

SHARE Project: A Study of the Effectiveness of a Housing Intervention for Battered Women

In September 2005, the Multnomah County Domestic Violence Coordinator's Office began a four-year study to evaluate the effectiveness of an existing "Housing First"¹ model for survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV). These services are provided by the Volunteers of America (VOA) Home Free program and include rent assistance with companion domestic violence advocacy services. The VOA services are partially funded by Multnomah County and the evaluation project is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)². Community partners include Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU), Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing, Department of Human Services, East Branch Self Sufficiency Office, Portland Impact and Raphael House of Portland.

This research is significant in that safe permanent housing combined with advocacy has the potential to increase IPV survivors' access to resources, support and information and can protect them and their children from further violent victimization by an intimate partner. Permanent housing programs will not negate the need for short-term emergency domestic violence shelters rather expands the range of other housing options currently available for survivors and their children.

The purpose of this study is to answer the following questions:

1. How effective is the "housing first" model in improving safety and quality of life outcomes for survivors of IPV and their children?
2. How cost effective is the "housing first" model?

What are the objectives?

This study will examine the difference in outcomes and cost effectiveness of a domestic violence specific Housing First model of Volunteers of America Home Free compared to four other models, including:

- Short-term housing with domestic violence advocacy services at an emergency shelter (Raphael House of Portland);
- Post-crisis advocacy only (Volunteers of America Home Free);
- Non-domestic violence specific housing assistance (Portland Impact);
- Housing assistance and limited or short term support and advocacy (Oregon Department of Human Services Temporary Aid to Survivors of Domestic Violence, TA-DVS).

Who are the study participants?

The study will include 300 women, aged 18-64 who speak either English or Spanish. Participants must:

- report an incident of intimate partner violence within the last six months,
- seek and obtain domestic violence services from one of our partner agencies listed above,
- have housing instability as a primary need, and
- have plans to stay in Multnomah County for the approximately two years.

¹ Housing First models include immediate permanent housing assistance combined with services and case management.

² Cooperative Agreement U49 CE 000520

What is the timing for the study?

The study will begin in summer of 2006 and will be completed in 2010.

What will we learn?

1. How are the women and their children doing over time (was the housing first model effective)?

A sample of women will be interviewed at four time points over 18 months (baseline, 6, 12 and 18 months post baseline). The women will be compensated for their time and childcare and bus tickets are available. The interviews are designed to collect self-report information on:

- demographics (age, race and ethnicity),
- employment, income and housing stability,
- incidents of IPV
- quality of life for survivor and her children, including health, mental health, substance use, parenting and social supports;
- utilization of other services,

2. What is the cost of IPV in Multnomah County and cost effectiveness of a housing first model?

We will estimate the cost of IPV using local and statewide records including criminal justice, health care, welfare, child welfare, income, housing and employment records as well as reports by the partner domestic violence and self-sufficiency programs. The cost effectiveness of the “housing first” model will be assessed by examining differences in IPV-related service use among participants.

3. What works in the housing models?

Twenty women will be invited to respond to additional questions about their experiences in services systems related to housing, domestic violence, child welfare and other needs and which components of these systems were helpful and which were not helpful.

What are the benefits to the community?

The findings from the study will have significant benefits for the local community and nationally. This study will:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of a “housing first” model for IPV survivors and their children.
- Provide information about the impact of housing instability on the reoccurrence of IPV and the safety and well-being of women and children.
- Develop an estimate of the cost of IPV to communities, across a range of government and social services.

The findings will be distributed at the end of the study to local, state and national elected officials, public health, domestic violence and housing service providers and policy makers.

For more information or if you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact Dr. Chiquita Rollins at 503.988.4112 or Amber Clough at 503.988.4995.