



Show Visual 1.

Model Facilities

1. District Alliance for Safe Housing



Show Visual 2.

The District Alliance for Safe Housing (DASH) provides housing and social services for victims of victims of domestic violence and their children in Washington, D.C.

Its mission is to ensure access to safe and sustainable refuge for victims of domestic violence through the development and management of safe housing and related services, while increasing the capacity of other community-based organizations to expand housing for victims throughout the District of Columbia. Access is central to DASH's efforts to making its programs accessible to people with disabilities as well as to improving victims' access to all forms of housing in the city.



Show Visual 3.

DASH helps women and children rebuild their lives on their own terms, while providing safety and the resources they need for a fresh start. The organization serves all women who are victims of abuse, regardless of their needs. DASH has the following three goals:

- Develop safe housing for domestic violence victims and their families to ensure safety from violence and promote living without fear of abuse.
- Deliver targeted housing resources to victims and their families to improve access to safe, affordable housing.
- Provide training and technical assistance among community-based programs to increase safe housing for victims and enhance the overall well-being and safety for women and children in the District.



Show Visual 4.

The organization began in 2007 as an informal phone-based housing advocacy group. Each year has seen tremendous growth in both the agency's life and the city's ability to ensure safety from abuse.

In fact, DASH has gone through such a remarkable and quick transformation it is now the largest domestic violence safe housing provider in the city.



Show Visual 5.

For example, in 2008 DASH’s housing program offered six apartments providing safe, stable transitional housing to 18 people. In 2009, DASH opened Huruma Place, a 20-unit/82-bed apartment-style emergency housing residence offering short-term emergency safe housing. Together, the 26 apartments provided emergency and transitional housing to 141 people in 2009. The impact from 2008 to 2009 was more than triple the number of safe bed “shelter” nights for women and children made homeless by domestic violence. These facilities are accessible to people with disabilities, and have housed women with a variety of disabilities, including mental illness and seizure disorders, and mobility disabilities. In fact, one resident came to Huruma from a rehab hospital after recovering from the abuse that left her paralyzed.



Show Visual 6.

Residents at Huruma Place may stay for 90 days or more while working with DASH staff to plan their next steps and find long-term housing. The apartment-based program was specifically developed with the capacity to serve “special” populations, including families with three or more children, women with male children over age 12, women with substance addictions, and other underserved groups. During 1 year, as many as 100 women and their children make Huruma Place their home before moving to transitional programs or permanent housing.



Show Visual 7.

DASH’s transitional-to-permanent housing project, called the Empowerment Project, is an innovative approach to providing housing for victims whose credit and rental histories were damaged during abusive relationships. Participants can sign a lease on an apartment of their choosing, made possible by the relationships DASH has established with landlords across the city. DASH provides a rental subsidy, along with intensive supportive services and resources, so the women can become financially independent over the course of 2 years.

DASH’s Empowerment Advocate works with each participant to focus on financial goals such as paying down debt, restoring damaged credit, and saving money for future goals, all while building a solid rental history in a safe apartment unit.



Show Visual 8.

DASH also created the Housing Resource Center (HRC), which is the hub of DASH’s efforts to prevent homelessness among domestic violence survivors. Here, survivors receive assistance in completing housing applications, obtaining safety transfers, navigating the public housing system, and making connections to community services.

Survivors can conduct housing searches in the computer lab and work one-on-one with housing specialists.



Show Visual 9.

The Housing Resource Center Online is a Web-based information clearinghouse with comprehensive information designed specifically to support survivors of domestic violence in locating safe housing. Here, survivors find various safe housing options and a comprehensive housing guide for survivors in D.C. seeking emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing. The guide details eligibility requirements, the admission process, and the physical accessibility of housing programs.



Show Visual 10.

The Housing Resource Center Online provides specific information on abuse of victims with disabilities, including abusive tactics such as manipulation of medication, withholding assistive devices, or financial exploitation. The resource also provides housing options for survivors with physical or mental disabilities, and notice of their right to ask for, and receive, reasonable accommodation.



