

Volume 28, Issue 30
August 14, 2023

Disaster Recovery Housing

- Hawaii's Worst-Ever Wildfire Destroys Town of Lahaina, Becomes Deadliest US Wildfire Since 2018
- DHRC Sends Letter to Congress Requesting HUD and FEMA Disaster Funding and Inclusion of "Reforming Disaster Recovery Act" in Supplemental Appropriations Bill

Budget and Appropriations

- Far-Right Republicans Continue Planning to Make Major Cuts to FY24 Appropriations – Take Action during August Recess!
- Senators Urge Biden Administration to Include Affordable Housing and Homeless Assistance Funding in Supplemental Spending Request

Homelessness and Housing First

- HUD and VA Launch HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Boot Camps
- Register for Today's (8/14) NLIHC, Alliance, and CBPP Webinar on Homelessness and Housing First

HUD

- HUD Issues New Notice to Supplement Main RAD Notice

Housing Trust Fund

- GAO Releases Report on National Housing Trust Fund

Our Homes, Our Votes

- Celebrate Civic Health Month!

Events

- Join Next Monday's (8/21) "Tenant Talk Live" on Forming a Tenant-Based Group!

From the Field

- Tribal Housing Advocates Celebrate Senate's Passage of "Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act"
- NLIHC to Release Summer Issue of *Tenant Talk* on Thursday (August 17)!

Opportunity Starts at Home

- ACLU Article Connects Systemic Inequality to Lack of Fair Housing

Research

- Housing First Approach Helps Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence Remain Stably Housed

Fact of the Week

- Intimate Partner Violence Survivors May Achieve Housing Stability Faster with Housing First Approach

NLIHC in the News

- NLIHC in the News for the Week of August 6

NLIHC News

- Where to Find Us – August 14

Disaster Recovery Housing

Hawaii's Worst-Ever Wildfire Destroys Town of Lahaina, Becomes Deadliest US Wildfire Since 2018

A brushfire on the Hawaiian island of Maui grew into a devastating wildfire that [tore through portions of the island](#) in what appears to be the worst disaster in the state's history. The fire destroyed as much as 75% of the town of Lahaina, causing nearly 100 deaths and ruining more than 1,700 structures. As of late last week, three fires were still burning at various levels of containment on the island. Search and rescue teams have begun looking for survivors but predicted that the death toll will likely grow.

With a population of more than 13,000, Lahaina is one of the larger cities on the island of Maui – a popular tourist destination – and is home to many indigenous Hawaiian residents, having served as the capital of the Kingdom of Hawaii from 1820 to 1845. Originally a wetland, the area around Lahaina was drained by missionaries and subsequent business interests from the continental U.S., resulting in the displacement of Indigenous villages and permanent changes to the landscape and ecosystem. While Hawaii experiences wildfires regularly, months of drought this year resulted in dead vegetation that fueled the flames, which were then fanned by winds as powerful as 67 mph. These factors combined to create a large, rapidly moving fire that brought about widespread destruction.

Residents described a frantic evacuation, with some people jumping to the relative safety of the Lahaina harbor as the fire rapidly consumed the city's downtown business district. With communications and internet access cut off in affected areas, the number of those missing on Maui is still unknown, though some residents have taken to social media to try to contact missing relatives.

In response to the emergency, Hawaii Governor Josh Green activated the state's National Guard to assist disaster survivors and perform search and rescue operations. President Biden [quickly approved](#) the Governor's request for a major disaster declaration, freeing up federal resources to assist response and eventual recovery efforts by FEMA. Meanwhile, the U.S. Coast Guard began emergency assistance operations in the area earlier this week. Recovery is expected to cost billions of dollars.

NLIHC's [Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition](#) (DHRC) – a group of over 900 local, state, and national organizations working to ensure that all disaster survivors receive the assistance they need to recover – has reached out to members on the island as well as the state's congressional delegation. NLIHC and the DHRC will continue to track the impact of this wildfire on households with low incomes and work to ensure the availability and accessibility of disaster assistance.

DHRC Sends Letter to Congress Requesting HUD and FEMA Disaster Funding and Inclusion of “Reforming Disaster Recovery Act” in Supplemental Appropriations Bill

The NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC) sent a [letter](#) on August 8 to congressional leadership to request the quick passage of an emergency disaster supplemental appropriations bill to fund ongoing disaster operations and disaster recovery for current and future 2023 disasters, as well as to permanently authorize HUD’s long-term disaster recovery program by including the “[Reforming Disaster Recovery Act](#)” in the bill.

FEMA’s Disaster Relief Fund (DRF), which funds FEMA’s operations, is expected to be depleted by the end of August. At that point, FEMA will begin diverting money from longer-term disaster mitigation and resiliency projects to fund immediate disaster responses. Doing so will allow the agency to respond to disasters but will also result in further delays for communities that have been waiting years for funding for long-term mitigation projects, putting them at greater risk of disaster impacts. The letter submitted by the DHRC – a group comprising more than 900 national, state, and local organizations, including many working directly with disaster-impacted communities and with first-hand experience recovering after disasters – requests that Congress move quickly to fund the DRF to prevent delays in these projects.

HUD’s Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program provides flexible grants to help states and localities recover from disasters and rebuild affordable housing and other infrastructure. The CDBG-DR program is the only source of long-term recovery funds after major disasters, but because the program has not been permanently authorized, these important funds are often slow to reach disaster survivors. By approving CDBG-DR funding for 2023 disasters via an emergency disaster supplemental appropriations bill as requested by the letter, Congress can ensure these funds are ready and available for ongoing disaster recovery efforts following disasters occurring later in the calendar year. With supplemental funding, disaster-impacted communities and households will not be forced to wait for congressional action before commencing long-term recovery efforts.

Meanwhile, lack of permanent CDBG-DR authorization not only slows the distribution of CDBG-DR funds but also allows for vital disaster recovery resources to be diverted away from those communities and households with the greatest needs following disasters. The bipartisan “Reforming Disaster Recovery Act of 2023” (RDRA) would formally authorize the CDBG-DR program and provide important safeguards to help ensure funds are made quickly available after disasters. The DHRC letter requests the inclusion of the RDRA in any supplemental disaster response appropriations bill, which would ensure all impacted survivors and their communities can fully recover; that communities receive assistance based on their needs; and that the program prioritizes transparency and oversight over how and where funds are being used.

The RDRA has garnered bipartisan support from numerous lawmakers in the Senate, including the bill’s cosponsors: Senators Brian Schatz (D-HI), Susan Collins (R-ME), Patty Murray (D-WA), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Roger Wicker (R-MS), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Jon Tester (D-MT), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), Todd Young (R-IN), Cory Booker (D-NJ), and Alex Padilla (D-CA). The bill was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in both 2019 and 2022.

