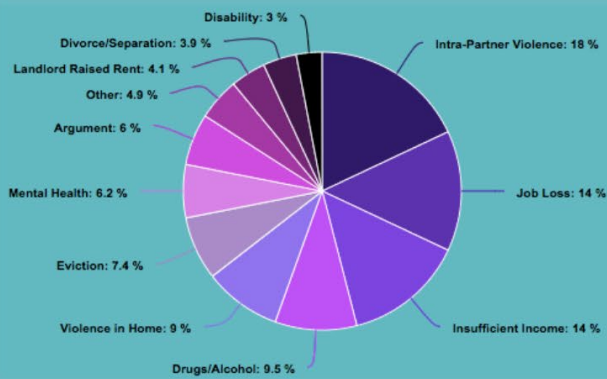


WOMEN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY



CAUSES



Primary causes of homelessness by age



Task Force on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

WOMEN AND THE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING SYSTEM

SANTA CLARA COUNTY TASK FORCE ON THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Affordable and available housing is critical for the wellbeing of women and their families, especially for women who are experiencing additional crisis. Support to maintain and create more affordable housing and domestic violence shelters is needed now more than ever in Santa Clara County.

In Santa Clara County, 51% of women experiencing homelessness are accompanied by minors. Forty-one percent (41%) of them report violence as being the cause of their homelessness. Of these women, 54% have faced some form of violence, abuse, harassment, or threats while experiencing homelessness.ⁱ Domestic violence shelter beds across the county, turn away approximately 2,000 requests a year due to lack of space.ⁱⁱ Thirty-nine percent (39%) of women returned to an unsafe home because they had nowhere else to go and 20% of women are pregnant while homeless.ⁱⁱⁱ

Women escaping unsafe and abusive lives tend to be the most vulnerable women experiencing homelessness. Per a countywide study, 46% of abuse against women occurs while they are homeless outdoors versus 21% in homeless shelters and 17% in indoor public facilities. **While 36% of women experiencing homelessness in the county attribute the cause of their homelessness to domestic violence, this number is only 8% for men.**^{iv}

The top causes for homelessness amongst women are intra-partner violence (18%), job loss (14%), insufficient income (14%), drugs and/or alcohol (9.5%), and violence in the home (9%).^v


CURRENT POLICIES & GAPS

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING SYSTEM


MEASURE A - AFFORDABLE HOUSING BOND

EMERGENCY SHELTERS:
Provide an access point to the Coordinated Assessment System


COORDINATED ASSESSMENT SYSTEM
A standard assessment assigns priority levels and matches people to housing programs from a community queue




Permanent Supportive Housing



Transitional Housing





Rapid Rehousing



72% exited rapid programs by 2018 and found permanent housing; 90% percent retention rate


BUT

Women are **33%** of the homeless population but only **27%** of clients in singles shelters 

 Only **27%** of women exiting shelters go into transitional or long-term housing

Inflow exceeds available housing

36% on the community queue are women

Women are enrolling at higher rates in lower intensity programs 

Task Force on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

The causes of homelessness amongst women in Santa Clara County changes when age is taken into consideration. Economic factors remain one of the top concerns throughout all three age demographics. The current housing crisis stemming from extremely high rental rates is a major contributing factor. As women age, medical factors, and likely the expenses that come along with those, become a major cause of homelessness. Younger women report violence at a high rate as the primary cause of their homelessness. The rate of violence as a primary factor for homelessness decreases with the increase in age of women.^{vi}

Santa Clara County utilizes a Coordinated Access System to assess priority levels for homeless individuals from a community queue and matches them with the appropriate housing program: Permanent Supportive Housing – long-term connections to housing and services, Transitional Housing – temporary housing and services, or Rapid Rehousing – services and financial assistance to remain housed independently. In 2018, 72% exited Rapid Rehousing and found permanent housing, 90% remained stably housed for at least 12 months through Permanent Supportive Housing, and only 6% entering the system returned to homelessness within two years.^{vii}

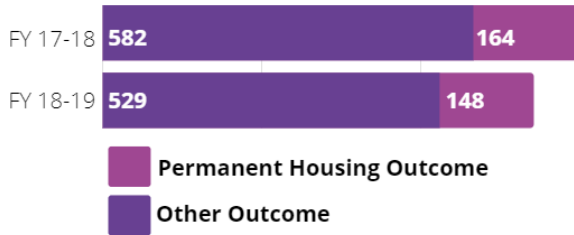
It is essential to acknowledge that women face disproportionate struggles based on the intersectionality of their various identities and experiences. While women need different resources than men, women also have a variety of needs amidst themselves and it is important to address the concerns of women experiencing homelessness through the application of an intersectional gender lens.

