

# Housing and Domestic Violence in Nevada: Paper Summary

EXHIBIT F - AFFORDABLE HOUSING  
Meeting Date: 01-23-06  
Document consists of 5 pages.  
Entire Exhibit Provided

## Choosing Between Abuse and Homelessness

Battered women who live in poverty are often forced to choose between abuse and homelessness. National studies indicate that between 22 percent and 57 percent of homeless women report that domestic violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness (Martin 553). Nevada advocates estimate that between 80 and 100 percent of their clients were in need of housing resources.

Battered women are often preoccupied with the consequences, for their children, of leaving the abusive household (Will he get custody? Will they be homeless? Where will she take them that is safe? How can she work to pay rent and afford childcare?) and of returning to the home (Will the children be hurt? Will she lose them in a CPS investigation of the violence?).

## Poor Policy

Sometimes victims are evicted from Public Housing because police were called to domestic assaults. And, if she's lost public housing in the past due to the violence—either because the perpetrator damaged property or engaged in any illegal activities (including, ironically, domestic violence)—she may also be stigmatized, and find that she is denied housing opportunities despite her financial need and eligibility.

Women who fight back in self-defense, and are prosecuted, may have a “violent criminal background.” Recent advocacy and litigation against HUD established that these “records’ conclusions” are a violation of the Fair Housing Act. However, we know that this discrimination still occurs, and that most survivors do not know they have legal recourse, or they don't feel they have the financial and emotional depth to pursue these rights.

## Wait Lists

The vast majority of victims turn to HUD programs—public housing and Section 8. Women often waited 6-8 weeks for appointments, and 4-36 months for housing to become available. This kind of wait is particularly dangerous for victims of domestic violence; victims who enter Emergency Shelter in Nevada usually have between 30 and 90 days to find transitional or permanent housing, and many—confronted by a gap between emergency shelter and public housing assistance—choose to go home to the violence rather than risk homelessness.

Prior to 1998, housing authorities were required by federal laws to consider battered women “involuntarily displaced families” and prioritize their placement. Federal preferences have since been repealed in favor of local public housing authority discretion. Only 35 percent of public housing authorities maintain a domestic-violence-victim preference of some sort, while the majority does not (Martin 553).

## Affordability and Need

The availability of transitional housing programs and low-income, subsidized housing in Nevada is simply too scarce. And securing housing in a “fair market” is simply out of reach for many families: In 2002, the National Low Income Housing Coalition concluded that a Nevadan must earn an hourly wage of \$15.38 for a two-bedroom apartment to be affordable (Timco). In 2005, that figure increased to \$16.38.

Nevada advocates were almost universal estimating that between 80 percent and 100 percent of their clients were in need of such resources: “There's rarely an exception,” and “The only ones who don't are returning to their abuser.”

Nevada women expressed the feeling that they were being “set up to fail”; others felt they were taking “one step forward and two steps backwards.” As they achieve more independence and stability—the goals of the support systems they access—their resources are actually diminished.

## Pursuing Self-Sufficiency

Without a permanent address, securing employment is challenging; without secure employment, securing a residence is almost impossible. TANF clients are assisted with job training and employment searches, and given childcare subsidies to make these activities possible, but welfare cannot assist with costs and logistics of transportation to and from home, daycare, and work, beyond bus tokens; if the TANF client is fortunate enough to secure employment and leave the TANF rolls, she quickly sees her childcare subsidy diminish, and must confront her transportation issues again.

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**According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition:**

A two bedroom apartment in Nevada Currently Costs

**\$820.00 per month**

To pay for that apartment the hourly wage required is:

**\$16.38 per hour**

or

**\$34,079 per year**

which is

**445% more than the current minimum wage**

## **AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS ABOUT POVERTY**

Assume a single women with two children:

Assume she has a fuel efficient car that never needs repair:

Assume someone paid for her utility, telephone, apartment deposits

Nevada's minimum wage should **increase** to \$6.15 per hour.

At 40 hours per week, that is \$246 per week, or \$984 per month.

Monthly income:	\$984.00
<b>2 Bed-Room Apartment in Nevada:</b>	<b>- <u>820.00</u></b>
(Utilities Included) Left over income:	164.00

Gasoline	- 64.00
Car Payment:	-100.00
Car Insurance:	- 50.00
Telephone:	- 50.00
Child Care for two children	-700.00
Food	-250.00*
Clothing and Diapers	-100.00
Medical Costs/Health Care	- 200.00 (- 1350.00)

Hypothetical Total Required Income:	\$2,334.00
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(\$506.00 less that projected income required by National Low Income Housing Coalition)

This example shows that with a minimum income wage job, the mother with two kids does not pay the recommended 30% of her income on housing, she pays 83% of her income on housing!

## Affordable Housing is a Poverty Issue

**These examples demonstrate why most victims of domestic violence desperately need Section 8 housing or HUD housing vouchers to stabilize their lives and provide a safe environment for themselves and their children.**

**The current 2.5 year waiting list is truly a gap of danger**

The first interim committee meeting talked about the need for affordable housing. The very professional presentations were calculated on “80% of Nevada’s median income” or \$43,318 a year. A very convincing argument was made that these families were having a very difficult time purchasing a house.

We don’t argue that middle income people don’t struggle to purchase housing with today’s costs.

**We maintain that the most critical housing issues is not about middle income wage earners...**

**It is about those living in poverty**

**Our concern is for people who cannot find or afford to RENT let alone purchase.**

## Add Domestic Violence....

### HOUSING IS A POVERTY ISSUE PLUS, A SAFETY, AND TIME-DEPENDENT ISSUE

The Bad News: Lack of low-income housing is a challenge that puts victims of Domestic Violence at risk.

The Good News: If you increase any transitional and/or low income housing you also address the needs of domestic violence victims.

We urge you to add the words *affordable and safe* to your search for solutions for *transitional and low income housing*.