Read the letter [here](#).

Budget and Appropriations

Far-Right Republicans Continue Planning to Make Major Cuts to FY24 Appropriations – Take Action during August Recess!

Even while members of Congress are adjourned for August recess, members of the far-right House Freedom Caucus (HFC) are reportedly strategizing on how to exact even steeper funding cuts from the fiscal year (FY) 2024 budget. The group, led by Representative Scott Perry (R-PA), was responsible for pressuring Republican leaders in the House to propose FY24 spending bills that fix spending at roughly FY22 levels, which would result in cuts of more than \$131 billion to domestic spending.

Attempted negotiations with the far-right faction have been a primary cause of the chaos marring the FY24 appropriations process in the House. While the Senate Appropriations Committee, under the leadership of Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) and Vice-Chair Susan Collins (R-ME), has written bills to the levels agreed upon in the “Fiscal Responsibility Act” and passed them through the Committee with bipartisan support, in the House the demands of HFC members – and Republican leadership’s willingness to entertain them– have derailed negotiations and stalled progress.

In their push for steeper cuts, Freedom Caucus members will need to identify which bills and programs to target, and convince other, more moderate Republicans in the House to support their proposal. Thanks to the determined, relentless work of housing advocates around the country, at a time when domestic programs were facing prospective cuts of up to 30%, the House’s draft FY24 appropriations bill provided a 10% increase to HUD funding. While still insufficient to cover the level of need, this increase is a testament to the power of our collective voice.

Together, we can – and have – [achieved historic protections and resources](#) for renters with the lowest incomes, and together we can continue to fight the ongoing threat of cuts to HUD’s vital affordable housing and homelessness resources. Advocates can use NLIHC’s [Legislative Action Center](#) to call or email their members of Congress and urge them to expand – not cut – funding for HUD’s vital affordable housing and homelessness programs in the FY24 budget.

NLIHC also released an updated [Congressional Recess Toolkit](#) that provides advocates with ideas, advice, and tips on how to set up in-district meetings with their members of Congress, along with talking points, sample op-eds, sample social media messages, and more. Advocacy over August recess will be crucial in setting the stage for resumed negotiations on the federal budget when Congress returns in September, and warding off ongoing threats to HUD’s vital programs.

Background

Members adjourned for recess on July 27 after months of contentious budget negotiations, culminating in vastly different spending proposals in the [House](#) and [Senate](#). The discrepancies between the House and Senate appropriations bills set the stage for what will likely be a tumultuous September on Capitol Hill. Congress only has until September 30 – the start of the new federal fiscal year – to enact all 12 appropriations bills or pass a continuing resolution (CR)

in order to keep the federal government funded and avoid a shutdown. Given how far apart the House and Senate are on their FY24 spending bills, and far-right members of the House already refusing to vote for a clean CR that does not cut federal spending, members are raising alarms about a likely government shutdown on October 1.

While advocates across the country have done tremendous work to ensure that neither the House nor Senate FY24 spending bills drastically cut funding for vital HUD programs, including rental assistance and Homeless Assistance Grants, the road to enacting a final FY24 spending bill with sufficient HUD funding is steep. With members of Congress back in their home states and districts, August recess is the perfect time for advocates to set up in-district meetings with their members to stress the impact and importance of increased HUD funding in any final appropriations bill.

Take Action

Thanks to the hard work of advocates across the country, who mobilized to weigh-in with their elected officials, HUD's vital rental assistance, homelessness assistance, and tribal housing program were spared from cuts in both the House and Senate bills. We still have work to do to ensure these funding levels remain in a final bill, and that other critical programs, such as Public Housing, are also fully funded.

Keep making your voice heard, and tell Congress that it cannot balance the federal budget at the expense of people with the lowest incomes! Advocates can take action TODAY in the following ways:

- [Contact your senators and representatives](#) to urge them to expand – not cut – investments in affordable, accessible homes through the FY24 spending bill!
- August recess is the perfect time for advocates to schedule in-district meetings with their members of Congress to urge them to support higher funding for affordable housing and homelessness programs. Check out NLIHC's updated [Congressional Recess Toolkit](#) for information on how to set up in-district meetings, meeting tips, talking points, and more!
- Join over 2,000 organizations by signing on to a [national letter](#) from the Campaign for Housing and Community Development Funding ([CHCDF](#)), calling on Congress to oppose budget cuts and instead to support the highest level of funding possible for affordable housing, homelessness, and community development resources in FY24.

Want to Support NLIHC's Work? Become a Member!

One way to support NLIHC and this work is by becoming an NLIHC member. NLIHC membership is open to individuals, organizations, corporations, and government agencies, and annual membership dues are suggested amounts, meaning you can join at any amount that works for you.

You can join easily online at nlihc.org/membership – or contact outreach@nlihc.org with any questions.

Senators Urge Biden Administration to Include Affordable Housing and Homeless Assistance Funding in Supplemental Spending Request

A group of 14 Democratic senators led by Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) sent a [letter](#) on August 9 to President Biden urging his administration to include critically needed homeless assistance funding as part of its supplemental appropriations request. The letter, which was endorsed by NLIHC, expresses appreciation for the administration's strong leadership and commitment to providing homeless assistance funding and for its championing of investments like those provided through the "American Rescue Plan Act" that helped keep millions of families in their homes during the pandemic. The letter addresses the urgent need for robust funding for affordable housing and homeless assistance programs, particularly as pandemic-era homeless prevention programs end and state and local homeless assistance resources are depleted.

Specifically, the letter urges the White House to include in any supplemental spending request:

- \$5 billion in new Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV), which could provide housing for approximately 70,000 more households experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness.
- \$580 million for the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program – the only federal program that provides comprehensive homeless assistance funding for outreach, frontline staff, rapid rehousing, rental assistance, and emergency shelter.
- \$1 billion for the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF), which could help develop and rehabilitate about 9,000 units of deeply affordable housing for individuals currently experiencing homelessness or who are most at-risk of experiencing homelessness.

"Collectively, these funds would help house tens of thousands of households and enable states and localities to expand homeless outreach and shelter services," the senators state in the letter. "They would directly support individuals and families experiencing homelessness, ease the current burden on local communities, and help jumpstart housing construction for the lowest-income households."

Additional signatories to the letter include Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Tina Smith (D-MN), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Peter Welch (D-VT), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Raphael Warnock (D-GA), Mark Kelly (D-AZ), and Edward Markey (D-MA).