Based on the most urgent issues identified by women living in homelessness in Santa Clara County, these are next steps to keep in mind for future policy:

Recommendation #1: Increase capacity across the housing continuum to ensure seamless housing and case management support for gender-based violence survivors from crisis to long term stability.

Santa Clara County has 62 confidential shelter beds designated for intimate partner abuse (IPV) survivors fleeing dangerous or abusive partners/situations. Collectively, confidential IPV shelters provided services to 746 survivors and children (equivalent to 22,109 bed-nights) during FY 17-18 and 677 people (23,202 bed-nights) during FY 18-19.

IPV Shelter Requests and Permanent Housing Outcomes



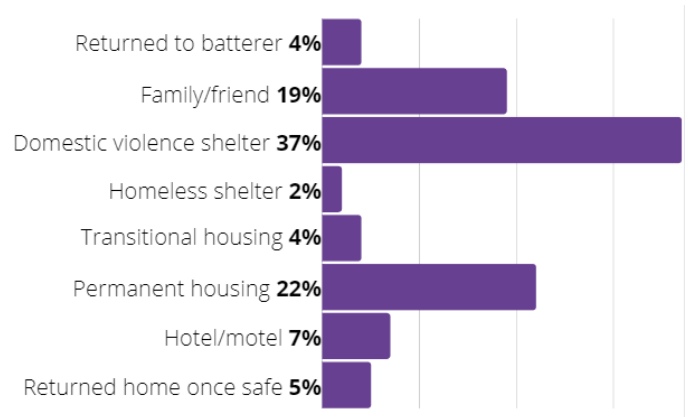
Shelter providers also receive emergency shelter requests from survivors of other types of gender-based violence (GBV) – including sexual assault, elder abuse, wage theft and other workplace crimes – as well as requests from homeless individuals with no recent victimizations. The shelter providers strive to support all survivors of GBV from an intersectional and collaborative framework.

IPV survivors seeking confidential shelter may also be victims of sexual assault and/or human trafficking. Some shelter providers also house survivors of sex or labor trafficking in addition to housing IPV survivors that were trafficked by their intimate partner. During FY 17-18, IPV shelters supported 23 human trafficking survivors for a total of 1,411 bed-nights. The number of human trafficking survivors housed increased in FY 18-19 to 39 and 2,875 bed-nights. These numbers do not include sexual assault survivors sheltered through the rape crisis centers.

Due to lack of space, there were 2,241 unmet requests for emergency, confidential shelter during FY 17-18 and 1,892 during FY 18-19. There may be some duplication of count as it includes individuals who requested shelter from one or more confidential emergency shelter providers. There has also been a 36% increase in the average length of shelter stay over two fiscal years. Survivors are staying longer at shelters due to lack of

options for transitional or permanent housing. The increase in average length of stay also increases the number of turnaways, as shelters have limited capacity.^{viii}

In recent years, IPV shelter providers have collectively tracked outcomes for survivors exiting confidential IPV shelters. During FY 18-19, 36% of survivors moved from one confidential shelter to another. Lack of access to safe transitional or long-term housing is reported as the primary reason for this shelter to shelter move. Twenty two percent (22%) of survivors reported moving into permanent housing upon exiting an emergency shelter. Only 4% of survivors exiting confidential shelters were accepted into transitional housing programs. Survivors moving into transitional or long-term housing require wrap around support to ensure they do not lose their housing placement. This includes financial as well as case management support.



Shelter Exit Outcomes for FY 18-19:

In order to provide seamless housing support for GBV survivors, the County should address housing for GBV survivors as a continuum that includes crisis, transitional, and long-term housing. This holistic approach requires funding flexibility that allows providers to utilize resources in the manner that best fits the client’s needs. During the last two fiscal years, the confidential IPV shelter providers turned away 16% fewer clients, possibly due to the increased city, county, and state investments in other parts of the housing continuum such as Housing First. Some clients may mainly need financial support to allow them to stay in

their homes. Other clients fleeing abusive situations should have access to confidential, emergency shelter. Clients in emergency shelter later require options for transitional and long-term housing. Survivors' housing needs are best met when providers and systems work collaboratively. In Santa Clara County, the Continuum Of Care Victim Needs Screening Tool (COC VNST) was created to ensure homeless service providers identify survivors of IPV, sexual assault, or human trafficking and provide them with the option of entering the confidential queue. This partnership has increased screening and warm handoffs amongst COC and IPV providers.

