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Slide 2 – Minnesota Housing Programs

- Hello and welcome to Part 3 of Violence Free Minnesota's Housing 101 for Victim Service Provider series, entitled Housing Programs in Minnesota.
- My name is Kenosha Davenport. I am the Executive Director of the Sexual Violence Center in Minneapolis, and I will be your host today.
- This session will cover government housing programs here in Minnesota, and the state and federal agencies that administer or fund those programs. This session includes important information for agency leaders and administrators to know, but advocates and direct service providers might also be interested.
- The information covered in this session will be familiar to some of you, and may be new for others. A lot of the information in this session has been pulled directly from publicly available resources which will be noted in our resource page for this series on our website.

- Understanding the landscape of housing programs, how they are interrelated, and sorting through the sea of acronyms used to refer to them, can be confusing for many providers who are starting or growing housing work at their agencies. We hope this session will provide clarity for those of you who might not be very familiar with them.
- Since the full universe of state and federal housing programs is very large, we will not be able to cover all programs in this 101 training, or every detail about each program. But we have tried to include the programs that victim service providers will most likely encounter in their housing work, and to introduce information about the programs in an accessible way.
- Finally, we know there is not nearly enough housing available in Minnesota to meet the need, and that much of what is available is unaffordable. We hope that gaining some familiarity with the available programs and funding streams will help you consider what you can do to help increase the availability of safe and affordable housing for survivors in your community.

Slide 3 – Government Agencies

Let's begin with an overview of government agencies involved with funding, programmatic standards, and other aspects of the housing picture.

Slide 4 – Federal Agencies

The primary federal agency that funds and oversees federal rule-making and programming related to affordable housing and community development in the U.S. is the Department of Housing & Urban Development, or HUD. HUD's programming, funding, and policymaking efforts focus on preventing and ending homelessness, enforcing housing protections such as fair housing laws, and increasing homeownership and affordable housing.

The U.S. Department of Justice, abbreviated DOJ, is the umbrella agency for two offices involved with housing policy and funding: the Office on Victims of Crime, or OVC; and the Office on Violence Against Women, or OVW. OVW was established under the Violence Against Women Act, or VAWA.

- OVC oversees the Crime Victim Fund, which are the Victims of Crime Act funds, or VOCA.

- OVC is tasked with overseeing the allocation and distribution of VOCA funding through formula grants to states and territories based on population. VOCA is the largest source of federal funding for crime victim services.
- OVW distributes funding to support domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence services and criminal justice initiatives.
- The Department of Health and Human Services, or HHS, oversees, regulates, and administers programs that address health needs and provide essential services. One of the programs the agency administers is the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, known as **FVPSA (pronounced fip-sah)**, which provides funding to domestic violence shelters for shelter and related support services, as well as new funding for sexual assault services.
- The U.S. Internal Revenue Service, otherwise, known as the IRS is a federal agency that oversees guidance, regulation, and processing related to tax programs and payments. The IRS is not involved in housing programs at the same level as these other agencies, but it oversees tax credit programs like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program, as described in part two. Please view Part 2 in this series if you are interested in more information.

Slide 5 – Minnesota Housing Programs

Now we'll switch to state agencies and programs.

- The Minnesota Office of Justice Programs, or OJP, is located in the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, or DPS. The office provides funding, guidance, research, technical assistance, and other leadership with the goals of reducing crime and improving assistance for crime victims. OJP is the main agency that handles pass-through funding to victim service providers, or VSPs to support shelter and victim services programming. OJP also has a specific Housing Specialist staff member that focuses on coordinating with state agencies, the state interagency council on homelessness; the domestic violence, sexual assault, general crime, and child advocacy center coalitions in Minnesota; and VSPs, to address issues at the intersection of housing and victims of crime.
- The Minnesota Department of Human Services, or DHS, oversees several different social service-related areas of funding and programming across the state, including several shelter and housing related programs. The Office of Economic Opportunity, OEO, handles the distribution of various forms of

shelter funding, including shelter capital, shelter services, transitional housing, and safe harbor housing programming.

- The Minnesota Department of Health, or MDH, is responsible for public health, including disease control and prevention, environmental health, public policy, and regulation of health care providers. Its mission is to protect, maintain and improve the health of all Minnesotans, and to promote healthcare equity across the state. It also co-leads the Safe Harbor response in Minnesota, which ensures that young people experiencing sexual trafficking are treated as victims and survivors rather than criminals.
- The Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, or the MHFA, is the state finance agency in Minnesota. In some ways MHFA functions a bit like a bank, but through a government agency. The agency assists individuals, partners, programs, and communities to preserve and create affordable housing. The agency administers and oversees several different types of programming, grant funding, and lending efforts, including mortgage lending programs, housing counseling programs, rental assistance programs, homelessness prevention programs, affordable housing development and preservation funding.

