



# BARRIER REDUCTION & CROSS-SYSTEM PARTNERSHIPS: BEST PRACTICES CHECKLIST

This checklist aims to provide Continuums of Care (CoCs) and Victim Service Provider (VSP) leadership with a comprehensive set of best practices to support barrier reduction and foster cross-system collaboration for programs serving survivors of domestic violence (DV) and unaccompanied women experiencing homelessness. Each section outlines key actions, including cost-neutral opportunities for immediate implementation and investment-driven improvements for long-term support.

## 1

### CROSS-SYSTEM PARTNERSHIPS

#### COST-NEUTRAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Reserve a seat on the CoC board for at least one VSP representative.
- Streamline coordination between VSPs and homelessness services providers by enabling the sharing of assessments and documentation to prevent repetitive, re-traumatizing questions throughout intake and referrals, while ensuring confidentiality for survivors.
- Establish referral pathways to ensure coordinated connections to homelessness services when individuals exit other systems (e.g., VSPs, hospitals, correctional facilities, child welfare).
- Strengthen system integration to ensure individuals accessing homelessness services can also be referred into VSP services as needed (bidirectional referrals).
- Develop and implement warm handoff protocols with built-in transition timelines (e.g., 48–72 hours) to ensure coordinated support between DV and homelessness services providers, promoting emotional and logistical support during service transfer.
- Establish regular meetings across DV and homelessness services systems to identify coordination challenges and build shared solutions.
- Establish self-evaluation or internal review processes to assess the effectiveness of coordination and service provision across systems. This can include percentage of successful referrals from system to system, wait times during warm handoffs, and permanent housing outcomes.

#### INVESTMENT-DRIVEN SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

- Work together to develop and implement a standardized level of care across VSPs and homelessness services that incorporates trauma informed care, cultural sensitivity training, and aims to minimize service delivery delays whenever possible.
- Establish Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and data-sharing agreements between homelessness services and VSPs to be able to share intake, assessments, service history, and other information as allowable by state and federal confidentiality requirements to better serve shared clients.
- Create and maintain a centralized resource directory for providers and service seekers that includes service listings, contact information, eligibility and access requirements to streamline connection to services.
- Establish partnerships or contracts with interpreters or multilingual service providers to ensure effective communication with clients in their preferred language.
- Co-locate homelessness services and DV services to reduce travel and coordination burden on survivors.

### COST-NEUTRAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Create assessment tools and prioritization processes that consider survivors and unaccompanied women's unique circumstances, accounting for the vulnerability of these populations and their increased likelihood of being a victim of violence.
- Ensure safety assessments are conducted prior to shelter and housing placements to mitigate unsafe or high-risk placement locations.
- Create more inclusive DV shelter policies so VSPs can serve all survivors, including those experiencing chronic homelessness.
- Adopt flexible documentation and eligibility policies that reduce barriers to entry.
- Provide clear and transparent information about available shelter and housing resources.
- Ensure transgender and non-binary people are provided shelter options and services that are in alignment with their gender identity and support a safe environment.
- Solicit and incorporate client feedback on shelter policies, services, and safety.

### INVESTMENT-DRIVEN SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

- Expand shelter access and options for women without children such as providing motel vouchers.
- Ensure there are shelter options that accept service animals, companion animals, and pets or provide alternative solutions such as temporary kenneling.
- Ensure shelters are accessible to accommodate survivors and unaccompanied women with disabilities.
- Ensure access to shelters or alternative community options for survivors with older children, regardless of gender, prioritizing keeping family members together.
- Develop processes for individuals to report shelter, housing, or services grievances outside of provider organizations such as utilizing a local ombudsperson.
- Hire advocates to engage with landlords and property owners on behalf of clients and establish incentives to encourage landlords to rent to voucher holders and people with limited rental/credit histories.

**Are you a City, County, Continuum of Care or Federally Recognized Tribe in need of support implementing these best practices? Cal ICH is here to help. Contact us at [calich@bcsh.ca.gov](mailto:calich@bcsh.ca.gov).**

## 3

### SUPPORTIVE SERVICES & SURVIVOR NEEDS: COST-NEUTRAL OPPORTUNITIES

#### COST-NEUTRAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand access and referrals to wraparound supports like childcare, transportation, and mental health services by increasing cross-systems partnerships and coordination.
- Increase availability of culturally appropriate services by hiring from a diverse pool of applicants with lived experience and/or cultural humility.
- Establish meaningful relationships with financial literacy and credit repair programs that are knowledgeable on financial abuse and coerced debt.
- Establish meaningful relationships with programs that provide job training, skill development, and employment support.
- Ensure access to case management and housing navigation for women who have been separated from their children with a focus on removing barriers to facilitate reunification through cross-system coordination.

#### INVESTMENT-DRIVEN SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

- Ensure services and resources are provided in multiple languages across systems with clear infographics.

## 4

### STAFF TRAINING & EDUCATION: COST-NEUTRAL OPPORTUNITIES

#### COST-NEUTRAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Strengthen understanding of CoCs and VSPs through education including purpose, goals, and parameters of each system.
- Ensure staff and community partners are informed about the suite of resources available in the community to support unaccompanied women and survivors of domestic violence and that they understand how to effectively make referrals to these resources.

#### INVESTMENT-DRIVEN SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

- Establish a coordinated training plan to ensure staff and partner organizations serving this population receive training on:
  - Gender-based violence, gender identity, and the intersectionality of the two.
  - The importance of protecting survivors' privacy (location) to support safety. This can be particularly challenging in small or rural communities.
  - Domestic violence, homelessness, and the intersectionality of the two.
  - The dangers unaccompanied women experiencing homelessness face.
- Ensure frontline workers in both homelessness services and VSPs receive training on:
  - Trauma-informed care
  - Identifying domestic violence
  - Domestic violence foundational overview
  - Safety planning for victims of domestic violence
  - Intersection of domestic violence and homelessness
  - DV/VSP confidentiality requirements
  - Cultural humility
  - De-escalation
  - Implicit bias
- Ensure survivor voices and peer specialists play a key role in developing and delivering training to staff and community partners.