



Fighting Poverty to Help Survivors of Domestic Violence

Poverty and domestic violence are often linked in a vicious cycle. Abusers almost always use finances to control their partners, and fear of poverty and homelessness keeps many people from leaving abusive relationships. In fact, as many as 90% of homeless mothers have experienced domestic violence at some point in their lives. To address this, HRA and several community-based organizations have taken the unprecedented step of fighting these problems together. This initiative helps survivors of domestic violence break the cycle of poverty and live safe, independent lives with services like financial literacy training, career counseling and credit repair.

Many survivors of domestic violence report that economic considerations like housing and cost of living were the main reasons they stayed in abusive relationships. Abuse is not only physical, sexual or emotional—almost all abusers also commit what is called economic abuse. This can include anything from taking control of household finances and refusing to allow access to money to taking out credit cards and running up debt in the partner’s name. Many survivors of domestic violence leave their relationships in dire financial conditions: unemployed, with bad credit or no credit history, along with massive debt and other financial complications when abusers also steal their identity. As a result, a quarter of those entering New York City shelters do so because of an experience of domestic violence.

To fight both domestic violence and poverty and homelessness, HRA has partnered with nine community-based organizations to provide a wide variety of services to help survivors rebuild their lives. The organizations involved are Barrier Free Living, HELP USA, New York Asian Women’s Center, Sanctuary for Families, the New York City Anti-Violence Project, the Urban Justice Center, Seamen’s Society, Edwin Gould Services, and the Violence Intervention Program. In addition to standard services like safety planning and counseling, all nine of these organizations offer economic empowerment programs. Clients can prepare their taxes, explore career options and educational opportunities, improve their language skills, repair damaged credit, and get assistance vital to starting a new life free of abuse.

These programs are open to all, and survivors of domestic violence are encouraged to participate once they leave shelter, or if they are participating in the Alternative to Shelter program. HRA’s Living IN Communities (LINC) III rental assistance subsidies help both residents of domestic violence shelters and residents of homeless shelters who are DV survivors to afford stable, affordable housing. DV survivors who transition from shelter to LINC III or NYCHA housing are also referred to the Domestic Violence Aftercare Program, which includes financial empowerment services from these providers along with other assistance designed to help them maintain a safe and stable environment. In the past six months, over 500 survivors of domestic violence have received HRA-funded financial empowerment services from the agency’s partners.