Read the letter at: <https://tinyurl.com/3awpk4t6>

Homelessness and Housing First

HUD and VA Launch HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Boot Camps

HUD and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) [launched](#) the new HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) "Boot Camps" workshop series on August 8. The

HUD-VASH Boot Camps are meant to help public housing agencies (PHAs) and VA Medical Centers (VAMCs) improve program efficiency and more quickly move veterans experiencing homelessness to permanent housing with supportive services. The HUD-VASH program pairs Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance with case management and supportive services provided by the VA. In April 2023, HUD [announced](#) the availability of approximately \$94.4 million in HUD-VASH funds, an amount expected to support as many as 11,000 new HUD-VASH vouchers.

The HUD-VASH Boot Camps are two-day, in-person workshops facilitated by HUD and VA Technical Assistance (TA) providers and led by HUD, VA, and U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) representatives. Boot Camps will be held in each of HUD's 10 regions across the country in the coming months. During the workshops, PHAs and VAMCs will identify strategies to more effectively refer veterans experiencing homelessness to HUD-VASH, issue vouchers, and lease up veterans into rental housing. The workshops will address key issues like implementing Housing First effectively, landlord engagement, understanding trauma, and effectively delivering supportive services.

The HUD-VASH Boot Camps were among those new actions intended to prevent and reduce veteran homelessness [announced](#) by the Biden administration in June (see *Memo*, [7/10](#)). The actions build upon historic investments by the Biden administration that have led to significant reductions in veteran homelessness. The number of veterans experiencing homelessness has [decreased by 11%](#) since early 2020 and by more than 55% since 2010 (see *Memo*, [11/7](#)). VA's efforts to combat veteran homelessness are grounded in the evidence-based [Housing First approach](#), which prioritizes helping veterans access housing and then providing them with voluntary wraparound services they need to stay housed – including health care, job training, legal and education assistance, and more. The new actions will advance the Biden administration's goal to permanently house at least [38,000 veterans](#) in 2023.

Read HUD's press release at: <https://tinyurl.com/3jb4dvm4>

Register for Today's (8/14) NLIHC, Alliance, and CBPP Webinar on Homelessness and Housing First

NLIHC, the National Alliance to End Homelessness (the Alliance), and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) invite advocates nationwide to [register](#) for the eighth webinar in our series on homelessness and Housing First. Join us for the webinar, "Keeping Faith with Housing First in Turbulent Times: Findings from Recent Research," today (August 14) at 2:30 pm ET. The webinar will examine how we can build support for humane, evidence-based practices and policies despite the unrelenting nature of the affordable housing crisis and growing calls for ineffective and punitive measures for addressing homelessness, including criminalization and the high-barrier "treatment first" approach. Panelists will address the affordable housing crisis, efforts undertaken by HUD and local homelessness systems to house people experiencing homelessness, and developments in the field.

Today's webinar will feature Nicole DuBois, senior research analyst and coordinator at the Alliance; NLIHC senior research analyst Dan Emmanuel; David Gonzalez Rice, policy advisor in HUD's Office of the Secretary; Dr. Tiana Moore, policy director of the Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative; Tasha Gray, executive director of the Homeless Action Network of Detroit, Collaborative Applicant, MI 501 – Detroit CoC; and John Threlkeld, senior congressional affairs manager at the Alliance.

Please note that this webinar is not a training, and webinar attendees will not receive a certificate of completion.

Did you miss the previous webinars on homelessness and Housing First? Check out the [webinar recaps](#), including links to the recordings and presentation slides.

Register for the series at: <https://bit.ly/3vIbn5o>

Read more about Housing First at: <https://bit.ly/3vHf8YR>

HUD

HUD Issues New Notice to Supplement Main RAD Notice

HUD's Office of Recapitalization (Recap) issued [Notice H-2023-08/PIH-2023-19](#), "Rental Assistance Demonstration – Supplemental Notice 4B," dated July 27. Supplement 4B contains improved resident engagement provisions, new climate resiliency requirements, changes to RAD/Section 18 Blends provisions, Faircloth-to-RAD features, and other changes. Supplement 4B amends the basic RAD implementation [Notice H-2019-09/PIH-2019-23](#), "Rental Assistance Demonstration – Final Implementation, Revision 4." NLIHC has updated its RAD "[Key Features for Public Housing Residents](#)" outline to incorporate many of the changes introduced by Supplement 4B. This article focuses on the resident engagement provisions. Additional provisions are highlighted in NLIHC's "[Summary of Key Features of RAD Supplement 4B](#)."

Congress created the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) in fiscal year (FY) 2012 as a demonstration to test whether public housing agencies (PHAs) could leverage Section 8 rental assistance contracts to raise private debt and equity in order to make public housing capital improvements and thereby preserve low-income housing. RAD Component One, which applies to public housing, initially allowed up to 60,000 public housing units to be converted from public housing capital and operating assistance to Section 8 Project-Based Vouchers (PBVs) or to Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA). Congress has increased the unit cap three times despite the absence of an evaluation of the impact of this "demonstration" on residents. The cap was raised in FY18 to 455,000 units. RAD is administered by HUD's Office of Recapitalization (Recap).

Resident Engagement (starting on page six of the Notice)

Supplement 4B intends to improve information provided to residents and to increase resident engagement throughout the RAD conversion process. It also increases the minimum number of

required resident meetings from four to five and provides clearer guidance regarding the potential need for additional resident meetings as the conversion process proceeds and development plans change.

Instead of a PHA simply notifying a “legitimate resident organization” of its intent to apply to HUD to convert a public housing property under RAD, Supplement 4B explicitly states the notification is to go to a “duly elected resident organization” as formally specified in 24 CFR Part 964 of the public housing regulations. NLIHC is concerned that this language has the potential to narrow a PHA’s resident notification obligation – some resident organizations may be “legitimate” yet not meet the strict Part 964 definition of “duly elected.” In addition, not all public housing developments have a resident organization of any sort; Supplement 4B does not address this potential problem. Supplement 4B encourages PHAs to partner with “resident leaders” to inform all residents of a public housing property planned for conversion.

The existing RAD Notice requires a PHA to provide residents with a RAD Information Notice (RIN) before applying to Recap for RAD approval. Supplement 4B adds text already required by the RAD Relocation Notice ([Notice H-2016-17/PIH-2016-17](#)), reducing the need for residents and advocates to juggle the two documents. The additional text requires the RIN to include a description of the conversion plans that will be discussed at upcoming resident meetings and a means for contacting HUD. RINs must be delivered to each unit or by U.S. mail to each head of household. RINs must also be posted in a conspicuous place at the converting project and must be available at the management office during normal business hours for residents and the general public to read and copy.

