



Violence Free Minnesota (VFMN): VFMN is a statewide coalition with 90-member programs who provide advocacy and services to domestic and sexual violence victim/survivors in all of Minnesota's 87 counties.

Intersection of Domestic Violence and Housing: The interconnectedness of domestic violence and housing insecurity is staggering.

- Over **90%** of homeless women have experienced domestic violence or sexual assault during their lives, and over **50%** cite domestic violence as the immediate cause of their homelessness.
- Domestic violence has been identified as one of the **top five** reasons people experience homelessness in Minnesota.

When trying to leave an abusive situation, one of the greatest challenges a survivor can face is accessing safe, affordable housing. For those fleeing, or attempting to flee violence, the layers of trauma are immense, with housing barriers being a contributing factor. Survivors face many hurdles to accessing housing: safety, discrimination, lack of affordable options, rental screening barriers tied to their underlying abuse, and many other compounding barriers. These roadblocks mean survivors often must choose between staying in an unsafe home or having no home at all.

Eliminating SOI Discrimination & Importance for Survivors:

Housing benefits provide the financial support many survivors need to create long-term stability for themselves and their families. Extensive federal funds have been allocated to provide vouchers to those fleeing and attempting to flee violence. But with the current barriers to utilizing vouchers there is a risk that instead of creating a path to housing for survivors, these vouchers will be rendered unusable; a mere illusion of assistance. Eliminating source of income discrimination can lift a serious hurdle and help actualize the effectiveness of vouchers for survivors.

Eliminating source of income discrimination has been voiced by victim service providers across the state as one of their top housing and economic justice priorities. VFMN recently conducted a survey with member programs, sharing various housing and economic justice initiatives, and asking for their feedback.

- There were over 40 respondents from across the state, and eliminating source of income discrimination was **ranked among the top five priorities** by those programs.
- For almost half of the organization's who responded it was **ranked as one of their top three areas of concern**.
- Programs who provided narrative feedback, expressing that they had worked with survivors who faced serious hurdles with being able to utilize their vouchers ranged from across the state; including NW, SE, and Central Minnesota, as well as several twin city and suburban metro programs. As one out-state program relayed, ***"This would eliminate a frequent barrier that survivors we assist face regularly."***