



NEW DESTINY HOUSING 2024 NEW YORK STATE POLICY PRIORITIES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND HOMELESSNESS IN NEW YORK STATE

More than 1 in 3 New Yorkers across the state will experience abuse by an intimate partner in their lifetime.^[i] According to the latest national survey, New York State reported the highest demand for domestic violence services in the country.^[ii] However, many survivors are unable to access the resources and services they need, especially when it comes to permanent housing. In fact, the majority of the unmet requests for services from domestic violence survivors in New York State are housing-related.

Without a safe place to rebuild their lives, survivors may be forced to remain in abusive situations, putting their lives at risk. In 2021, 1 out of every 7 homicides in New York State were domestic homicides, where the victim was either an intimate partner or a family member.^[iii] Women of color are disproportionately impacted. In 2022, 89% of intimate partner violence homicide victims were reported as female and 70% were reported as Black or Hispanic.^[iv]

Survivors who can flee to shelter may spend years homeless before securing safe, affordable housing and, once they do, they are faced with a myriad of challenges to keep it. Soaring rent prices heighten the barriers. New York continuously ranks as one of the states with the highest cost burdens.^[v] Almost 40% of New York households pay 30% or more of their income for housing, the most commonly used threshold of affordability, and 1 in 5 are severely cost-burdened, paying more than 50% of their income for housing. Hispanic, Black, and Asian New Yorkers are affected the most by housing insecurity. The steady decrease in housing availability is a major contributing factor to the crisis. Over the last decade, New York State created new homes at a rate of 5.7%, which is lower than the job growth rate, 8.3%, and far below other states, like Texas and Florida. In New York City, the housing vacancy rate dropped to 1.4% in 2023, the lowest since 1968.^[vi]

The devastating and long-lasting consequences of abusive behavior only compound the challenge of finding a permanent home for survivors. While physical abuse is the most visible, perpetrators often utilize multiple tactics to exercise power and control over their victims, including isolation and economic violence. Up to 99% of survivors report enduring financial abuse and being stripped from their social safety nets.^[vii] Public benefits, rental assistance, and flexible funding programs are essential for survivors to regain self-sufficiency. In 2022, there was a 21% increase in the number of survivors applying for cash assistance across the state.^[viii] But not all survivors are able to access the resources they need, especially survivors of color, survivors with a disability, non-citizens, and survivors from marginalized communities.^[ix]

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New Yorkers across the state will experience abuse by an intimate partner in their lifetime

14%

of homicides were domestic homicides in 2021

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1 in 5

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of intimate partner violence homicide victims were reported as female

In 2022, the number of survivors applying for cash assistance increased by

21% statewide



PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Permanent affordable housing, coupled with support services, is critical for domestic violence survivors to reclaim their autonomy and thrive. Governor Hochul and the State Legislature have made strides in recent years, such as creating a new state flexible funding program for survivors, and have continued to fund supportive and affordable housing. However, given the scale of the crisis, it is imperative for our State leaders to advance additional measures to ensure the long-term housing stability of survivors and their families. The State must invest to protect survivors in first generation supportive housing, expand rental assistance, and increase public assistance benefits to unlock a sustainable path for survivors to break the cycle of homelessness and abuse.

PROTECT SURVIVORS IN FIRST GENERATION SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Supportive housing is one of the safest and most cost-effective housing solutions for survivors of domestic violence. Yet, the New York State Supportive Housing Program (NYSSHP), on which thousands of survivors rely, has been shockingly underfunded for decades. Created in 1987 and administered by the state Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), NYSSHP provides funding specifically for direct services tied to housing. More than 20,000 households across the state – all of whom are homeless or at high risk – live in NYSSHP housing. Because of virtually flat funding for nearly 40 years, nonprofits are no longer able to provide the level of security and services that our vulnerable families need to remain safe and stably housed.

New Destiny opened its first NYSSHP building in 2008 and we are still operating with service rates of \$3,672 per family per year. This funds less than 2 staff for the whole building and it's one fifth of what providers receive under the newer supportive housing program, the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI), which began in 2016. ESSHI funds \$25,000 per household annually, of which usually half, or \$12,500, is used for direct services. Additionally, an automatic 2% escalator is included in each contract. The disparity between the NYSSHP and ESSHI programs is indefensible. Survivors in NYSSHP buildings deserve the same access to the health and healing resources that those in other supportive housing can access. It is time for our state leadership to step up and create parity between the two programs. The supportive housing community proposes a 5-year, phased-in approach to reach parity, with a budget increase this year of only \$32 million.

New Destiny urges the Legislature to support our full proposal for a \$32 million increase in FY 2024-25 and ensure that our most vulnerable neighbors, including survivors of domestic violence, have a place to live safely, heal, and thrive.

RAISE CASH AND SHELTER ALLOWANCE

New York State public assistance programs, overseen by OTDA 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. According to the latest survey, the median monthly rent in New York City is \$2,148 yet, a single mother with two children residing in Manhattan is only receiving a shelter allowance of \$400 per month.



We urge the Senate and the Assembly to pass A05543 (Rosenthal) / S2982 (Kavanagh), which would increase the shelter allowance to 100% of the federal fair market rates and help ensure that individuals can access safe and stable housing. Similarly, the Legislature has the opportunity to help lift affected New Yorkers out of deep poverty in every community in our great state by increasing the basic needs allowance to keep pace with inflation, as A05500 (Rosenthal) / S5270A (Persaud) proposes.

New Destiny urges members of the State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign A05543/S2982 and A05500/S5270A to increase housing and economic stability for New Yorkers in need.

EXPAND HOUSING RESOURCES: PASS HAVP AND CITYFHEPS LEGISLATION

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.^[x] For noncitizen New Yorkers or those in mixed-status households, where at least one member of the family is not a U.S. citizen or eligible immigrant, it can be difficult – if not impossible – to access sufficient housing support. This includes countless immigrant survivors of domestic violence, who lack equitable access to housing resources and, as a result, face great risk of eviction and tend to stay in shelter for longer.

The Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) A4021A (Rosenthal) / S568B (Kavanagh) would create a permanent, statewide Section 8-like rent subsidy available to all New Yorkers who meet the eligibility criteria, regardless of immigration status. With \$250 million in funding, this affordable solution will provide up to 13,000 vouchers and help as many as 30,000 New Yorkers leave shelter or avoid the trauma of homelessness.^[xi]

In addition to HAVP, the Legislature can help undocumented and non-citizen New Yorkers, including domestic violence survivors, by passing A05513 (Rosenthal) / S1631 (Kavanagh). This legislation would authorize New York City to expand eligibility of CityFHEPS, a city rental assistance program, to all who qualify. During the pandemic, the State Legislature took direct, bold action to assist undocumented immigrants and their families by creating the historic Excluded Workers Fund. Now, it is time to expand housing resources for them.

New York State must pass HAVP and fund it at \$250 million, as well as A05513 (Rosenthal) / S1631 (Kavanagh). These are two vital steps to expand equitable access to housing for domestic violence survivors, regardless of immigration status.

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-convenor of the Family Homelessness Coalition, and a member of the Supportive Housing Network of New York and the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development.



SOURCES

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