After a RIN is provided to residents, the existing RAD Notice requires a PHA to conduct at least two meetings with residents of a project slated for RAD conversion. Supplement 4B specifies the timing of these meetings: they must occur no less than one week after a RIN is issued and within the six months before a PHA submits a RAD application to Recap. Supplement 4B adds eight specific information items that must be presented to residents at the two meetings.

Supplement 4B adds a list of nine items that a PHA must submit to Recap along with its RAD application, such as a summary of residents’ questions and comments made at the meetings and submitted in writing, along with the PHA’s responses; a summary of who attended meetings, as shown on sign-in sheets or lists of registrants or participants on calls or online meetings; and a description of the PHA’s efforts to promote resident participation at meetings.

The existing RAD Notice requires a PHA to request a “Concept Call” with Recap before submitting a Financing Plan to show Recap that the RAD conversion plan has advanced to a point where Recap can review it. Supplement 4B requires a PHA to have two additional meetings with residents before it has a Concept Call with Recap. While the existing RAD Notice only required one such meeting, it also required one meeting before a PHA submitted its RAD Financing Plan; therefore, there is no net increase in the number of required resident meetings at this stage.

Supplement 4B adds text stating that these two meetings should be scheduled so as to provide meaningful updates to residents regarding the RAD application progress, and that residents should be able to provide input and raise questions or concerns at these meetings. Supplement 4B

encourages PHAs to hold these meetings every three months and to provide written progress descriptions to residents before each meeting. A summary of residents' questions and comments from these meetings, and the PHA's responses to residents, must be submitted in the RAD Financing Plan. Additional resident meetings might be required by Recap after the Concept Call if HUD determines more meetings are needed to provide residents with up-to-date information.

After Recap has issued a RAD Conversion Commitment (RCC) and before project "closing," Supplement 4B requires a PHA to hold an additional resident meeting. This is the fifth required resident meeting – a net addition of one meeting. Supplement 4B also adds a requirement for the PHA to provide residents access to or copies of the new lease form and any house rules.

Supplement 4B explicitly states that there are "required meetings" at which a PHA must discuss any "substantial change" to RAD conversion plans compared to key elements of the conversion plan from previous meetings. The required meetings are (1) the two meetings after a RIN is issued, (2) the two meetings after a PHA receives a "CHAP" (preliminary Recap approval of a RAD application) and before the Concept Call, and (3) the one meeting after Recap issues an RCC.

Supplement 4B adds a number of practices that a PHA must carry out to improve resident participation at meetings, such as providing adequate notice of meetings ("adequate" is not defined – Consolidated Plan regulations call for at least two weeks advance notice); conducting meetings in places that foster participation; considering timing of meetings (e.g., times of day and days of the week, including weekends) to encourage participation by residents who have a variety of schedules; and offering meetings in person, electronically (e.g., Zoom), and/or a hybrid of both. Supplement 4B explicitly states that PHAs may not restrict attendance at the meetings; some residents have reported that their PHAs denied access to non-residents capable of providing RAD technical assistance to residents.

Supplement 4B also includes some resident engagement changes for Faircloth-to-RAD projects. The "Faircloth limit" prohibits using public housing Capital or Operating funds to build or operate new public housing units if doing so would result in an increase in the number of public housing units a PHA owned, assisted, or operated as of October 1, 1999. In April 2021, HUD announced a new "Faircloth-to-RAD" option for PHAs to create deeply affordable homes (see NLIHC's "[Summary of Key Features of RAD Supplement 4B](#)") for more about Supplement 4B's changes to Faircloth-to-RAD).

Read Notice H-2023-08/PIH-2023-19, "Rental Assistance Demonstration – Supplemental Notice 4B," at: <https://tinyurl.com/47mtfhv6>

Read [Notice H-2019-09/PIH-2019-23](#), "Rental Assistance Demonstration – Final Implementation, Revision 4," at: <https://tinyurl.com/444jhr5x>

NLIHC's updated RAD "[Key Features for Public Housing Residents](#)" is on NLIHC's [public housing webpage](#).

NLIHC's "[Summary of Key Features of RAD Supplement 4B](#)" contains highlights covering changes to Notice REV4 provisions pertaining to Faircloth-to-RAD, RAD/Section 18 Blends,

climate resilience, Housing Quality Standards (HQS), RAD for PRACs, and Zero-HAP households.

Basic information about RAD that does not yet include changes made by Supplement 4B is on [page 4-46](#) of NLIHC's *2023 Advocates' Guide*.

Visit HUD's RAD website at: <https://www.hud.gov/RAD>

Explore HUD's resident-related RAD material at: <https://www.hud.gov/RAD/residents>

Housing Trust Fund

GAO Releases Report on National Housing Trust Fund

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) released [Affordable Housing: Improvements Needed in HUD's Oversight of the Housing Trust Fund Program](#) (GAO-23-105370) on August 8. The GAO report provides information about 70 projects completed with support from the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) in 12 states, providing details about activity types (e.g., new construction or rehabilitation), number of bedrooms, racial/ethnic composition of occupants, targeted populations, per-unit costs, and additional funding sources used to develop the projects. The report also discusses weaknesses in the oversight and monitoring of HUD that have little practical relevance to the uses or benefits of HTF resources.

The GAO report was issued in response to a [request](#) sent on April 14, 2021, by Representatives Patrick McHenry (R-NC) and Steve Stivers (R-OH). At the time of the request, Mr. McHenry was the Ranking Member of the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Financial Services, and Mr. Stivers was the Ranking Member of the House Subcommittee on Housing, Community Development, and Insurance. Currently, Mr. McHenry is the Chair of the House Committee on Financial Services, and Mr. Stivers is no longer a member of Congress. NLIHC sent GAO [a reply](#) on November 15, 2021, addressing most of the questions posed by Representatives McHenry and Stivers.

The HTF allocates funding by statutory formula each year to states to build, preserve, rehabilitate, and operate rental housing for extremely low-income households (ELI) – those with income less than 30% of the area median income (AMI) or less than the federal poverty line, whichever is greater. The authorizing statute requires 90% of HTF dollars to be used for rental housing, and currently 100% of HTF-assisted units must be occupied by ELI renter households. HUD's Office of Affordable Housing Programs (OAHP) within its Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD) oversees the HTF program.

