Permanent Supportive Housing as Anti-Poverty Policy for Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence: A Case Study

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Angela’s Story

“I was in a domestic violence shelter, hoping I would get the place (low-income housing) one day. But it was taking so long, I was getting frustrated. I was depressed, I was about to give up. It was very terrible, I was moving from borough to borough. It was hard for me to keep a job. And any time I have to move to a new place I have to adapt to the new place. I have to get a baby sitter and change my children’s school every 3 months.”
Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Poverty

• Experiences of IPV and poverty are often intertwined
• Women in families with annual incomes less than $10,000 were 4 times more likely to be victimized than other women (Bachman & Saltzman 1995)
• Abusers use strategies to maintain power and control over a period of time, e.g. physical, emotional, sexual (Stark 2007)
• Economic abuse is used to control a woman’s ability to acquire, use, and maintain economic resources (Adams et al. 2008; Postmus et al. 2012)
• Economic factors are the largest predictor of whether a woman stays, leaves or goes back to an abusive relationship (Anderson & Saunders 2003; Kim & Gray 2008)
IPV and Housing

• Historically, domestic violence agencies considered housing to be a critical, but temporary intervention to facilitate escapes

• Emergency shelters limit stays to 30-90 days, and transitional (or second tier) programs typically have one to two-year limits

• In 25 major U.S. cities surveyed in 2013, an estimated 16 percent of homeless persons were homeless because of domestic violence (U.S. Conference of Mayors 2013)
Advocate’s View of Transitional Programs

“People were still leaving shelter in large numbers without having safe housing and then you know, they tended to cycle through the system again. When people left the system, a lot of them were going to unstable living situations, so they were doubling up, tripling up with relatives, with people that they were acquainted with. A few people went directly into the general homeless system, and a number of people went back to the batterer. So it wasn’t a great outcome-if you spent a lot of money on shelter, you would like to see, you know, at the end of the stay, people were in fact in a better situation and that the kids were protected and that there was at least a chance for improved life outcome.”
What is Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)?

- Links affordable rental housing to case management, job training, and other supportive services
- Assumes that individuals can best address their needs when living in safe and affordable housing as opposed to temporary shelter
- Designed as congregate or scattered-site models, with services available onsite or through linkage agreements
- Supported by studies in terms of resident success and cost savings (Culhane et al. 2002; Martinez & Burt 2006)
Current Study

• Longitudinal, qualitative study
• Case study of The Anderson, Bronx, New York
  – Designed and run by New Destiny Housing
  – Opened in December 2012
  – Consists of 40 units, half of which are set aside for IPV survivors coming from emergency and transitional shelters
  – Operates as a “services light” model with a full-time Tenant Support Coordinator, who provides limited on-site services and referrals to other off-site programs and services
  – Main goals of the model are to (1) maintain housing stability, (2) keep people safe and violence-free, and (3) support individual progress toward self-sufficiency.
• Data collection included document reviews, advocate interviews, and resident interviews and focus groups
Resident Interviews and Focus Groups

- 13 women participated in study, one Spanish-speaker
- Semi-structured interview guide
- Four in-depth interviews conducted over an 18 month period
- Gift cards given at each interview with increasing amounts ($25, $30, $35, $45)
- Two focus groups completed at the end of the project to better understand group dynamics and perspectives on service provision
FINDINGS
Progress towards New Destiny Goals

• Housing stability
  – All residents remained stably housed during the study period

• Safe and violence-free lives
  – Residents felt safe and reported high levels of personal safety
  – Complex mental health needs

• Economic self-sufficiency
  – Residents expressed increased sense of responsibility and ownership of life events
  – All residents scored higher on at least some aspects of the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix
  – Many residents increased human capital through education or employment
  – Progress was sometimes uneven and not universal
Safe and Violence-free Lives: Trauma and IPV

• “I was just so stressed. I was sitting and talking to Elizabeth a few weeks ago and I had… she said I started stuttering, like I was stuck on a work and I just fell out… I had a seizure. I was just like all the stress after all that stuff I went through…”

• “I would say I’m vulnerable… and this is the big thing, but not a danger to myself. Like cause my thoughts are crazy and like I said, it goes back to the injury. That’s the only thing that’ll mess me up.”