- The Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness, or MICH, is a cabinet-level body led by the Lt. Governor and is comprised of the commissioners of 13 state agencies or their representatives, and the chair of the Metropolitan Council. MICH helps to coordinate, support, and provide leadership in the state's efforts to move towards housing, health, and racial justice for people who are unhoused.

Slide 6 – Program Discussion Overview

We will summarize 10 programs in this session: Continuum of Care; Emergency Solutions Grants; Victims of Crimes Act, or VOCA; the Family Violence and Prevention Services Act, called FVPSA (**pronounced fip-sah**); Office on Violence Against Women Transitional Housing; Minnesota Transitional Housing; Housing Stabilization; Housing Support; the Family Homelessness Prevention Assistance Program; and certain capital investment programs through the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency.

Slide 7 – Continuum of Care (CoC) Funded Housing Programs

The Continuum of Care Program, commonly called CoC, allocates funding to support several types of local programming with the goal of preventing and

ending homelessness. It is a regional or local planning group that coordinates funding, services, systems, and resources for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. It includes a wide array of stakeholders, including government and non-governmental agencies such as victim service providers, or VSPs. Each CoC covers a defined geographical area, which can be a city, county, or regional area within a state.

- CoC program funding is allocated annually through a competitive application process. Both HUD and local CoCs are involved in this process. The local CoC is the main contact and administrator for VSPs who might wish to pursue funding.
- CoC funding supports several programmatic areas, including rapid-rehousing, transitional housing, joint transitional and rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, and in limited circumstances homelessness prevention and supportive services.
- This funding also includes a set-aside called Domestic Violence Bonus funding that is specifically available to groups that provide services to survivors. This

funding has provided valuable support for VSPs involved in housing work, but they are not limited to this pot of money if they wish to apply.

More on the CoCs will be covered in Parts 4 and 5 of this series.

Slide 8 – Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG)

The Emergency Solutions Grant program, or ESG, is a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or HUD program that allocates funding to local jurisdictions to assist people obtain housing who are experiencing a housing crisis, including homelessness.

Each year HUD allocates ESG funding to local governments, such as counties, urban areas, or states. The amount each area receives is established by a pre-determined formula.

In Minnesota six cities and counties receive HUD ESG formula grants directly.

These six areas are referred to as “entitlement jurisdictions.” They are: Duluth, St. Louis County, St. Paul (in conjunction with Ramsey County), Minneapolis, Hennepin County, and Dakota county. These jurisdictions are responsible for overseeing ESG funds and allocating them to non-profit organizations in their

area. All the areas outside of the six jurisdictions are referred to as “non-entitlement jurisdictions” or the “balance of state”. The Office of Economic Opportunity, OEO, distributes ESG funding to local governments and providers in the non-entitlement jurisdictions.

Eligible program types under ESG include:

Street Outreach

Emergency Shelter

Homelessness Prevention; and

Rapid Rehousing

Slide 9 – Victim of Crimes Act (VOCA)

The Victim of Crimes Act of 1984, or VOCA, funds direct services to crime victims that are provided by nonprofit agencies, local units of government such as county attorney offices and police departments, and Tribes.

State administrators receive formula funding from the Office of Victims of Crime, or OVC and in turn distribute it through a competitive application process.

Minnesota’s state administrator is the Office of Justice Programs, or OJP. VOCA

funding originates from the federal Crime Victim Fund, established through the VOCA of 1984. The fund is not supported by tax dollars, but through sources such as criminal fines, penalties, forfeited bail bonds, and special assessments.

VOCA funding has a variety of eligible housing-related uses. For example, VOCA funds can be used to support:

Emergency shelter;

Transitional housing; or

Direct financial assistance to help survivors relocate for safety reasons. This can include expenses such as moving costs, travel, rental assistance, or security deposits.

Slide 10 – Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act grant program, abbreviated FVPSA (**Pronounced fip-sah**), is a federal funding source that supports immediate shelter and supportive services for survivors.

FVPSA (fip-sah) funding is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, or HHS. State administrators receive formula funding from HHS, who

then distribute it to victim service providers through a competitive application process.

FVPSA (fip-sah) funding supports a wide array of shelter programming and supportive services, including housing-related services. Some examples of eligible activities are:

Shelter

Safety planning, crisis counseling and information and referral

Legal advocacy, and,

Additional support services

FVPSA (fip-sah) also supports Coalitions and The National Domestic Violence Hotline

Slide 11 – Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) Transitional Housing

Programs

- The Office on Violence Against Women, or OVW, administers a Transitional Housing Program to support this service.

- Funding is allocated yearly by OVW through a competitive grant process.

