

# *Victim Service Providers & Housing: Common Acronyms & Terms*

## **General DV Funding, Sources and Administrators:**

VSP: *Victim Service Provider*. There are different definitions for VSP. The Violence Against Women Act defines VSP as, “a nonprofit, nongovernmental or tribal organization or rape crisis center, including a State or tribal coalition, that assists or advocates for domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking victims, including domestic violence shelters, faith-based organizations, and other organizations, with a documented history of effective work concerning domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.”

VAWA: *Violence Against Women Act*. VAWA is a federal statute that was originally passed in 1994. The legislation recognized domestic violence (DV) and sexual assault (SA) as crimes, and created several programs intended to assist survivors that are administered through the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). In addition to programing and funding, VAWA includes several legal protections for survivors, including protections in the context of housing. VAWA is up for reauthorization every five years, although that process can, and is often held up for several years each reauthorization cycle. Even if reauthorization is delayed, however, the VAWA legal protections for survivors remain in place.

FVPSA: *Family Violence Prevention & Services Act*. FVPSA is a federal statute that was originally passed in 1984. It created programs to fund domestic violence shelters and other services for survivors, including services such as crisis counseling, legal advocacy, and other forms of support services. FVPSA also provides funding for state coalitions and the national domestic violence crisis hotline. FVPSA funding is administered through HHS through formula grants to states and Native American Tribes, as well as a variety of discretionary programs. During the COVID-19 pandemic there were several COVID-specific funding sources administered through FVPSA.

VOCA: *The Victims of Crime Act*. VOCA is a statute that was passed in 1984 that created the Crime Victim Fund. The fund is not supported by tax dollars but rather is filled using yearly deposits from money that is obtained by the federal government through criminal fines, penalties, forfeited bail bonds, and special assessments. Each year states can apply to the federal government for a portion of VOCA funds and then distribute their allocation directly to local entities, including DV agencies. The funding has a variety of eligible uses including shelter, supportive services such as crisis counseling, as well as direct monetary assistance to survivors for emergency needs. VOCA is one of the main sources of funding in Minnesota that supports VSPs programming, including shelter services, general support services, and direct client assistance to domestic violence survivors.

OVC: *Office for Victims of Crime*. OVC is a program office within the federal DOJ. The office was created through the VOCA statute to allocate funding from the Crime Victim Fund.

OVW: *Office on Violence Against Women*. The Office on Violence Against Women is an office within the federal Department of Justice (DOJ) that focuses on addressing violence against women and increasing services to victims of DV, SA, stalking, and dating violence. OVW administers VAWA funded programs, including the OVW Transitional Housing Program.

OJP: *Office of Justice Programs*. OJP was created by Minnesota statute in 2003, and is a consolidation of several different government entities that existed at that time related to crime victim services. The office provides funding, guidance, research, technical assistance and other leadership in an effort to reduce crime and improve assistance for crime victims. OJP is the state entity that distributes funds from HHS and DOJ related to VAWA, FVPSA, and VOCA to local providers and generally oversees the grant management of those grants. *Note: There is a federal OJP, which is a department with the DOJ and includes six program offices; one of which is OVC. However, for the purposes of this document we are referring to Minnesota OJP*

## **Housing Models & Types:**

**Housing First:** Housing First is an approach to homeless services that recognizes housing as a foundation need that should be met before other issues can be safely and effectively addressed in someone's life. It is focused on client choice and low barrier access to permanent housing. Programs that follow a housing first approach do not mandate programming or require set conditions (such as sobriety) for people to obtain housing.

**TH: Transitional Housing.** TH can have different definitions, but one common definition is that transitional housing is short-term housing, generally less than 24 months, that is intended as a bridge to permanent, independent housing. Generally transitional housing includes supportive services and is rent-free or scaled rent.

**RRH: Rapid Rehousing.** RRH is a housing assistance model that works to move people rapidly out of homelessness and into permanent housing. Rapid rehousing generally focuses on providing assistance and services that are flexible and tailored to the needs of each specific household. Rapid rehousing services traditionally have three main components: 1) help with housing identification, 2) rental assistance and financial assistance with housing costs (security deposit, utilities, moving costs, etc.), and 3) case management and services such as helping individuals to obtain a rental unit (i.e. unit viewing, lease review, overcoming barriers to rental screenings, etc.) and providing ongoing supportive services (links to resources, employment services, etc.)