Show Visual 11.

The downloadable Housing Resource Guide lists information on domestic violence emergency and transitional housing programs in D.C., as well as a selection of programs in Maryland and Virginia. The Guide provides detailed information for each housing program so survivors can know exactly what services are provided, what the eligibility requirements are, if the program is accessible to people with disabilities, and how to apply.



Show Visual 12.

One of DASH's most recent projects is the Cornerstone Housing Program. This program is designed to provide access, safety, and acceptance to victims of domestic violence by providing a "low barrier" housing program that accommodates victims regardless of disability, chemical addiction, immigration status, or sexual orientation.



Show Visual 13.

The Cornerstone Housing program is a collaborative project with the city's other domestic violence programs to meet the needs of survivors. The Cornerstone Building, purchased in 2007, incorporates principles of universal and green design. The space will be a model facility that provides a peaceful sanctuary from abuse that is accessible to all

victims. All program elements will address the complex issues that may stand between women and a safe, stable future, including economic, emotional, and spiritual needs.

The Cornerstone Building is an apartment-style residence of co-located emergency and transitional housing in a 47-unit apartment building. The facility will open in the fall of 2010, and each year will offer transitional housing for as many as 40 women and families, and emergency housing for up to 21 women and their children.



Show Visual 14.

DASH has been involved in the process of purchasing, renovating, and establishing the facility since its inception in 2007. Peg Hacskeylo, Executive Director of DASH, provides some important points to keep in mind when renovating a building as a shelter:

- Before putting a contract on a building, find an architect and project manager who are committed to universal design to maximize accessibility.
- Develop the support of professionals who are in favor of the project, as the process of purchasing the building, vacating it, renovating it, and moving into it can be long and somewhat complicated. DASH was very lucky to have a project team all dedicated to the type of housing being developed.
- Work with the surrounding community to garner support from neighborhood residents and businesses. Stress the security of the facility, and responsibility and consistency of the staffing.
- Balance cost with accessibility features. Budgets are always a concern, but attempt to achieve the maximum benefit in accessibility. You can often cut costs in decorative or non-essential features to make accommodations for people with disabilities. Remember, universal accommodations benefit everyone.



Show Visual 15.

These photos were taken when the Cornerstone Building was under construction. The original entrance to the building was very elegant, but it had steps, which would have required modification for wheelchair accessibility. Also, this entrance was difficult to secure, so DASH opted to make a side entrance into the main entrance.



Show Visual 16.

The building was constructed in 1936. While it had retained a number of attractive features, it was not very accessible. Because of the building's age, the majority of its features were either not to code or not universally accessible. Modifications/additions included:

- Fire sprinkler system
- New elevator large enough to accommodate a stretcher
- All new electrical and fire safety systems
- New plumbing
- Remediation of lead-based paint and asbestos



Show Visual 17.

All signage is in Braille, including signs for public areas and rooms. Accessible rooms are identified as such.



Show Visual 18.

All lighting is incandescent, and sconces are used throughout. Notice that gas piping and electrical conduits are visible. To retrofit the building and conceal the utilities would have been prohibitively expensive. DASH made the decision to leave the utilities as they were, and to spend the money on features that would benefit the women they serve.



Show Visual 19.

All apartments have parquet floors for durability and ease of maintenance, to prevent trip and fall hazards, and to make access easier for women with vision disabilities or wheelchairs.



Show Visual 20.

All rooms and public areas are equipped with visual and audible smoke alarms to accommodate women who are blind, Deaf, or hard-of-hearing.



Show Visual 21.

Kitchens are equipped with tile floors. In accessible units, wall cabinets and countertops are set at a lower height so they can be reached by residents who use wheelchairs. In addition, cutouts in the base cabinets allow better access for women in wheelchairs.



Show Visual 22.

Bathrooms in accessible units are large enough to allow for wheelchair turnaround. They have minimal or non-existent thresholds and roll-in showers. Showers are equipped with

a fold-down seat and hand-held shower head. Controls are easily within reach of someone using the fold-down seat. The mirror above the lavatory is lower so that a person using a wheelchair can see her reflection. Toilets are equipped with grab bars. Public bathrooms also adhere to these standards.