• “I’m anxious to get this divorce over with… It’s almost like when I know I have to go back to court and I’m looking at the calendar and I’m like, oh God, I have to go back soon, I have to see his face… I get so angry… But since coming here I have less stress, I am more happy, more confident, self-esteem is back up.”
Economic Self-Sufficiency: Stability

• “I’m so proud of myself, like this year I’ve accomplished to much. For me to be working, like I’ve never been behind in my rent, had my lights cut off, never got like a final notice. My cable has never been cut off, my light has never been cut off, phone, nothing.”

• “They (housing and services) are helping me to concentrate on just, you know, going to school and finishing and getting in something for myself. I’m at a point where everything is actually stable.”

• “I’ve come a long way!”

• “So I hope that our stories could make them see that, you know, the change (housing with services) has helped a lot of us women out. There is life after domestic violence.”
“Just to find out that there are people here, there was staff, you got support, that people will have your back you know, it was just like different you know and it really meant a lot just to know that oh people cared, people are not going to see me get hurt or whatever. They are there checking in on me, they are watching. I mean I can’t even put into words how it’s like a load off of your shoulders you know, like I’m not alone anymore. I don’t have to worry every time I step out of the building and look to the right and the left and this and that because I’ve lived like that you know.”
Views on Services Light Model: On-site Programs

“My best memory here is like last Thanksgiving when everybody brought down a dish from their family or whatever like their own culture so it was like a multi-cultural thing and everybody…we all ate together and you know it was like most of the people from the building participated and you know I mean it was just fun. You know you saw the kids getting together, everybody eating, everybody enjoying, everybody talking, everybody socializing.”

“Money workshops are always helpful because dealing with money and, I think maybe like a, everybody is mostly on welfare so a welfare workshop where you talk about some stuff that goes on with welfare, if you're not on, how to apply, how to make sure your rent is getting paid, how to maximize how you're budgeted.”
Views on Services Light Model: Referrals

“Yeah she did offer (to help find off-site services), yeah but it wasn’t…it was because I brought it up so she’s like “okay let me just help you out real quick,” out of her own kindness. But it is something that should just be done. I’m young, I’m a first-time mom, first-time apartment owner, it’s like I don’t know these things, it’s hard.”

“I wanted to talk to her about it too. So she said she was going to help me. So let’s see where it goes. I hope it turns out good.”

“If she doesn’t know the answer, she always knows people.”
PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES
On-site versus Off-site Services

- **Advantages of services-light model**
  - Avoids “program” feel
  - Fosters empowerment and independence
  - Allows for wider variety of offerings
    - Based on diverse needs
    - Accommodates differing schedules

- **Disadvantages of services-light model**
  - Accessibility and location of off-site services
  - Assessment of appropriateness for target population
  - Evaluation of quality of outside agencies before establishing linkages
  - Dependent upon resident initiative
Balancing Competing Priorities

• Empowerment versus case management
  – Fostering empowerment and independence means offering only voluntary services
  – Providing case management entails regular communication and meetings

• Support versus administration
  – Support and case management require close relationships and the ability to respond to unique circumstances
  – Administration and building management requires enforcing rules and regulations universally and consistently
Next Steps

• Book project: *Home Safe Home, Housing Solutions for Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence*
  – Explanation of survivor needs and current policy limitations
  – Analysis of low-term housing goals
  – Overview of national program trends
  – Review of funding and policies
  – Discussion of future research and policy
  – Includes practitioner perspective

• Further qualitative coding of resident interviews
Thank you!

- New Destiny Housing
- Residents of The Anderson
- Rutgers University Research Council
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Further Reading


