



moving victims of violence from crisis to confidence

Safe Horizon

Safe Horizon is the largest victim's assistance organization in the United States servicing over 250,000 children, adults, and families affected by crime and abuse throughout New York City each year.

Safe Horizon's Mission

Safe Horizon's mission is to provide support, prevent violence, and promote justice for victims of crime and abuse, their families, and communities and move victims of violence from crisis to confidence.

Domestic Violence Shelters at Safe Horizon

Safe Horizon operates eight Domestic Violence shelter programs throughout the five boroughs and is in the process of opening a ninth.

Domestic Violence Shelters at Safe Horizon

Of Safe Horizon's current eight domestic violence shelters, there are six **emergency shelters** comprised of apartments, communal living spaces, and safe dwellings. Within these six shelters, there are 457 beds serving 195 families.

There are two **transitional shelters** comprised of single-family apartments. Within these two shelters, there are 253 beds serving 80 families.

Services Offered in Safe Horizon shelters

Within Safe Horizon shelters, we offer the following services to the approximately 300 families we serve:

- comprehensive case management services (delivered by trained staff from a client-centered/trauma-informed perspective)
- connection to resources and providers in the community
- empowerment groups including DV support groups and Economic Empowerment workshops
- transportation assistance including MetroCards for public transportation to appointments and cabs as needed for safe transport to court, appointments, storage, and placement.

Services Offered in Safe Horizon Shelters

- social and healing activities coordinated by our residential teams
- nutrition assistance (including onsite food pantry and supermarket vouchers as well as referrals to free nutrition resources in the community)
- assistance with education (through the Department of Education and a private educational assistance organization we contract with)
- assistance with employment search and access to employment opportunities as needed
- assistance with access to independent housing through our connection with the New York City Human Resources Administration, realtors in the community, and our team of skilled housing specialists

Housing Challenges for Survivors

In our work with survivors of abuse, we observe that they often face challenges around homelessness and access to adequate housing. These challenges are often connected to the abuse.

Women Affected by Domestic Violence and Housing Challenges

When considering the intersectionality of domestic violence, homelessness, and challenges around accessing adequate housing, Black and Hispanic women are representative of a significant portion of those facing challenges.

Women Affected by Domestic Violence and Housing Challenges

In 2019, of the total 837 families housed in Safe Horizon shelters throughout the year, 62% identified as Black and 35% identified as Hispanic.

Housing Challenges for Survivors

Some factors that contribute to the housing challenges faced by the women in our program include:

- a shortage of accessible/affordable housing
- credit issues (sometimes as a result of financial abuse)
- limited income (possibly due to not having employment or leaving employment for reasons related to abuse)

Housing Challenges for Survivors

- Trauma reactions can be a barrier to clients following through with the housing process (for example, a client can have apprehension or nervousness about the process, separation issues related to leaving shelter and transitioning into independence, reflection on past experiences of independent living that may not have been a good experience for them).

Strategies for Clients to Address Housing Challenges

In Safe Horizon shelters, we help clients address these challenges by using the following strategies:

- Prep for housing interviews: We engage clients in role playing activities that include scripts (if needed) and dialogues to prepare for conversations with landlords. During these interactions we help clients prepare around physical presentation, difficult questions with landlords (i.e. credit history, past evictions, etc.), and other factors of the interview process.

Strategies for Clients to Address Housing Challenges

- We help clients prepare for the housing process with helpful tips around topics such as standing out from other prospective tenants, handling rejection, keeping momentum (not just settling on one opportunity), and staying hopeful.
- We conduct support groups that give clients the opportunity to discuss topics with their peers such as triggers, past experiences, progress, barriers, and challenges including those related to housing.

Strategies for Clients to Address Housing Challenges

- We provide “Economic Empowerment” programming that helps clients in a variety of areas including addressing credit issues, financial tips/tools, and provides employment assistance through workshops and individual sessions.
- We provide onsite group housing workshops where staff and clients can pool housing opportunities, resources, and receive feedback about others’ experiences with the process.

Strategies for Staff to Assist with Housing Challenges

At Safe Horizon we also understand the need to provide staff with tools to adequately assist clients with housing challenges. As part of our work with staff around this we provide them with:

- an understanding of the housing market through training around housing systems, processes, and resources
- best practices/tips
- monthly housing meetings
- a handbook that includes helpful information

Strategies for Staff to Assist with Housing Challenges

In support of our staff, we also help them to:

- manage client tasks vs staff contribution
- handle concerns around landlord practices
- incorporate client-centered practice, trauma-informed perspective, and safety assessment/risk management into their housing work with clients

Single Women Survivors and Access to DV Services/Housing

Another group of domestic violence survivors that are typically affected by homelessness and challenges to accessing adequate housing are single women. Safe Horizon operates the domestic violence hotline for the entire City of New York, and places survivors of domestic violence from all over (even other states and countries) in city/state funded domestic violence shelters throughout the 5 boroughs of NYC.

Single Women Survivors and Access to DV Services/Housing

- When referrals are called in to shelters from the hotline (1-800-621-HOPE) and other programs (such as anti-violence and anti-trafficking programs) in an effort to house a single woman seeking safety from domestic violence, there are not very many single spaces available. This is because of the way shelters spaces are designed mostly for families and the way funding is set up to reimburse shelters per night, per bed (in emergency shelters) or per family (in Tier II shelters).

Single Women Survivors and Access to DV Services/Housing

- There is a bill currently being considered in Albany called the “Single Differential Bill”.
 - This bill authorizes the Office of Children and Family Services to provide full reimbursement to domestic violence shelter providers who downsize a space designed for a family of “one parent and one child” to accommodate a single adult. Passing of this bill would increase the spaces available to house women of this group and therefore give them more access to the services they need including assistance with searching for adequate housing.

Increased Access to Housing for Survivors of Domestic Violence

In addition to passing the “Single Differential Bill”, increased funding for domestic violence shelter programs and more independent housing options and programs for individuals seeking housing with government funded vouchers would be of a great benefit to all domestic violence survivors seeking adequate housing.