

UNC Research Links Domestic Violence and Housing Needs

CHAPEL HILL, NC – July 2019: Compass Center is excited to announce a major step forward in its efforts toward securing housing for victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) and their families. [UNC School of Social Work recently released the Orange County North Carolina, Domestic Violence, & Housing: A Collaborative Community-Provider and Researcher Needs Assessment.](#) Data derived from this four-year community needs assessment reveals a critical need for housing services for IPV victims and their families. Given that 1 in 4 women in North Carolina experience IPV, this assessment was designed to help ensure that IPV victims receive comprehensive services and support. Such services include financial assistance to further support survivors at risk of becoming homeless.

The assessment, a collaborative effort with UNC and Compass Center for Women and Families, Orange County Rape Crisis Center and UNC Hospital's Beacon Child and Family Program, mainly analyzed housing needs in Orange County for IPV survivors and their families. Homelessness and partner violence often occur hand-in-hand; however, Orange County currently does not have a dedicated domestic violence shelter.

"What we know is that housing needs exacerbate the other needs and problems that IPV victims struggle with such as child care, employment, health, and safety," said UNC School of Social Work researcher Prof. Rebecca Macy, who worked with UNC School of Social Work Assistant Professor Cindy Fraga Rizo to conduct the community needs assessment.

Addressing the safety and housing needs of IPV victims and their families is a complex challenge without any single, straightforward solution. Many variables, including a lack of affordable housing; insufficient employment opportunities; limited public transportation; and a general sense that domestic violence and homelessness are not significant problems in Orange County worsen the situation. Additionally, there's little to no evidence proving that existing homeless shelters are effective in helping survivors transition quickly from a violent relationship into safer homes.

To help devise a solution, the UNC research team interviewed nearly 200 individuals who have been impacted by domestic violence or have worked with survivors, including court judges, prosecutors, faith leaders, teachers, department of social service workers, mental health professionals, business leaders, and IPV survivors themselves.

After analyzing the report's findings, Compass Center designed an implementation strategy, identifying a three-pronged approach to address housing and other needs of IPV victims in Orange County:

- Flexible funding to help survivors with expenses related to independent housing, such as car repairs, a plane ticket to start over with family in another state, or to purchase a new uniform for a job
- Rapid re-housing services to help individuals with rental assistance and access to supportive or affordable housing programs
- Crisis housing, in the form of apartments, to quickly meet the needs of a survivor in search of a safe and fully furnished place to stay until more permanent plans are made

A grant from the North Carolina Governor's Crime Commission enabled Compass Center to begin to put this approach into action and provide much needed rapid re-housing services. On January 15th, 2019, Compass Center launched its 'Housing Micro-Grant Program.' Through this program, survivors of domestic abuse receive funds to support rent, utilities, deposit assistance, and moving expenses for up to 120 days. As of April, Compass Center is currently housing 14 families, including 17 dependents. The other 16 families in the program are in the process of securing housing.

As for the future, Compass Center is engaged in a feasibility study with local consulting firm Moss + Ross to determine the long-term sustainability of potentially expanding the housing program beyond the grant cycle to the three-pronged approach.

To learn more about this [assessment](#) or our Housing Micro-Grant Program, please email dvhousing@compassctr.org.