

FACT SHEET: HOUSING NEEDS OF SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING STUDY OVERVIEW

In 2023, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) conducted a study to better understand how to support the housing needs of survivors of trafficking (hereinafter “survivors”). The study assessed the availability and accessibility of housing and services for survivors and those at risk of trafficking. The study methods included a literature review and 23 participant-driven listening sessions with federal, state, and local government partners and other stakeholders, including those of backgrounds in research, policy advocacy, and direct service, as well as personal lived experience with human trafficking.¹ The study explored the following topics:

- Methods of Conducting Outreach to Survivors and Assessing their Needs
- Availability of Housing and Services Resources
- Access to Mainstream Housing and Services
- Barriers to Fair Housing
- Best Practices in Housing and Service Delivery

Building Trust with Survivors²

Engaging with survivors, through intentional outreach and needs assessment efforts, is critical to help ensure they have access to services and housing assistance. Survivors know what they need to feel safe and stably housed. Therefore, housing and service providers should build trust to understand survivors’ needs and connect them to the appropriate services. A key part of building trust is incorporating trauma-informed, survivor-centered approaches to engagement and service delivery. Survivors often face challenges in accessing culturally responsive services and are limited to services that are non-trafficking specific, including in the homeless assistance system. By partnering with local organizations that have built trust within their communities and drawing lessons from how these providers engage with the survivor community, housing providers can improve access to critical services.

Principle Finding

“Although many program models and approaches to service provisions exist that are well suited to addressing the housing needs of survivors of trafficking, they are typically not scaled to meet the need. Beyond increased resources and increased training, technical assistance is needed to better coordinate across often siloed housing and service providers and to better integrate trafficking-focused providers into the mainstream housing and homelessness systems.”

Coordinating Efforts to Ensure Survivors Access a Wide Range of Housing and Services³

Federal agencies fund many types of housing assistance that survivors can access. Most forms of housing assistance face a demand far greater than the available resources. The U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services offer housing grants, support victim service providers, offer transitional housing, and other survivor-specific housing programs. Survivors may also qualify for more general housing assistance offered by HUD, like temporary and long-term rent subsidies such as Housing Choice Vouchers or emergency and transitional shelters available in the homeless assistance system. Connecting survivors with these programs requires collaboration among housing and service providers and improved outreach methods to impacted communities.

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Barriers to Accessing and Maintaining Safe Housing⁴

Trafficking-specific and general housing assistance can be critical to survivors' stability. However, they often face barriers to accessing these services and maintaining access to safe, reliable housing. These can include:

⇒ *Barriers to Market-Rate Housing* like practices that prevent survivors from being accepted as tenants such as routine checks of criminal records, credit, or rental histories; anti-nuisance laws that punish reporting crimes on their property; and negative assumptions from landlords about survivors.

⇒ *Barriers to Accessing Housing and Homelessness Assistance* like a scarcity of crisis and shelter resources; prioritization of assistance for other groups; age limits and other restrictive policies; and a lack of trauma-informed services, culturally-specific services, and services for men.

⇒ *Barriers to Fair Housing* like illegal housing discrimination based on being members of a protected class.⁵ Discrimination and exploitative behavior by housing providers present systemic barriers to survivors accessing and maintaining safe housing, even when housing assistance is available.

Improving and Expanding Flexible, Survivor-Centered Housing⁶

Service providers, housing providers, federal agencies, and private funders all have a role in improving housing and service practices to ensure survivors have better access. Collaboration among victim service providers and housing providers will enhance opportunities for survivors to access services.

Takeaways

- Invest in flexible funding sources, and work to increase flexibility in existing programs
- Train housing and service providers on trauma-informed and survivor-centered practices, culturally-specific services, language access, rights of foreign national survivors, and landlord engagement
- Integrate meaningful contributions from people with lived experience in all areas of program design and policy
- Reduce the traumatizing impacts of navigating service access

[Access the full study here](#)

Endnotes

- ¹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Housing Needs of Survivors of Human Trafficking Study," 2024, pp. 7-8
- ² U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Housing Needs of Survivors of Human Trafficking Study," 2024, pp. 21-30
- ³ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Housing Needs of Survivors of Human Trafficking Study," 2024, pp. 31-42
- ⁴ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Housing Needs of Survivors of Human Trafficking Study," 2024, pp. 43-58
- ⁵ The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing because of Race, Color, National Origin, Religion, Sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), Familial Status, or Disability.
- ⁶ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Housing Needs of Survivors of Human Trafficking Study," 2024, pp. 64-71