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UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative Releases Findings on Intersection of Intimate Partner Violence and Homelessness

SAN FRANCISCO (January 16, 2024) – The University of California, San Francisco [Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative](#) (BHHI) today released a special report on the relationship between intimate partner violence (IPV) and homelessness in California. The analysis is based on survey data and in-depth interviews from the [California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness](#) (CASPEH), the largest representative study of homelessness in the United States since the mid-1990s.

The [IPV report](#), *Toward Safety: Understanding Intimate Partner Violence and Homelessness*, is the first in a series of deep dives into CASPEH data that will be released by BHHI this year. Additional reports will include Black Californians' Experiences of Homelessness, Aging and Homelessness, Latino/x Experiences of Homelessness, and Behavioral Health and Homelessness, among others.

Intimate partner violence – violence or abuse by a current or former intimate partner – increases the risk of homelessness for survivors, particularly those with limited financial resources. Forty percent of survivors who experienced IPV in the six months prior to their homelessness indicated that violence was a reason for leaving their last housing and 20 percent indicated it was the primary reason.

“Those impacted by intimate partner violence face dual traumas – the harrowing experience of homelessness and the lasting impacts of violence,” **said Margot Kushel, MD, Director, UCSF BHHI and principal investigator of CASPEH.** “Those who had nowhere to go were willing to forgo housing to protect their personal safety. Unfortunately, due to lack of access to domestic violence services or shelters, IPV continues to worsen during homelessness.”

“We need a comprehensive statewide strategy to address the deep relationship between intimate partner violence, or domestic violence, and homelessness,” **said Debbie I. Chang, president and CEO of Blue Shield of California Foundation,** a CASPEH funder. “We can’t solve one without addressing the other. Domestic violence contributes to homelessness and can continue or worsen when someone is unhoused. Both domestic violence and homelessness affect people of color with low incomes disproportionately. To take on these interwoven issues, and prevent them from happening in the first place, we need to support survivors’ economic needs by offering flexible financial assistance and permanent, affordable housing.”

Key findings from the report include:

- The median monthly household income of those experiencing IPV in the months prior to homelessness was \$1,000, highlighting their **extreme poverty as a main cause of homelessness** in a state where the median monthly rent for a one bedroom is \$1,600.

- Participants reported leaving their homes as a survival strategy, even when they had rental subsidies, indicating that the **need to ensure safety superseded usual protections against homelessness**.
- Almost all participants indicated that **modest financial support** could have averted their homelessness despite IPV, with large majorities saying a housing voucher (92%), a lump-sum payment (83%), or a shallow monthly subsidy (73%) would have staved off homelessness for at least two years.
- **Barriers to seeking help that would protect participants** against homelessness included not knowing about specialized domestic violence (DV) resources, having childcare responsibilities, and fearing that intimate partners would find out.
- A majority of participants (60%) who both experienced IPV prior to homelessness and left housing due to violence **spent most nights in unsheltered settings**, indicating that **many people leaving housing due to IPV do not go to DV shelters**.
- Many participants (42%) who experienced IPV in the six months prior to homelessness, experienced IPV during homelessness and felt that **being homeless left them vulnerable to increased violence from their intimate partner**.
- Nearly all survivors (95%) reported that **the high cost of housing** was a barrier to their exiting homelessness and 61% indicated that **poor credit or eviction history**, often a consequence of IPV, was a barrier to regaining housing.

Despite these challenges, those impacted by IPV described paths forward to housing stability and healing, including increased access to DV shelters, increased education, flexible financial support, DV-specialized services, and support for finding permanent housing.

Based on the report findings, **BHHI endorses policy recommendations in four key areas:** promote policies and programs that center violence and homelessness prevention; promote equity in responses to intimate partner violence; increase access to affordable, permanent housing options for survivors; and increase support for survivors currently experiencing homelessness.

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About UCSF BHHI

[The UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative](#) provides accurate, timely policy-oriented research about homelessness for local, state, and national policymakers and practitioners.

Funded by a generous gift from Marc and Lynne Benioff and based at the UCSF Center for Vulnerable Populations, UCSF BHHI is a trusted source for evidence-based practice, policy, and scalable solutions – turning evidence into action to prevent and end homelessness.