Show Visual 23.

Closet shelving is at a level that's easily reachable for a person using a wheelchair – about 48” from the floor.



Show Visual 24.

Door thresholds inside the apartments are also minimal or non-existent, allowing for easy access. Doorways are wider to accommodate wheelchairs.



Show Visual 25.

Light switches in accessible rooms are lowered so a person in a wheelchair can reach them easily.



Show Visual 26.

DASH anticipates serving 150 women and children by the end of 2011.



Show Visual 27.

Creating an accessible building is only one aspect of making sure victims with disabilities can obtain services. You must also ensure that:

- Your programs are accessible.
- Your programs don't screen out victims with disabilities.
- Your programs don't pose barriers that victims can't overcome to receive services.
- The staff are adequately trained and receive the support they need to serve victims with disabilities effectively.

As noted earlier, making your facility and services universally accessible benefits everyone, not just people with disabilities.



Show Visual 28.

Provide contact information.

2. SafePlace



Show Visual 29.

SafePlace exists to end sexual and domestic violence. Nationally recognized for its innovative and effective programs, SafePlace has been providing women, children, and men a place of safety, compassion, and empowerment in Austin, Texas since 1974.

To carry out its mission, SafePlace:

- Provides safety for individuals and families affected by sexual and domestic violence.
- Helps victims in their healing so they can move beyond being defined by the crimes committed against them, and become survivors.
- Promotes safe and healthy relationships for the prevention of sexual and domestic violence.
- Works with others to create change in attitudes, behaviors, and policies that perpetuate the acceptance of, and impact our understanding and responses to, sexual and domestic violence.



Show Visual 30.

In 1998, the Austin Rape Crisis Center and the Center for Battered Women – both founded in the 1970’s – joined to combine resources and help more survivors, their families, and the Austin/Travis County community. This union recognized that the issues of sexual assault and domestic violence were related, and that often one form of violence needed to be addressed in order to treat the other.

SafePlace became a unified source of hope for women, children, and men hurt by sexual and domestic violence. The agency continues to be nationally recognized as a leader for its innovative and effective programs.



Show Visual 31.

SafePlace has long supported the immediate needs of survivors through a 24-hour hotline, hospital accompaniment, shelter, and counseling services. More recently, the agency added programs that educate, build awareness, provide support in accessing resources, and work with the children of survivors.



Show Visual 32.

The facility serves anyone suffering from the trauma of sexual abuse, rape, and/or domestic violence based on their needs and current situation. This includes women, children, teens, and men who have experienced violence, recently or in the past.



Show Visual 33.

SafePlace's ADA policy demonstrates a commitment to be barrier-free and accessible as defined by state/federal statutes. All the agency's facilities meet ADA inspection standards. For example, 20 percent of bedrooms in SafePlace's emergency shelter are designed to be fully accessible.

There are five buildings at the SafePlace location. All of the buildings are fully accessible by people who use wheelchairs.



Show Visual 34.

At each building, parking lots have the required number of spaces set aside for parking for people with disabilities.



Show Visual 35.

Wide curb cuts and marked pathways allow easy movement from the street and between the various buildings.



Show Visual 36.

The entrance to the main building has an extra-wide security gate and an automatic gate opener. When an individual arrives at SafePlace, they use an intercom to announce themselves and who they are there to see before being allowed entry by SafePlace staff. For Deaf clients, an alternate confidential protocol is followed. Residents at the emergency shelter may come and go as they please with the caveat that SafePlace has a curfew.



Show Visual 37.

Automatic door openers are also installed in areas of the building where residential and non-residential services are provided. And all doors have levered door handles instead of knobs.



Show Visual 38.

Clients who are new to SafePlace have access to brochures and other informational materials, and waiting rooms with wide entrance doors, space, and privacy.



Show Visual 39.