GAO selected 12 state HTF grantees and reviewed 70 of their completed HTF projects, accounting for 42% of the HTF funds granted nationally in 2021. GAO reviewed HUD data on 2,186 completed HTF-assisted units as of March 1, 2022, making it possible for the report to describe those projects.

GAO found that 57% of the completed units were newly constructed, and 42% were rehabilitated, with 1% simple acquisitions. GAO also looked at 4,275 units in development, finding that 64% would be newly constructed and 35% would be rehabilitated. NLIHC obtained project-specific information from each state and the District of Columbia reflecting projects awarded funds from their [2018](#), [2017](#), and [2016](#), ([2016 Supplement](#)) HTF allocations. This information indicated planned (not completed) projects. NLIHC's review of projects planned for rehabilitation found that all but a few projects should more accurately be portrayed as substantial rehabilitation essential to preserve existing federally assisted housing from leaving the affordable housing stock, along with some adaptive reuse projects. CPD uses an online management information system, IDIS, which only allows a state to indicate whether a project is "rehabilitation," "acquisition and rehabilitation," "acquisition only," or "new construction."

GAO also reports that of the 2,186 completed HTF-assisted units:

- 41% had one bedroom, 16% were efficiency units, 26% had two bedrooms, 14% had three bedrooms, and 3% had four or more bedrooms.
- 61% were rented by White households, 28% were rented by Black households, and 11% were rented by Latino households.
- Most occupied units received some form of rental assistance, with only 26% not receiving any rental assistance.

GAO found that many states aligned their HTF application process with those of their other multifamily housing programs, such as their Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), HOME Investment Partnerships program, or state program application, eligibility, and ranking processes. (NLIHC has made note of this practice as well.) GAO found that non-HTF funds generally represented a larger proportion of projects' total funding than HTF funds; NLIHC has also noted that for most projects, HTF is an important source of gap financing. GAO indicated that LIHTC equity supported 47 of the 70 properties in its sample, representing about 40% of total funding. Various private sources of funding constituted about 27% of total funding, while state and local funds provided 19% of total funding. A mere 5% of the funds derived from the HOME program, the Federal Home Loan Bank System's Affordable Housing Program (AHP), and state or local contributions of their federal Community Development Block Grant program.

Nine of the 12 states reviewed by GAO awarded HTF funds to projects that targeted special needs populations, such as people experiencing homelessness, formerly incarcerated people, people with disabilities, older adults, and veterans. NLIHC's reports for 2016, 2017, and 2018 reflecting all states and the District of Columbia show similar results. GAO reported that nine of its 12 states that targeted special needs populations also prioritized the development of permanent supportive housing. NLIHC has also identified significant numbers of HTF-assisted projects devoted to permanent supportive housing, likely explaining GAO's reporting that 57% of the completed units in its survey had one bedroom or were efficiency units.

GAO reports that North Dakota and California set aside some of their HTF funding for projects developed by members of Indian Tribes or that are located on reservations or in other tribal areas. NLIHC's reports indicated that North Dakota and South Dakota had set-asides. For those three early years, California did not have a Native American set-aside. GAO also indicates California and Utah set aside 20% of their HTF funds for rural areas, while Tennessee and Utah

award extra points for rural applications. When NLIHC reviewed the HTF allocation plans or related program materials for these states in 2016, 2017, and 2018, they did not have rural set-asides or significant extra points for rural areas.

GAO found that the average overall per-unit (non-HTF-assisted and HTF-assisted unit) development cost of the 70 projects was \$232,000. In addition, nine of 11 HTF-assisted projects that were similar to LIHTC projects in a prior GAO report had per-unit development costs within the range of the LIHTC comparison projects. The average per-unit development cost for new construction projects was \$74,000 higher than for rehabilitation projects. The average per-unit development cost for projects developed by nonprofit entities was \$40,000 higher than for projects developed by for-profit entities. To explain the difference, GAO refers to studies observing that nonprofits focus more on populations that are more costly to serve, such as special needs tenants who may require additional or enhanced facilities. In addition, nonprofits tend to focus on smaller projects that in general have higher per-unit costs due to the inability to benefit from economies of scale.

GAO also addressed several CPD-related technical issues that have little practical bearing on how HTF is used or whom it benefits. One issue, however, is of particular interest. The McHenry/Stivers letter to GAO criticized the HTF program, claiming it cost \$1 million per completed unit of housing. As NLIHC explained to GAO, the “Leveraging” section of CPD’s National Housing Production Reports used misleading terminology. It has a term “Total Dollars for Completed HTF Units” and a corresponding numerical figure; that numerical figure confusingly reflects both the amount of HTF dollars plus other (non-HTF) dollars in projects. A different table on page 3 provides the total number of completed HTF units for a given month. Simply dividing the reported number of completed HTF-units into the misleading “Total Dollars for Completed HTF Units” results in greatly inflating the perceived HTF cost per-unit because most HTF-assisted projects contain relatively few HTF-assisted units. The actual average HTF cost per unit for completed projects for the month cited by the McHenry/Stivers letter was \$113,552, with average HTF costs per unit in subsequent months declining to an average of \$97,226.

CPD explained to GAO that the template used for the National Production Reports is used for multiple programs and not easily customizable. Therefore, CPD will add explanatory language to the National Production Report webpage. NLIHC notes that this fix depends on the public reading that webpage closely and perhaps simply reviewing each month’s report – overlooking the explanation.

The other technical CPD monitoring weaknesses identified by GAO are as follows:

- Because CPD does not review grantees’ final drawdown and completion dates, it has been unaware of grantee noncompliance with and confusion about the requirement to enter project completion information into IDIS within 120 days of the final drawdown of funds.
- CPD’s data on the total number of units (non-HTF units plus HTF units) in completed HTF-assisted projects are inaccurate. CPD could take additional steps to identify likely errors in IDIS total units data and to instruct grantees on requirements for reporting these data.
- CPD has not effectively communicated requirements for grantees to obtain cost certifications for completed HTF projects.

- CPD has not scheduled or conducted a comprehensive assessment of fraud risks using GAO’s Fraud Risk Framework or HUD’s own fraud risk management policy.

Read *Affordable Housing: Improvements Needed in HUD’s Oversight of the Housing Trust Fund Program* (GAO-23-105370) at: <https://tinyurl.com/ycx3adpm>

Read NLIHC’s HTF reports:

- *The National Housing Trust Fund: A Summary of 2018 Projects* at: <https://tinyurl.com/4nnvcv5fs>
- *The National Housing Trust Fund: A Summary of 2017 Projects* at: <https://tinyurl.com/2bd2ansp>
- *Getting Started: First Homes Being Built with National Housing Trust Fund Awards* at: <https://tinyurl.com/5x3ksfxz> and Supplement, <https://tinyurl.com/282vxthy>

More information about HTF is on NLIHC’s HTF landing page and state-specific page, as well as on [page 3-1](#) of NLIHC’s *2023 Advocates’ Guide*.