**PSH: Permanent Supportive Housing.** PSH is housing that is permanent, meaning that unlike transitional housing, an individual can stay in the housing as long as they wish (assuming lease terms and other eligibility requirements are met). Permanent supportive housing must also come with supportive services for tenants and generally has a rental assistance component.

**Shared Housing:** Shared housing is a model of housing where two or more unrelated people live in one rental unit (a single family home or apartment) and share common spaces but also have their own private spaces as well. Shared housing models vary. Some providers who work with shared housing models purchase a home or apartment and provide those spaces as PSH or TH (either with rent or without rent) to survivors who live together as roommates. Other VSPs do not own the house or unit themselves, but rather help survivors who they are working with pair up with other survivors and help them find units that work for them. Sometimes shared housing models include the VSP providing involved support services where others do not.

**Master Leasing:** Master leasing in the VSP context is generally where a survivor rents a private market unit and pays rent directly to the landlord, but the VSP whom the survivor is working with acts as a third party to the agreement and assumes certain liabilities and financial responsibilities related to the unit. This differs from subleasing because generally under subleasing the VSP would rent the unit directly from the landlord, and then lease out the unit to the survivor whom they are working with (with the VSP collecting the rent, if rent is required, directly from the survivor).

**NOAH: Natural Occurring Affordable Housing.** NOAH is a term that is used to refer to affordable rental properties that exist on the private market without being subsidized by the government or other entity.

**Federally Subsidized Housing:** Federal subsidized housing is a form of permanent housing that is supported financially by the federal government in order to make the rent affordable for households with low-to-moderate income. There are several forms of federal subsidized housing, including programs such as: 1) Tax credit properties (such as LIHTC properties discussed below) where developers receive tax credits to create units for tenants with low to moderate income, 2) Public housing, which are government owned properties with rental amounts based on the tenant's income, 3) Section 8 housing, which are properties owned by a non-government entity where the rent is based on income, but that rental subsidy is directly tied to the building (meaning that if the tenant moves the subsidy will not move with them) and 4) Section 8 Vouchers which are government issued rental subsidies that a renter can use on the private market to pay for a portion of their rental costs.

## **Housing Agencies and Systems:**

**HUD:** *Department of Housing and Urban Development.* HUD is a federal agency. HUD oversees several different federal affordable housing programs and funding streams that are allocated to tribes, states, counties, cities and direct service providers. HUD also creates regulatory oversight of their programming related to shelter and housing.

**OEO:** *Office of Economic Opportunity.* OEO is a department within the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). OEO handles the distribution of various forms of shelter funding, including shelter capital, shelter services, as well as transitional housing program.

**MHFA:** *Minnesota Housing and Finance Agency.* MHFA, also referred to often as MN Housing or Minnesota Housing, is a state agency. Each state has a finance agency, and MHFA holds that role for Minnesota. The goal of the agency is to assist individuals, partners, programs, and communities to preserve and create affordable housing. It functions somewhat like a bank as well as a funder. The agency has mortgage lending programs, and oversees distribution for tax credits and other funding related to affordable housing development. During the COVID pandemic the agency has been tasked with overseeing rental assistance programs (like RentHelpMN) as well as foreclosure prevention programs.

**COC:** *Continuum of Care.* A COC is a regional or local body that coordinates shelter and housing-related options and services for individuals facing homelessness within a particular area. A large portion of HUD funding that supports homelessness outreach, shelter services, and affordable housing is distributed through “COC funding”. Local homelessness service providers cannot apply for this funding directly, but rather each year programs must submit applications for projects directly to the COC, and the COC then in turn submits an application with all of the chosen projects to HUD. This annual application process is referred to as the COC Program Competition Process. In addition to coordinating the funding application for COC funds, the COC also coordinates other aspects of the local homelessness service systems including coordinated entry (discussed below) and other system-wide functions in their area related to homeless services. COCs are intended to streamline and improve coordination of local homeless responses. Minnesota has 10 COCs (Northwest, Northeast, St. Louis County, Central, West Central, Southeast, Southwest, Hennepin, Ramsey, Suburban Metro Area COC).

**DV Bonus:** Domestic Violence Bonus funding. DV Bonus is a type of COC funding that is allocated as part of the annual COC competitive application process. Along with the general COC funding that is available each year through the COC competitive application process there is also a set-aside, called DV Bonus funds, which is specifically for new projects that assist survivors of domestic violence dating violence, and stalking. If a provider has a new project that serves survivor they can apply to the COC to be included in the COCs application to HUD for funding. The program can be related to projects that provide rapid rehousing, joint rapid rehousing and transitional housing, or coordinated entry. Generally HUD allocated approximately 52M a year in DV Bonus funds to COCs throughout the country; the portion that each COC receives varies.