Victim services providers can apply directly to OVW for this funding.

- The OVW transitional housing program funds:
 - Transitional housing spaces
 - Short-term housing assistance for transitional housing program participants
 - And voluntary support services for recipients of transitional housing, including counseling, childcare, transportation, life skills, and educational and/or job training.

Slide 12 – Minnesota Transitional Housing Program (THP)

The Minnesota Transitional Housing Program, referred to as THP, is a state funded transitional housing program.

This program is administered by the Minnesota Department of Human Services Office of Economic Opportunity, or OEO. Funding is distributed through a competitive application process every two years.

- The program provides financial support for transitional housing spaces, time-limited rental assistance, and supportive services for up to 36 months with some possibilities for extension.

Should your agency consider applying for THP funding, be aware that it is part of a Combined Request for Proposals, or RFP, with multiple activities and multiple funding sources, and therefore you will not see an RFP for that program specifically.

Instead, you will see a “Department of Human Services-Office on Economic Opportunity Homeless Assistance Grants” RFP, with eligible activities including Youth and Adult Outreach, Shelter, Transitional and Rapid Re-Housing.

Slide 13 – Housing Stabilization Services

The Housing Stabilization Services Program is a newer program through Minnesota Medical Assistance, or MA. This funding supports housing-related services for people with disabilities, and seniors who are unhoused or at risk of becoming unhoused and can be a good referral source for advocates working with survivors on housing stability.

Funding Allocation:

- Housing Stabilization Services is not a grant program. Providers are paid for individual services delivered. Organizations who want to be housing stabilization services providers must be eligible to enroll as MA providers to receive this funding.
- Providers are compensated based on an hourly billing rate for time spent providing services under the program.

Eligible Activities:

- There are three types of services provided under the program.
 - Through consultation services the provider helps a program participant make a person-centered plan regarding their housing needs, and if appropriate, the provider will help link a program participant to other services and benefits.
 - Transition services include helping program participants with planning for, finding, and moving into housing. These services can include, but are not limited to, helping a participant identify and resolve barriers to housing;

locating housing, completing tenant screening processes, conducting lease negotiations; or ensuring that a new living situation is safe.

- Sustaining services help participants maintain their housing. These services can include, but are not limited to, assistance with housing recertification processes; education and support with lease compliance, maintaining income/benefits; or other similar services related to housing stability.

There are some restrictions on housing stabilization services funding.

- Providers funded to provide consultation services usually cannot receive funding to provide transition or sustainability.
- Generally, housing stabilization providers cannot apply to work with only one specific population of people. However, VSPs under this program *can* apply to specifically work with survivors. But they cannot limit housing stabilization services to survivors they are already working with. They must also accept referrals to assist other survivors not currently involved with their agency.

- Also, remember, housing stabilization services are reimbursed for services rendered, so the provider will only be compensated for time spent providing services to individuals who meet the program's eligibility requirements. Eligible recipients are adults on Medical Assistance with a documented disability, who are also eligible for waived services such as the elderly waiver or the Community Access to Disability Inclusion waiver, or CADI.

Contact the Department of Human Services if you are interested in more information about this program.

Slide 14 – Housing Support Program

The Housing Support program, formerly known as Group Residential Housing, is a state funded program, administered through the Minnesota Department of Human Services, or DHS. The program supports seniors and adults with disabilities and limited income with their housing needs. This can also be a helpful referral source when helping eligible survivors seek housing.

Non-profits can apply to DHS to become a Housing Support provider.

Housing support is not structured like a traditional grant program. There are many technical aspects of the program that we will not cover here, but we will try to paint a general picture of how the program works.

- Housing support providers assist program participants with room and board costs, which can include expenses such as rent, utilities, food, and some types of household supplies, and other necessities.
- The amount of financial assistance each program participant receives varies by their individual circumstances. The financial assistance may cover all or only a portion of the program participant's housing and room and board costs. DHS and providers use a specific formula to calculate the amount of assistance each person receives.

Contact DHS if you are interested in pursuing this funding or if you would like more information about the program.

Slide 15 – Family Homeless Prevention Assistance Program (FHPAP)

The Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP) provides supportive services and financial assistance, such as rent deposits, rent payments

or utility payments, to eligible households that are unhoused or at imminent risk of being unhoused.

- The Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, or MHFA administers FHPAP.
- Regional areas throughout Minnesota, for example, counties, can apply for funding for eligible activities.
- The regional areas in turn allocate funding to local providers through a competitive application.

FHPAP can fund street outreach, homelessness prevention, rapid rehousing, coordinated entry programming, and direct financial assistance such as rent and rent deposits.