Read the McHenry/Stivers letter requesting a GAO analysis at: <https://tinyurl.com/5wnnuadr>

Read NLIHC’s response to GAO at: <https://tinyurl.com/ymk5j7um>

Our Homes, Our Votes

Celebrate Civic Health Month!

Our Homes, Our Votes is NLIHC’s nonpartisan campaign to boost voter turnout among low-income renters and educate candidates about housing solutions. NLIHC is proud to join over 300 organizations nationwide in recognizing [Civic Health Month](#) this August, which celebrates efforts to ensure that every eligible voter has access to the ballot.

Just like housing security (see [Memo, 2/27](#)), voting is a key social determinant of health, according to the American Medical Association. Civic Health Month, led by the nonpartisan civic engagement organization Vot-ER, highlights the links between voting and health and promotes nonpartisan voter engagement.

To learn more about the intersections of health and voting, sign up to attend Vot-ER’s [Civic Health Month conference](#), which will be held virtually on August 25 from noon to 4:15 pm ET. The conference will include hands-on training sessions and discussions about building a healthier democracy, as well as a panel discussion featuring practitioners at the forefront of health equity and a keynote address by Dr. Bayo Curry-Winchell. Participants will prepare to mobilize for the November 2023 elections and think ahead to the 2024 electoral cycle.

For more information about Civic Health Month, visit: <https://vot-er.org/civic-health-month/>

For more information about *Our Homes, Our Votes*, visit: <https://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/>

Events

Join Next Monday's (8/21) "Tenant Talk Live" on Forming a Tenant-Based Group!

NLIHC will host the next session of "Tenant Talk Live" – a webinar geared towards tenant and resident leaders – next Monday, August 21, at 6 pm ET. The webinar, "How to Form a Tenant-Based Group: Resident Councils, Tenant Associations, Tenant Unions, and Beyond!," will discuss tips for forming a new group, including how to talk to your neighbors, organize, and address the threat of retaliation. NLIHC staff will be joined by Ryan Bell, Southern California regional coordinator at Tenants Together, and Santra Denis, executive director of the Miami Workers Center. Register for next Monday's Tenant Talk Live webinar [here](#).

Ryan Bell has been involved in organizing housing justice and other social justice campaigns in Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley for the past 17 years. Today, he supports almost 30 Southern California member organizations with Tenants Together, a statewide organization dedicated to defending and advancing the rights of California tenants to safe, decent, and affordable housing. He is also a member organizer with the Pasadena Tenants Union and the Chair of the Pasadena Rental Housing Board, which was established by the rent control charter amendment he helped pass in November 2022. Ryan has also been the director of community engagement at PATH (People Assisting the Homeless) and was a pastor for many years. He received his master of divinity degree from Andrews University and his doctorate from Fuller Theological Seminary. Though today he is a secular humanist, the experience he gained in pastoral ministry still serves him in his organizing work.

Santra Denis is the executive director of the Miami Workers Center, a member-led organization that helps domestic workers, tenants, and families in Miami, Florida, achieve dignity, power, and self-determination. She previously served as the senior vice-president for the Urban League of Broward County Young Professionals, where she spearheaded the first Annual State of Young Black Broward Forum on health, criminal justice, and economics. Santra also founded Avanse Ansanm, which engages, connects, and builds power among Haitian-American millennials. She has also worked with the Catalyst Miami, Shands Healthcare, Care Resource, and Bay Pines VA Healthcare System. Santra is a fellow with the New Leaders Council, the premier leadership and professional development network for cross-sector changemakers, and a fellow with Sant La, a Haitian-American leadership program for young adults in Miami Dade County. She also serves as a member of the Community Advisory Board at Florida International University Research Center in Minority Institutions, a board member for Miami Dade County's Office of New Americans, and a member of the Black Mothers Care Plan Advisory Board. Trained as a public health professional, Santra holds bachelor of health sciences and master of public health in policy and management degrees from Florida International University.

"Tenant Talk Live" webinars are held the first and third Monday of every month at 6 pm ET. For more information on future topics, visit our website: <https://nlihc.org/tenant-talk-live-webinar>.

To stay up to date on “Tenant Talk Live” events and connect with other attendees, join the [Tenant Talk Facebook group](#).

“Tenant Talk Live” would not be possible without tenants like you! We strive to connect and engage with residents and tenant leaders through our webinars. If you are a low-income tenant and have a topic you would like to propose for an upcoming “Tenant Talk Live,” or if you would like to participate as a speaker on an upcoming call or webinar, please email: sbetancourt@nlihc.org. Webinars like “Tenant Talk Live” also depend on the support of our members. Become an NLIHC member [here](#)!

From the Field

Tribal Housing Advocates Celebrate Senate’s Passage of “Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act”

The U.S. Senate passed on July 27 the “Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 2023” (NAHASDA) through an amendment (S.Amdt.1078) attached to the “[National Defense Authorization Act](#)” for Fiscal Year 2024” (NDAA) (S.2226). [NAHASDA](#), which has not been reauthorized since 2013, is the primary federal statute designed to address Native American housing issues in tribal communities. Amendment [#1078](#) was introduced by Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Chairman Brian Schatz (D-HI) and Vice Chair Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and passed following a vote of 86-11, demonstrating the bill’s strong bipartisan support. Tribal housing advocates have consistently pushed for NAHASDA reauthorization and expansion. They will now urge members in the U.S. House of Representatives to retain NAHASDA in the final NDAA.

[Housing needs](#) among Native Americans living on tribal lands are among the worst in the country. Members of this population face high poverty rates and tend to have low incomes, and they often experience overcrowding or live in homes that lack plumbing and heat. NAHASDA was originally passed in 1996 to streamline tribes’ access to housing program dollars and enable greater control through the Indian Housing Block Grant program. If enacted, the NAHASDA reauthorization bill would reauthorize the program for seven years and include reforms to expand local control of the programming, streamline environmental reviews for tribal housing projects, and incentivize private partnerships.