**CE or CES:** *Coordinated Entry System.* HUD requires each COC to have a coordinated entry system. Coordinated entry is a system that each COC sets up to coordinate homelessness services throughout their region. Each coordinated entry system looks different, but generally there are four components; access, assessment, prioritization, and referral. Access is often a centralized point of contact where individuals facing homelessness can reach out to obtain shelter or housing from providers throughout the COC. Assessment is usually a process where those individuals are asked a variety of questions to determine eligibility for shelter or housing and identify what type of shelter or housing would be most appropriate. Prioritization is the process by which the system prioritizes people who have gone through assessment for available housing in the COC. This usually involves a waiting list (called a “priority list”). After going through an assessment individuals seeking housing are placed on the “priority list”. Referral is the process by which people on the “priority list” are referred to a program when a vacancy in a housing program becomes available for them.

## **Housing Specific Programs and Funding Sources:**

ESP: Emergency Services Program. ESP is a state grant program administered by OEO that funds direct service providers to support their shelter operation costs. This is an ongoing shelter funding source, for which there is a bi-annual application process, but ESP has also been used as a vehicle through which a lot of COVID-related shelter funding has been distributed outside of that traditional ESP timeline.

ESG: Emergency Solutions Grant. ESG is a federal grant program overseen by HUD that supports shelter, outreach, homelessness prevention, and rapid re-housing. It is allocated yearly to recipients across the country by a set formula. During the COVID-19 pandemic there was also a special allocation of ESG funding, called ESG-CV funding, which specifically supports COVID-19 related homelessness outreach, homelessness prevention, rapid rehousing, and emergency shelter.

HOME: The HOME Investment Partnership Program. HOME is a program through HUD that provides funding that focuses on capital costs for the creation of affordable housing. The HOME program is an ongoing program with a bi-annual application process. However, when the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA, discussed below) was passed in 2021, the statute included a large amount of new funding, referred to as HOME-ARPA, which was allocated to states, cities, and counties through the HOME program. Although the HOME-ARPA money is being filtered through the pre-existing HOME program, the funding is different than the traditional HOME funding and can fund several eligible costs that are normally not allowed under the traditional HOME program.

HTF: Housing Trust Fund. There are several different funding sources referred to as housing trust funds. There is the National Housing Trust Fund, which originates from HUD, and is administered by MHFA. There is a state housing trust fund, also administered by MHFA, and there are local housing trust funds that are through entities such as cities or counties. Generally, housing trust funds support the development of housing for low-income households, although in Minnesota some MHFA housing trust fund money is provided for rental assistance.

Entitlement and Non-Entitlement Recipients: Recipients are the local entities that receive ESG and HOME funds directly from HUD. Recipients distribute the funding to sub-recipients, which are generally non-profits that provide direct services. Select counties and cities within a state, called “entitlement jurisdictions,” receive ESG and HOME funds directly from HUD, which they then grant out to sub-recipients as noted above. In Minnesota there are six “entitlement jurisdiction” (Hennepin County, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Duluth, Dakota County, and St. Louis County). The remaining funding that was not allocated to “entitlement jurisdictions”, goes directly to the state (OEO for ESG funding and MHFA for HOME funding). The state then distributes these funds to sub-recipients in all of the remaining areas outside of the six entitlement jurisdictions. Those areas are referred to as the “non-entitlement” jurisdictions.

Transitional Housing Assistance Grants: There are various funders that support TH. For instance, OVW allocates funding, through an annual application process, to entities who provide transitional housing to survivors of DV, SA, dating violence, and stalking. The state of Minnesota also allocates funding on a bi-annual basis to support transitional housing through its Transitional Housing Program (THP). THP is administered by OEO and is open to all transitional housing providers, not just those servicing survivors of DV, SA, dating violence or stalking.

FHPAP: The Family Homeless Prevention Assistance Program. FHPAP is a state funding source that is allocated by MHFA to several metro counties and out-state regions (FHPAP administrators) who then distribute funds to sub-grantees such as non-profits. FHPAP funding is targeted to provide support (services and financial) to families, youth and singles that are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless. The funding supports work such as homeless prevention, outreach, and RRH.

