



FACT SHEET: CONSIDERATIONS FOR HOUSING YOUTH HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS AND YOUTH AT RISK OF TRAFFICKING

To better understand how to support the housing needs of survivors of trafficking, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) conducted a study to assess the availability and accessibility of housing and housing services for survivors of human trafficking and those at risk of trafficking.¹ This fact sheet is intended to apply the study findings to understand how to assist youth² trafficking survivors (hereinafter “youth survivors”) and youth at risk of trafficking with housing access needs.

Youth experiencing homelessness are at an increased risk of experiencing human trafficking. Youth with one or more marginalized (i.e. discriminated against, oppressed, underserved) identities experience greater vulnerability both to trafficking and housing instability, especially youth of color and LGBTQI+ youth. When youth survivors are identified, they have unique needs for social and housing services, including short- and long-term housing solutions, youth-focused victim services, long-term health and mental healthcare, education and job resources, child welfare services, legal and immigration services, and community resources. There is no one-size-fits-all housing solution for youth survivors and they often require flexible housing and social services to meet their needs.

Barriers to Accessing Housing Services for Youth Experiencing Homelessness and Trafficking

Youth are not always able to access the housing and housing services they need due to systemic barriers and misconceptions about human trafficking. While these services are technically supposed to be available everywhere, some youth are fearful of the potential consequences of engaging with the youth homeless system or lack access to sufficient services.

Common barriers to obtaining market-rate housing include:

- ➔ Lack of rental history⁴
- ➔ Juvenile justice system involvement
- ➔ Lack of access to safe jobs and sustainable income to pay for housing
- ➔ Fair Housing protections violations like discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, national origin, race and color, or survivor status

Common barriers to accessing housing services include:

- ➔ Housing providers’ lack of understanding of trafficking and trauma-informed care, resulting in traumatizing interactions and victim-blaming
- ➔ Perceptions that youth with undocumented status are a risk to other clients or the provider
- ➔ Juvenile justice system involvement
- ➔ Lack of flexibility in the current youth homelessness system, preventing youth from accessing beneficial housing structures like shared housing
- ➔ Limited number of victim service providers and culturally specific organizations that can meet the complex needs of survivors
- ➔ Lack of housing providers that can meet the complex needs of survivors

Case Study: Continuum of Housing Options³

The Santa Clara Housing Pilot implemented a pilot project that provided a continuum of housing options to girls and gender-expansive youth involved in the juvenile justice system and child welfare system. The pilot provided options for stays in shelters, shared housing, host homes, and a single site house with on site staff to allow the youth to stay in places they are most comfortable and move through the continuum as needed. The prioritization of social service provision and pool of housing resources in the pilot reduced the number of youth who stayed in the systems’ custody.



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Takeaways

Service providers, housing providers, federal partners, and private funders all have a role in improving access to housing services for youth survivors. Youth-focused and youth-led housing programs that include youth and youth survivors in decision-making and program development, allow flexibility in living arrangements, and provide opportunities for youth to lead in safety and housing services planning. To meet the needs of youth survivors, stakeholders need to:

Build trust with survivors by:

- Training service and housing providers on trauma-informed care and outreach
- Prioritizing whole-person treatment to avoid stigma and allow youth to participate in safety, housing, and victim services planning

Coordinate efforts to ensure access to a wide range of services by:

- Building awareness and understanding of the needs of youth survivors by coordinating among Public Housing Authorities, Continuums of Care, and Public Child Welfare Agencies and community based anti-trafficking and anti-sexual assault organizations, including youth-focused and culturally specific organizations
- Ensuring youth survivors are able to access all necessary services by improving coordination between victim service providers, including culturally specific organizations and housing providers
- Utilizing community-based peer navigators to help youth understand local youth housing systems and learn about their rights

Improve and expand flexible, survivor-centered housing services by:

- Utilizing flexible funding to provide adaptable housing assistance for shared housing, creative rental options, and direct cash assistance, which allow youth to choose housing situations they are most comfortable with and prevent immediate crises from spiraling into larger ones
- Integrating meaningful contributions of people with lived experience in all areas of program design and policy

Case Study: Flexible Rental Assistance⁵

The Oakland Housing Authority operates a sponsor-based housing program for youth aging out of foster care. Through a service provider sponsor, the program provides flexible rental assistance that makes rental payments for youth living in communal living arrangements. Youth were able to use funds to live with roommates or extended family, allowing them to quickly access safe housing and avoid limits on housing access due to a lack of rental history.

[Access the full study here](#)

Endnotes

- 1 To read more about the full Housing Needs of Survivors of Human Trafficking Study see: https://www.hud.gov/press/press_releases_media_advisories/hud_no_24_059
- 2 For the purposes of this fact sheet, "youth" refers to minors under the age of 18 and young adults aged 18-24
- 3 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Housing Needs of Survivors of Human Trafficking Study," 2024, pp. 61-62
- 4 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Housing Needs of Survivors of Human Trafficking Study," 2024, pp. 37
- 5 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Housing Needs of Survivors of Human Trafficking Study," 2024, pp. 57