Tribal housing advocates have long celebrated the success of NAHASDA and championed its reauthorization. The [United Native American Housing Association](#) (UNAHA), NLIHC’s first tribal partner, helped enact NAHASDA in 1996 and has since worked to educate its network of members in the Northern Plains about best practices for implementation, as well as mobilize them to advocate for the bill’s continuation and expansion. Recently, representatives from UNAHA stressed the importance of reauthorizing NAHASDA during a Senate committee hearing on Native American housing (see [Memo](#), June 20). Because amendment #1078 was quickly introduced and voted upon in the Senate, NLIHC worked closely with UNAHA to communicate our [support](#), while also mobilizing advocates to contact their Senators and push for

bipartisan support of the bill. Now, advocates must turn their attention to members of the House, whom they will urge to retain NAHASDA reauthorization in the final NDAA.

“UNAHA is very encouraged with the strong bi-partisan vote of support for NAHASDA reauthorization,” said Sharon Vogel, UNAHA president and NLIHC board member. “We feel this is as close as we’ve gotten to reauthorization in the last decade. NAHASDA is the primary source of funding for Indian housing, and reauthorization is of critical importance in maintaining our programs. NLIHC’s advocacy and support have had significant impact in getting the bill this far.”

“The Association of Alaska Housing Authorities [AAHA] is excited that NAHASDA Reauthorization was included into the Senate NDAA and urges the House to concur with the Senate amendment,” said Colleen Dushkin, executive director of [AAHA](#), an NLIHC member. “Access to safe, sanitary, and affordable housing for our families continues to be a top priority across Alaska, and reauthorization of NAHASDA is a step in the right direction. We look forward to working with Congress to increase funding for NAHASDA, the primary funding source for providing housing development and services for Alaska Native, Native American, and Native Hawaiian families across the nation.”

While reauthorization is essential for ensuring the stability of NAHASDA, it does not appropriate any funding. Like the rest of federal funding for housing, investments in affordable housing on tribal lands have been far too small for decades. Yet while some federal housing programs receive modest increases each year to keep up with inflation, funding for NAHASDA has [remained stagnant](#) for over a decade, furthering systemic inequities and preventing tribal housing programs from meeting the urgent housing needs of native communities. NLIHC and our partners will continue to push Congress to fully fund tribal housing programs.

For more information about the history of NAHASDA and how to advocate for its reauthorization with legislators, please read our *2023 Advocates’ Guide* [article](#) on Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Housing Programs.

NLIHC to Release Summer Issue of *Tenant Talk* on Thursday (August 17)!

NLIHC will release the summer issue of *Tenant Talk*, our biannual newsletter engaging tenants in housing advocacy, this Thursday (August 17)! The upcoming issue, *Tenant Talk: Taking Pride into Our Work*, delves into the history of the LGBTQ+ movement, exploring the efforts of LGBTQ+ individuals to overcome housing discrimination and ensure access to safe and affordable homes for members of their community. As always, the new issue features articles by individuals with lived experience of housing insecurity, as well as the voices of LGBTQ+ housing advocates. [Sign up now to reserve your free copy!](#)

Interested in other ways to stay involved with NLIHC? Here are some additional opportunities:

- Join NLIHC’s Tenant Talk Live webinars, held the first and third Monday of every month. Tenant Talk Live webinars provide residents with the opportunity to connect with

one another and NLIHC, share best practices, discuss federal housing policy, and learn how to lead in their communities. Register for these webinars [here](#) and view the schedule [here](#).

- NLIHC is seeking external authors for our “[On the Home Front Blog](#).” If you’re a tenant, resident, or renter who would like to write a guest blog post about federal housing advocacy, we invite you to reach out to us today at outreach@nlihc.org.
- NLIHC hosts weekly webinars regarding different housing justice topics. Learn more about our webinars at: <https://nlihc.org/gap>
- Publications like *Tenant Talk* would not be possible without the support of our members. Become an NLIHC member [here](#)! Resident associations can join for \$15, and individuals can join for \$5.

Opportunity Starts at Home

ACLU Article Connects Systemic Inequality to Lack of Fair Housing

In a recent [article](#), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) explains why efforts to address systemic inequality must focus on ensuring fair housing. The article explores the concept of fair housing, the history of federal law addressing housing discrimination, the impacts of housing discrimination on Black communities, and how the “Fair Housing Act” promotes more inclusive communities. The article also surveys how the ACLU has sought to combat housing discrimination by pursuing solutions with multi-sector implications, such as challenging “crime-free housing” programs and advocating for the housing rights of domestic and sexual violence survivors. “Today, fair housing remains the key to addressing deepening income inequality and forced displacement from our communities, as the long-lasting reach of discriminatory housing practices constantly shape who has access to quality education, health care, security, opportunity, and wealth,” explains the article.

Research

Housing First Approach Helps Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence Remain Stably Housed

A [study](#) published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open* finds that a Housing First model of service delivery for survivors of intimate partner violence may be more effective than traditional approaches at improving housing stability. Intimate partner violence (IPV) – defined as “violence, abuse, and controlling behavior committed by a partner or former partner” that can have long-term consequences for those subjected to it – has been [identified as a major contributing factor](#) to housing instability and homelessness, particularly for women.

[Housing First](#) is an innovative, evidence-based model of providing stable housing to individuals who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. While traditional approaches often require

individuals to meet certain qualifications (e.g., maintaining sobriety) before they are eligible for housing assistance, Housing First ensures individuals are stably and safely housed *first* so they can derive greater benefit from supportive services like counseling or substance use treatment that empower them to thrive in a community setting. Domestic Violence Housing First (DVHF) tailors this model to the unique needs of IPV survivors. Instead of requiring survivors to complete prerequisites like leaving their abuser or obtaining a protective order before receiving assistance, advocates work collaboratively with survivors to secure safe, stable housing before all else. This may include the use of “flexible funding” to pay rent or relocation costs and address other immediate financial needs that contribute to housing instability (e.g., transportation expenses). Other supportive services are then provided at a pace with which the survivor is comfortable, and for as long as they feel services are needed.

The study’s authors sought to determine whether a DVHF approach resulted in better outcomes for survivors of IPV than a more traditional approach to service delivery (i.e., one prioritizing “support groups, counseling, legal advocacy, and referrals”). From July 2017 to 2021, staff from five domestic violence (DV) services organizations based in Washington State referred all clients experiencing housing instability or homelessness to the study. Due to ethical concerns, the researchers decided *not* to randomly assign participants to receive services through either the DVHF or traditional approach. Instead, participants were provided services organically, based on the DV services providers’ available capacity and resources at the time of referral.

Each of the 344 participants was interviewed at the beginning of the study and again every six months for two years, resulting in a total of five interviews per participant. In each session, the researchers administered five validated screening questionnaires to assess the participant’s current level of housing instability, abuse (including “physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as stalking and harassment”), depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The researchers then evaluated participants’ scores on the screening questionnaires over time and between the two treatment groups (DVHF versus traditional approach), accounting for key characteristics that could bias the results. These characteristics included whether the participant was parenting children, lived with their abuser, identified as a member of a racial/ethnic minority group, reported challenges with substance abuse, or resided in a rural area.