Slide 16 – Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) Capital Investment

Funding

MHFA has several forms of capital investment funding to support the acquisition, rehabilitation, and preservation of affordable housing in Minnesota; some that originate from state and others from federal funding. MHFA funding for housing

development is generally not grant based, but comes in the form of amortized mortgages, deferred loans, tax credits and other forms of financing support.

- MHFA capital funding is most often focused on large-scale development, and so will not be a resource for many VSPs. But if your agency is considering undertaking such a project to increase housing options for survivors, learning more about MHFA will be useful for you. If you are interested in exploring these programs further, contact MHFA for more information.
- MHFA distributes capital funding in primarily two ways; a consolidated request for proposals and via rolling applications.
- MHFA distributes a large amount of its capital funding through its Annual Consolidated Request for Proposal Process. It is referred to as the consolidated request for proposals because MHFA combines many different funding sources through one RFP. Developers do not apply for a specific funding source, but instead request funding for a particular project. If they are approved for funding, MHFA will designate which financing options the grantee will receive.
- MHFA also accepts applications on a rolling basis throughout the year for several financing opportunities.

- MHFA also distributes tax credits to support the development of affordable housing. In our last session we described the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program, or LIHTC, (pronounced lie-tech) an IRS tax credit program administered in Minnesota by MHFA. Through this program MHFA distributes tax credits to housing developers or their investors, to decrease tax liability for projects that involve the construction, acquisition, and rehabilitation of affordable housing units. We referenced this housing in the last session of this series. States are required annually to create a plan to establish the criteria for how to distribute the tax credits, called the Qualified Allocation Plan, or QAP. The process is an open, public hearing with opportunity for comment. Some states have used the QAP to secure preferences for housing for survivors. Minnesota has not yet done so. In the resource pages you will find information about QAPs and how to get involved in the process here in Minnesota.
- Other MHFA administered programs include the National Housing Trust Fund, which uses deferred loans to increase the supply of multifamily rental housing in areas where there is an inadequate supply of affordable housing; and the Home Investment Partnership Program, or HOME, designed to create

affordable housing for low-income households. HOME allows states and local governments to use its funds for grants, direct loans, loan guarantees or other forms of credit enhancements, or rental assistance or security deposits.

- VSP participation in the development of affordable housing can substantially increase the amount of survivor-centered housing availability. If your organization has identified development as a goal, connecting with MHFA and other local technical assistance providers is an important first step. Even if it is not practical or possible for VSPs to pursue this type of development there may be opportunities such as partnering with a developer on a project or collaborating with a developer to provide services.
- More information will be available in the resource section attached to this series on the VFMN website.

Slide 17 – Additional Programs and Funding Sources

We are not able to cover all available Minnesota housing programs in today's presentation. We chose to highlight the programs you will be most likely to encounter. In addition to those main programs, we wanted to quickly mention a few others before we end.

- The first Heading Home Corps. This is an AmeriCorps program, launched in 2021 that places temporary, full time, housing resource navigators, or HRNs with housing providers across Minnesota. HRNs work with program participants to assess their housing needs and link them with resources to locate and/or sustain housing. The Heading Home Corps Program provides training to the HRNs and assists with the cost of compensating the HRN.
- The Bridges Rental Assistance Program, funded by MHFA, provides housing assistance for people with mental illness and very low income, while they wait for a Housing Choice Voucher or another type of rental subsidy. Eligible uses for Bridges funding include temporary rental assistance payments and security deposits paid directly to the landlords on behalf of qualified participants.

Priority is given to those who are:

- Unhoused
- Living in a regional treatment center
- Living in a community-based residential treatment facility, or
- Living in substandard and unaffordable units.

- The Safe Harbor Program is a state funded program that supports organizations providing trauma-informed shelter or housing with supportive services for youth who have experienced sexual exploitation and/or sex trafficking. It is administered by OEO in a bi-annual competitive application process.
- Homeless Youth Act Funding (HYA) is a state-funded program administered through OEO. It supports outreach and drop-in programs, emergency shelter programs, and integrated supportive housing for youth experiencing houselessness and youth at-risk of houselessness. OEO awards HYA funding through a bi-annual competitive application process.

This is not a comprehensive list of available housing programs and potential funding sources. Additional resources may be available through local governments such as counties and cities, or even private and non-profit funders. Connecting with local government officials should help you identify possible resources should you be interested.

Slide 18 – Additional Resources

For more information about state and federal government funding and programs, please see the resource pages attached to this session, and found on the VFMN website.

Slide 19 - Gratitude

Thanks to everyone who participated in the development of this series, and thanks to all of you for joining us for this session. We hope this discussion helped build a picture of available housing resource programs and funding sources available in Minnesota. We hope it is a useful tool as you continue the important work of helping increase housing options for survivors of violence.

Slide 20

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