

'13

Domestic Violence Counts Economic Stability for Survivors

Personal safety and economic security are inextricably linked for victims of domestic violence. For many victims, concerns over their ability to provide financially for themselves and their children are a significant reason for staying in or returning to an abusive relationship.

This report documents the work that programs do to help survivors recover from the devastating impact of financial abuse and the economic consequences of violence.

Access to Safe Housing

One of the first steps for survivors escaping violence is finding a safe place to live, and domestic violence shelters offer safe spaces for victims to determine their next steps. Emergency shelter, transitional housing, and affordable housing are critical in helping survivors permanently escape violence and increase their economic stability.

In just one day:

- 36,348 victims and their children found safety in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program
- 5,778 requests for shelter or transitional housing, however, were unmet due to lack of funding and resources. This is the largest category of unmet need.

In 2013, 187 domestic violence programs reported having to reduce or eliminate emergency shelter (including hotel/motel stays and safe houses) services because of funding cuts. In addition, 71 programs reported being forced to reduce or eliminate their transitional housing services.

Economic Empowerment and Financial Literacy Services

Many survivors need support and resources in order to build financial stability and independence, particularly when abusers have limited their access to assets, concealed financial information, or ruined a survivor's financial profile.

Across the country, domestic violence programs work with survivors to increase their financial literacy, improve their ability to secure employment, and repair their credit and assets.

- 29% of programs provided services related to building financial skills on the Census Day, and 83% of programs provide this service throughout the year.
- 22% of programs provided job training and employment assistance on the Census Day, and 69% of programs provide these services throughout the year.
- Through NNEDV & The Allstate Foundation's Moving Ahead through Financial Empowerment Curriculum alone, over 17,000 survivors received economic empowerment education in just one year.

"One of our program participants received a job offer on Census Day. This employment opportunity will provide her with an income to be able to exit the shelter and obtain and retain her own housing for her family. Financial autonomy reduces the likelihood that survivors will return to their abusers and also improves their feeling of self-worth and self-determination."

– Missouri Advocate

'13

Domestic Violence Counts Economic Stability for Survivors

However, because of funding cuts and reduced resources, 32 programs had to reduce or eliminate their financial literacy services, and 24 programs had to reduce or eliminate their job training or employment assistance services.

Access to the Social Safety Net

Access to public benefits like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) is critical in providing increased economic stability for survivors. Many victims remain in abusive relationships or unsafe situations because they cannot afford to leave. When victims do flee, many do so without any financial resources.

Domestic violence advocates help survivors address their basic financial needs and rights, which in turn helps survivors find safety and build long-term security for themselves and their children.

- 49% of programs provided advocacy and services related to access to public benefits on the Census Day, and 91% of programs provide this service throughout the year
- 22 programs were forced to reduce or eliminate these services in 2013 because of reduced funding and resources

"A woman currently in our shelter has had difficulty finding employment since she has no recent work history because of the abuse. She recently decided to go back to school for job training. She was accepted into college and received financial aid that will enable her and her daughters to access safe housing. She said that she is feeling good about the future for the first time in many years."

– Utah Advocate

"One of our shelter residents started working through the Moving Ahead curriculum. Understanding the components of economic abuse was an eye-opener for her, and she was glad to learn how to open a checking account and keep a checkbook after she gained employment. She had worked in the past, but her abuser always took her money. She is looking forward to earning an income and helping her family secure economic independence."

– Kentucky Advocate

"A woman and her children came to our emergency shelter after fleeing her abusive husband. She had not been employed for several years because of the abuse. Once she was safe in the shelter, she began looking for a job. On the day of the Census, she had her first job interview and was hired right away! The survivor shared that she feels like she finally has the tools she needs to start her life over."

– Georgia Advocate

