

Domestic Violence and Housing

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence may be physical, verbal, financial or emotional abuse. Domestic violence does not have to include violence—it is about the power and control of one person by an intimate partner. One in four women will be a victim of domestic violence in her lifetime.

Who can be harmed by domestic violence?

Anyone. Domestic violence affects the victim, children and families, the workplace, and the community. Anyone can be a victim of domestic violence. It is estimated that from 1992 to 2000, only 54% of intimate partner violence was reported to the police.

I am having housing problems because of domestic violence. Is that common?

Many housing problems are caused by domestic violence. It is also hard for victims to find housing because of: safety concerns, bad references, bad rental history, criminal history, poor credit, lack of income, no money saved for security deposits, moving expenses, first month's rent, difficulty in making their own decisions, and poor employment history. Abusers often isolate their victims. Many domestic violence victims are forced to stay with their abuser or to return to their abuser because they have nowhere to go after they leave their partner. A victim of domestic violence will often have little or no way to get money. Victims often have very few friends or family members to rely on if she leaves a violent relationship.

Domestic violence is a major cause of homelessness. Victims of domestic violence often leave and return to their abuser many times. This may lead to many periods of homelessness for the victim and her children. Domestic violence victims often return to their abusers because they cannot find permanent housing. Twenty-five percent of homeless mothers have been physically abused in the past year.

There is a connection between domestic violence, homelessness, and poverty. Poverty limits women's choices and makes it harder for them to escape violent relationships.

I am worried that my landlord/housing provider may treat me differently if they find out about the fact that I am a domestic violence victim.

Sometimes, domestic violence victims have problems finding permanent housing due to discrimination against them. Some landlords will not rent to domestic violence victims. Sometimes in public or subsidized housing, the landlord can evict tenants when violence occurs in their homes, regardless of whether the tenant is the victim or the abuser. Public housing authorities sometimes wrongly use "one strike" policies against domestic violence victims. Under federal law, housing authorities are allowed to evict families for criminal activity committed by a tenant's family member or guest.

Landlords often evict domestic violence victims because of police involvement. Also, the noise from the verbal and physical abuse disturbs the neighbors' ability to use and enjoy their homes. Another reason is damage to property. Victims may not seek help from the police and the courts because they know they may face an eviction if the landlord finds out about the abuse. Victims also may be told to not get protection orders because this may put their housing at risk. The result of all of these factors is that the domestic violence continues.

Who can I contact for help if I am a victim of domestic violence?

- New York State Domestic Violence Hotlines
 - o English 1-800-942-6906
 - o English TTY 1-800-818-0656
 - o Espanol 1-800-942-6908
 - o Espanol TTY 1-800-980-7660