Housing Support: Housing Support, formerly known as Group Residential Housing (GRH), is a Minnesota-based housing program. The Housing Support program supports seniors and adults with disabilities who qualify based on income. The program pays room and board expenses for program participants. Program participants are required to contribute their income to the program and are then allocated a certain percentage of that income back

based on a specific formula outlined by the Housing Support program. Housing Support is administered by DHS. Non-profits can apply to be Housing Support providers who administer housing support services and room and board assistance to program participants.

Housing Stabilization Services: Housing Stabilization Services is a new program as of 2020 that was established under Minnesota's Medicaid program (also known as Medical Assistance or MA) to assist homeless individuals with locating and sustaining housing. In order to be eligible for Housing Stabilization Services individuals must be homeless or facing housing instability; be an MA recipient; be 18 years of age or older; have a disability or disabling condition; and have an assessed need for services and require assistance due to their disability in one of the following areas: communication, mobility, decision-making, or managing challenging behaviors. Non-profits can apply to be Housing Stabilization providers. Housing Stabilization providers help program participants with 1) completing a housing plan, 2) housing transition services, and/or 3) assistance with housing sustaining services

LIHTC: Low Income Housing Tax Credit. LIHTC is a program administered by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The program issues tax credits to private companies or non-profits for the acquisition, rehabilitation, or construction of rental housing that in whole or in part is designated for lower-income households. LIHTC funding is often prioritized for projects that support the affordable housing needs of certain groups such as seniors, individuals with disabilities, or individuals who meet the HUD definition of chronically homeless. In Minnesota LIHTC awards are administered by MHFA.

ARPA: The American Rescue Plan Act. ARPA is federal law that was passed in 2021 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The ARPA statute provided funding across several sectors that were impacted by COVID including several new funding allocations to support housing/shelter. ARPA includes extensive funding allocations to states for rental assistance programming, an extension of the HOME program, as well as large amounts of COVID Fiscal Recovery dollars that were distributed to states, counties, and cities to cover costs related to the impact of COVID (including but not limited to housing needs).

## **HUD Data Collection & Reporting:**

HMIS: Homeless Management Information System. HMIS is the information technology system that all HUD funded grantees (except VSPs) are required to use to track data and submit reports related to the work they do under their HUD grants. It contains client-level data as well as data related to services provided. It is meant to be a centralized data source for all local homelessness service providers that can be used for reporting purposes, and also to track individuals across providers and systems in order to coordinate services, identify trends, and assess program performance.

HMIS Lead: Each COC designates an HMIS lead agency that is responsible for managing HMIS and ensuring compliance with HUD's HMIS data and privacy standards. The HMIS lead houses, updates, and oversees the system. Individual providers are then given access to the HMIS system by the HMIS lead so that the provider can enter data and run reports. The Institute for Community Alliances (ICA) is the HMIS lead for Minnesota.

CAPER: Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report. The CAPER is the report that HUD grantees who receive ESG or ESG-CV funding must submit to HUD regarding the work they do and individuals they serve under their ESG or ESG-CV grants.

APR: Annual Performance Measure. The APR is the report that HUD grantees who receive COC funding must submit to HUD regarding the work they do and individuals they serve under their COC grants.

CSV File: Comma Separated Values. A CSV file is an electronic text file that contains a list of data. Each line of the file consists of one or more fields, separated by commas. HUD reports such as the CAPER and the APR must use be in CSV format in order to be accepted.

SAGE: Sage is the electronic portal through to which HUD grantees are required to upload their grant reports (such as the CAPER or the APR). SAGE will reject any files that are not in CSV format.

PII: *Personally identifying information*. PII is information about an individual that may directly or indirectly identify that individual. In the case of a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, it also means information that would disclose the location of that individual. Personally identifying information includes information such as an individual's name, address, other contact information, and social security number, but it also can include information such as an individual's race, birth date, or number of children if, in the particular circumstances, that information would identify the individual. See [vawa confidentiality summary OVW.pdf](#)

Comparable Database: A comparable database is a system that victim service providers who are funded through HUD use, as an alternative to HMIS, for data collection and reporting relating to the services they provide under their HUD grants. A comparable database is meant to allow VSPs to comply with HUD reporting while still keeping PII regarding individuals served safe and confidential. The database is owned by and accessible only to the VSP, and reports that are pulled from the database and provided to HUD only contain aggregated data. In order to be a comparable database, a database must meet all of the privacy requirements outlined by VAWA, FVPSA, VOCA and any relevant state confidentiality statutes. The database must also have all of the same data fields, functions, and reporting abilities as HMIS. Comparable database are not provided by HUD, the COC, or the HMIS lead. The database must be identified and purchased by a VSP on the private market.