The researchers found that all five indicators (housing instability, abuse, depression, anxiety, and PTSD) improved over the two-year period regardless of whether clients received services via DVHF or the traditional approach, which “speaks to the value of DV services overall.” However, participants who received services via DVHF experienced significantly greater improvement in all five indicators than those who were served through a traditional approach, particularly in terms of housing stability. The authors note that, “it is promising that DVHF resulted in relatively rapid improvements for survivors...and that these positive changes were maintained across 12, 18, and 24 months.” However, they emphasized that because the participants overwhelmingly self-identified as female (97.1%) and heterosexual (86.9%), the results may not be fully representative of the experiences of LGBTQ+ survivors of IPV. Furthermore, the effectiveness of DVHF may vary in states with different laws and policies than Washington.

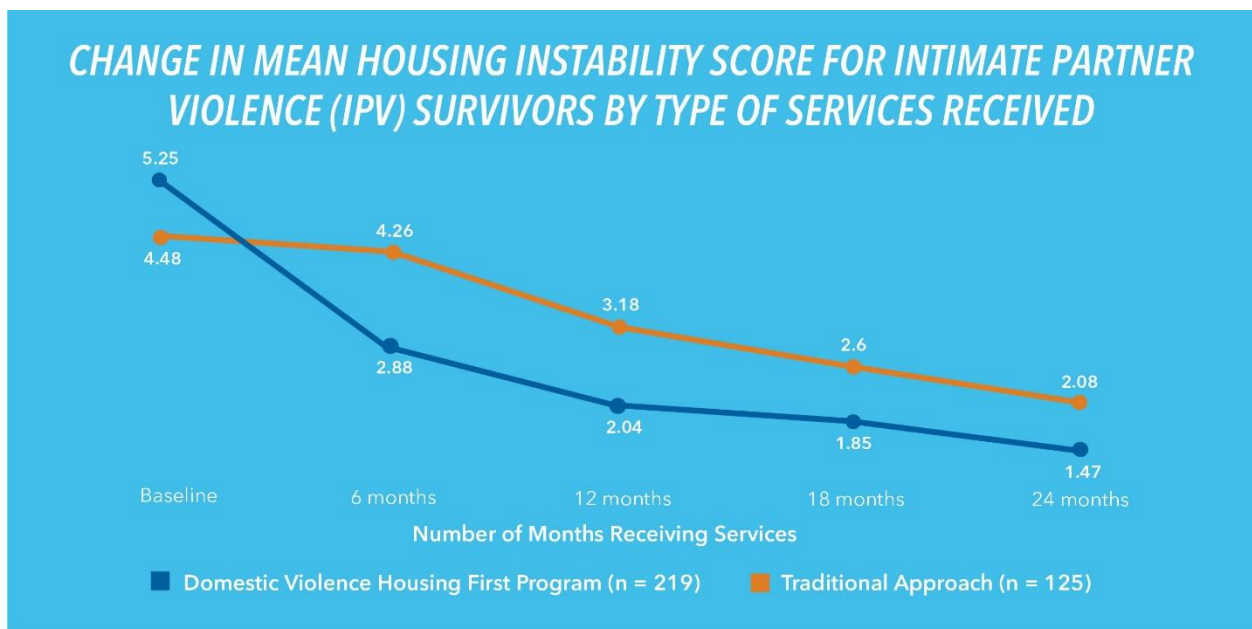
The study further corroborates [a growing body of evidence](#) that the Housing First model and its derivatives (like DVHF) are effective strategies to end homelessness and increase housing stability. However, greater funding is needed to ensure social services providers have the

resources, staff, and training required to successfully implement the components of Housing First – namely, the ability to work collaboratively and intensively with clients in a trauma-informed manner, as well as to provide flexible funding for housing and secondary financial needs that prevent clients from remaining safely and stably housed.

Read the article at: <https://bit.ly/3qi7GnE>

Fact of the Week

Intimate Partner Violence Survivors May Achieve Housing Stability Faster with Housing First Approach



Note: Scores were assessed using the Housing Instability Scale and range from 0 to 7, with a higher score indicating greater housing instability. Traditional approach to service delivery prioritizes “support groups, counseling, legal advocacy, and referrals.”
Source: Sullivan, C.M., Simmons, C., Guerrero, M., et al. Domestic Violence Housing First model and association with survivors’ housing stability, safety, and well-being over 2 years. JAMA Network Open. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.20213



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Source: Sullivan, C.M., Simmons, C., Guerrero, M., et al. Domestic Violence Housing First model and association with survivors’ housing stability, safety, and well-being over 2 years. JAMA Network Open. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.20213

NLIHC in the News

NLIHC in the News for the Week of August 6

The following are some of the news stories to which NLIHC contributed during the week of August 6:

- “Report: Homelessness declined by 17% during the pandemic; family homelessness went down by a quarter” *American City and County*, August 9 at: <https://tinyurl.com/4xv42nna>
- “The Anti-California” *The Atlantic*, August 9 at: <https://tinyurl.com/mrymvufp>
- “Housing-first interventions, not policing, key to ending homelessness” *Route Fifty*, August 8 at: <https://tinyurl.com/42dy2rhj>

NLIHC News

Where to Find Us – August 14

- [Florida Housing Coalition Statewide Affordable Housing Conference](#) – Orlando, FL, August 28 (Dan Emmanuel)
- [Annual Utah Housing Matters Convention](#) – Midway, UT, August 28-30 (Sid Betancourt)
- Ability Housing, Inc. Annual Summit – Kissimmee, FL, September 12-13 (Diane Yentel)
- [National Alliance of Resident Services in Affordable and Assisted Housing \(NAR-SAAH\) Conference 2023](#) – New Orleans, LA, September 12-15 (Sid Betancourt)
- [New York Downstate Independent Housing Forum](#) – Virtual, September 13 (Lindsay Duvall)
- [Neighborhood Preservation Coalition of New York Annual Conference](#) – Saratoga Springs, NY, September 19 (Lindsay Duvall)
- New York Regional Housing Collaborative – New York, NY, September 20 (Lindsay Duvall)
- [Southern California Association of Non-Profit Housing](#) – Los Angeles, CA, November 3 (Sarah Saadian)
- [Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency](#) Conference – Hershey, PA, December 7 (Sarah Saadian)

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