



DOWNTOWN **WOMEN'S** CENTER
Every woman housed

**MEDIA ADVISORY
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2021**

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**DOWNTOWN WOMEN'S CENTER AND NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR SAFE HOUSING
RELEASE LANDMARK TOOLKIT FOR HOUSING SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

The Downtown Women's Center (DWC) and the National Alliance for Safe Housing (NASH) are pleased to announce the release of the first-ever comprehensive toolkit for developing and operating permanent supportive housing for survivors of domestic violence.

Despite [previous research](#) showing that more than one-third (38%) of survivors experience homelessness at some point in their lives, there has remained a dearth of public guidance on housing solutions that meet their specific needs. In remedying this gap, the Toolkit also seeks to bolster service providers' response to COVID-19 at a time when social isolation and economic uncertainty are fueling national surges in domestic violence, unemployment, and housing insecurity.

"Even before the pandemic, we knew something had to change," said Amy Turk, DWC Chief Executive Officer. "We heard from so many survivors over the years that housing programs often act as barriers to healing. From our own experience in trauma-informed service delivery at DWC, we also knew that alternatives were possible and that we weren't alone in our efforts to shift the model. Our task became one of harnessing the community's collective knowledge and experience, to create a resource that would lead to better housing for survivors."

The Toolkit was conceptualized in meetings of the [Domestic Violence & Homeless Services Coalition \(DVHSC\)](#) and grew to include community partners nationwide. For the first time ever, it incorporates unique perspectives from survivors as well as architects, service providers, housing developers, and property managers.

"The information in this Toolkit is so unique precisely because it was co-created with survivors," commented Peg Hacskaylo, NASH Chief Executive Officer. "Centering their voices, perspectives, and experiences was of the utmost importance to us. What became clear almost immediately during the process was that safe, stable housing is critical for trauma survivors to be able to heal—but it's only the first step."

"Contemplate, if you can, the suffering and stress experienced as homelessness becomes inevitable, experiencing the homelessness once feared, and the journey to being housed," said Tiffany Duvernay-Smith, a survivor-advocate with DVHSC and a Document Specialist at the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. "Imagine how the trauma of abuse, homelessness, and systems navigation would impact your mental well-being. To 'survive,' a person needs people and programs who really recognize their anguish and the intersection of those experiences to



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meet them exactly where they are, with empathy, resources, peer support, and services like on-site supportive housing case managers who are trained in domestic violence awareness, trauma and resiliency-informed care, and the like.”

While intended as a reference for individuals building and operating housing for domestic violence survivors, the Toolkit's recommendations are applicable across housing programs and partnerships that serve or will serve trauma survivors, even if units are not specifically designated for individuals with lived experience of domestic violence.

On February 17, 10am-11:30am, DWC and NASH will host a virtual panel to introduce the Toolkit and discuss key insights. Featuring Los Angeles County Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell as moderator, the panel will be followed by a series of practical workshops for service providers in March and April (dates TBD).

The Toolkit is available for download [here](#), and event registration information is available [here](#).

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*The **Downtown Women's Center (DWC)** is the only organization in Los Angeles focused exclusively on serving and empowering women experiencing homelessness and formerly homeless women. DWC envisions a Los Angeles with every woman housed and on a path to personal stability. Its mission is to end homelessness for women in greater Los Angeles through housing, wellness, employment, and advocacy. For more information, visit www.DowntownWomensCenter.org.*

*The **National Alliance for Safe Housing (NASH)** was established to ensure that survivors of domestic and sexual violence have access to a full range of housing options through improved access, increased resources, and innovative solutions, and to ultimately catalyze a safe housing movement. NASH's vision is to create a world where safe housing is a human right shared by everyone. Learn more at www.NationalAllianceForSafeHousing.org.*