. Between 2010 and 2022, Black New Yorkers were 2.4 times more likely than members of other racial or ethnic groups to be victims of domestic violence homicide.^[xi]



Most survivors need housing assistance because they cannot access whatever household resources existed. More than 94% of survivors of intimate partner violence experience financial abuse and isolation^[xii] and over half are victims of nonconsensual, credit-related transactions.^[xiii] As a result, survivors often have poor credit scores and rental history, or may have lost their rental subsidy due to violations committed by the abuser. The shortage of affordable housing only heightens the barriers for survivors as they strive to regain stability. In 2023, the net rental vacancy rate of homes renting under \$2,400 fell below 1%.^[xiv] Challenges are even greater for survivors from marginalized communities, survivors with a disability, and non-citizens survivors due to systemic discrimination and lack of equitable access to resources.^[xv]

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

While the city has made strides in recent years toward bringing accountability to the various shelter systems, increasing rental subsidies, and developing more supportive and affordable housing, domestic violence survivors continue to be left out of life-saving housing, such as the city's homeless set-aside apartments and city-funded supportive housing. This must change. Also, the city must implement and invest adequately in the newly created flexible funding microgrant program for survivors, which can prevent homelessness and shelter recidivism for a fraction of the cost of shelter and re-housing efforts.

AS OUTLINED IN THE HOUSING OUR NEIGHBORS BLUEPRINT, ALLOW SURVIVORS IN HRA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER TO ACCESS HPD HOMELESS SET-ASIDES

The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) creates a critical pipeline from shelter to permanent housing for homeless New Yorkers by requiring most developers who receive public funding to set aside at least 15% of their apartments for individuals and families in shelter. These units are commonly referred to as HPD homeless set-asides. In FY 2023, HPD moved nearly 2,000 homeless households into newly constructed units and 548 into re-rental apartments.^[xvi] However, only a handful of these homes were “volunteered” to survivors living in the HRA domestic violence shelter system. Currently, the administration formally allows only individuals and families in the DHS shelter system to access these units, despite committing “to even the playing field for all New Yorkers” in the Housing Our Neighbors Blueprint in April 2022. **Expanding access to homeless set-asides would not only make this valuable housing resource more equitable, but would fill vacancies more quickly, and help survivors avoid having to enter DHS shelter when they time out of domestic violence shelter.**

OPEN UP CITY-FUNDED SUPPORTIVE HOUSING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

Unlike New York State supportive housing programs, the city supportive housing initiative, NYC 15/15, does not include domestic violence survivors. NYC 15/15 requires families to meet the federal definition of “chronically homeless” to be eligible for supportive housing. There are two criteria: families must have a lengthy stay in DHS shelter—which doesn’t include the 180 days spent already in an HRA emergency domestic violence shelter—and have a diagnosed disability, such as serious mental illness or substance use disorder—which domestic violence survivors rarely divulge for fear of losing custody of their children to their abuser. In other words, survivors are effectively shut out of this important housing resource. **At least half of survivors experience post-traumatic stress disorder and depression;**^[xvii] **moreover, survivors can sustain head trauma more often than football players, but they are rarely diagnosed.**^[xviii] **Permanent, supportive housing is a lifeline for domestic violence survivors who need housing and some level of support to attain and maintain stability.** New Destiny also supports The Supportive Housing Network of New York’s recommendations to improve NYC 15/15, especially the ask to develop additional congregate units above the original 7,500 allocation.

FUND FLEXIBLE FUNDING FOR SURVIVORS AT \$6 MILLION

Last year New York City took a major step in homelessness prevention by enacting Intro 153-A, which created a housing stability program for domestic and gender-based violence survivors. The program is designed to provide low-barrier grants to survivors and connect them to supportive services, with the goal of helping them maintain housing. New Destiny witnesses the beneficial impact of microgrants every day. Our rapid re-housing program, HousingLink, receives small federal service funding that can be used to cover most emergency needs, such as utility arrears, moving costs, and healthcare. Similarly, during Covid, a privately funded microgrant pilot, overseen by the Mayor’s Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence and administered by Sanctuary for Families, further demonstrated that flexible funding can significantly improve survivors’ financial situation, help them remain housed, and foster financial stability.^[xix] The pilot illustrated the high demand for low-barrier financial support among survivors of domestic violence in New York City. The \$500,000 for the pilot was quickly depleted and forced the program to cease receiving applications in less than 2 months.

For some survivors, an immediate, but otherwise manageable, financial or health crisis can quickly snowball into a catastrophe causing homelessness. This newly created housing stability program has the potential to be a lifesaver for survivors, especially for non-citizen New Yorkers, and help bridge the gap for existing federally funded initiatives that do not cover essential items, like furniture or groceries.

ABOUT NEW DESTINY

Founded in 1994, New Destiny is the only organization in New York City dedicated to the long-term housing stability of survivors of domestic violence, and the largest developer of supportive housing for survivors and their families. We are also a leading advocate in the effort to obtain the resources needed to end the cycle of domestic violence and homelessness for low-income families and individuals.

New Destiny is a co-convener of the Family Homelessness Coalition, and a member of The Supportive Housing Network of New York and the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development.



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