The County could explore partnerships with nonprofit developers for the purpose of bridging the long-term housing gap for IPV survivors. These partnerships should include creative financing options to address long term rental assistance support for survivors under the 25-50% of County median income. Housing access must be coupled with trauma-informed, culturally responsive, survivor-centered services that allow for language access. While language access continues to be critical for all communities, there is a particularly large gap in housing and economic self-sufficiency services for the Asian and Pacific Islander community.

Women's Bill of Rights I, III, and V

Recommendation #2: Provide living wage training opportunities – and jobs – for women

According to a Santa Clara County study, 82% of women did not have or attend any form of job training while experiencing homelessness.^{ix} Prioritizing high skills job training and education while providing access to childcare can equip women with the knowledge and skills to be independent earners to support themselves and their families. This will provide women with transferrable skills and the ability to reintegrate into society after experiencing sudden loss of income and subsequently housing. It also provides a safe environment for women to regain learning their worth, build esteem, and decompress the flight or fight state of mind associated with their escape.

The creation of free quality training options with diverse career paths that pay well above minimum wage will motivate women to find and develop skills that best fit their needs. It will also alleviate surviving in poverty by enabling women to achieve a living wage. Integrating education on job retention, wage theft prevention, and workers' rights into training opportunities is also an area the County can support.

Income and wealth are key factors in a family's financial resiliency to obtain housing and ability to recover from financial emergencies such as a rent increase or eviction. Women-headed households are overwhelmingly low-income. For example, in San Jose 70% percent of all women-headed households with children earn incomes at or below 80% of the area median income.^x

Certain Santa Clara County department and agencies practice targeted hiring for vulnerable populations in the community and the County can improve existing practices by intentionally hiring more women from this particular subset and continue to provide high skills job training and education through professional development.

Further, this recommendation urges the supporting of Santa Clara County policies for equal pay and fair wages through an intersectional lens. The County should ensure that this incentive structure is clearly expressed to women – these jobs, although requiring extensive training and time away from children, position women to be able to provide for their families and themselves in the form of a living wage above the poverty line.

Women's Bill of Rights I, II, and VI

Recommendation #3: Support measures to make housing more affordable and accessible for women; Eliminate discriminatory policies in the housing market

There is a need for new larger units in affordable housing to fit the needs of women with children and large families through an intersectional lens that acknowledges certain relationships between race and

family size. The County should analyze and provide a breakdown of unit sizes in approved Measure A projects.

The County can support rent control and just cause eviction protections which can enable women and their families to be stabilized in their homes and victims of domestic violence to not fear eviction for calling the police. The County should support providing landlord/property owner education to understand legislation as it relates to rent control, just cause evictions, and the Violence Against Women Act.

In addition, the County should reduce the documentation requirements for affordable housing and remove the criminal history question from the affordable housing applications. The County should also create a system to track housing vouchers for women that move from homelessness to incarceration, so as not to lose their “spot in line” for housing and move again into homelessness upon community reentry.

Women’s Bill of Rights I and X

ⁱ County of Santa Clara Gender and Homelessness Study August 2018

ⁱⁱ Santa Clara County Domestic Violence Advocacy Consortium 2017 and 2018

ⁱⁱⁱ County of Santa Clara Gender and Homelessness Study August 2018

^{iv} Women and the Supportive Housing System in Santa Clara County – Office of Supportive Housing 2018

^v County of Santa Clara Gender and Homelessness Study August 2018

^{vi} County of Santa Clara Gender and Homelessness Study August 2018

Responses and recommendations based on presentations at November 28, 2018 meeting by:

Hilary Barroga, Office of Supportive Housing, Santa Clara County

Carla Collins, Office of Women’s Policy

In addition, recommendations were developed from interviews, site visits to and requests for information from: Santa Clara County Domestic Violence Advocacy Consortium

Responses and recommendations developed by Ad Hoc Committee members and Office of Women’s Policy staff:

Perla Flores, Member

Minjung Kwok, Member

Jacklyn Joanino, Member

Gitika Harith, Office of Women’s Policy

Julie Wood, Office of Women’s Policy

^{vii} Ending Homelessness: The State of the Supportive Housing System in Santa Clara County 2017

^{viii} Santa Clara County Domestic Violence Advocacy Consortium 2017/18 and 2018/19

^{ix} County of Santa Clara Gender and Homelessness Study August 2018

^x 2017 ACS 1-Year Estimates, B19131: Family Type By Presence of Own Children Under 18 Years By Family Income In the Past 12 Months (In 2017 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) - Universe: Families