SafePlace's Resource Center provides non-residential services. Meeting areas, such as this support group room, have accessible pathways and turnaround space for women who use wheelchairs.



Show Visual 40.

All the buildings have accessible features, such as fire extinguishers and first aid kits. Hallways are wide and maintained frequently to keep them clutter free. Service animals are always permitted.



Show Visual 41.

All the buildings have visual and audible fire alarms. All restrooms in non-residential areas are accessible, and signage is provided in Braille. Signage in the emergency shelter is in Braille in English and Spanish.



Show Visual 42.

Restrooms in non-residential areas such as the resource center are accessible. This children's restroom has a low toilet and grab bars.



Show Visual 43.

SafePlace operates an emergency shelter for victims of violence who need immediate safe housing. The shelter is easily accessible from the main building and is close to public transportation. It features a counter cut-out at the front desk to facilitate communication between people who use wheelchairs and emergency shelter staff.



Show Visual 44.

The emergency shelter also has a welcome video, translated in American Sign Language, for new arrivals, letting them know what they can expect during their stay at the shelter. The video is captioned and has voiceover in English and Spanish.



Show Visual 45.

Wide hallways with turnaround space make movement through the building easy. An elevator provides access to the upper floor of the shelter.



Show Visual 46.

The emergency shelter is organized into six clusters, and each cluster has five bedrooms. Each cluster shares a kitchen and living/eating area, which is designed to allow people who use wheelchairs to access the sink and items on the counter. Frequently used items are stored in cabinets beneath the counter so they can be reached easily.



Show Visual 47.

The dining rooms have plenty of space within the rooms and under tables. Accessible front-loading washers and dryers are also available.



Show Visual 48.

Bedrooms in the emergency shelter feature other accommodations, such as levered door handles, individual air-conditioning units positioned at a lower level, visual and audible fire alarms, and lowered peepholes.



Show Visual 49.

The fifth bedroom in each cluster is fully accessible. Bathrooms in these units have a cut-out sink, roll-in shower, grab bars, shower wand, and accessible toilet.



Show Visual 50.

Fire alarms with strobe lighting are positioned throughout the emergency shelter. Hallways are not carpeted to allow for easy mobility. Incandescent hallway lighting provides light that's not too bright, not too dim, and not flickering.



Show Visual 51.

The emergency shelter features a food commissary with a counter at a lower height, and a ramp to the shelter's patios.



Show Visual 52.

There is also an efficiency apartment in the emergency shelter that was originally designed as a temporary shelter for rape survivors, but has been used to shelter men, women with mental illness who have extreme difficulty in chaotic and loud environments, and for women or children with chronic health conditions. At the time this photo was taken, someone who did not have a disability was in the process of moving in.



Show Visual 53.

In addition to the emergency shelter, SafePlace operates longer-term supportive housing and a charter school and day care on the premises for residents who have children. All buildings have accessible entrances, bathrooms, doors, alarms, drinking fountains, and other features. The teachers at the charter school have special education and ESL certification.



Show Visual 54.

SafePlace provides a variety of ADA equipment for use by residents in the emergency shelter. Equipment is also available in the Resource Center, which provides administrative and non-residential services. Equipment includes door beacons, alarm clocks with bed shakers, baby cry signaler systems, videophones, and other devices.



Show Visual 55.

The organization publishes handout material specifically for people with disabilities, including an informational fact sheet for the Deaf community and awareness information on accessibility and interpersonal violence against people with disabilities.



Show Visual 56.

Other handouts, on topics such as assertive communication and safer sexuality, are published in simplified language for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.



Show Visual 57.

SafePlace also shows its commitment to accessibility through the icons on its Web site, brochures and letterhead.



Show Visual 58.

In addition to the physical features that provide accommodation, SafePlace provides a range of services to survivors with disabilities. For example, the organization offers a Deaf Services program for Deaf, deaf/blind, and hard-of-hearing survivors of violence.

The Deaf Services staff are culturally and linguistically fluent in ASL. Deaf, hard-of-hearing, or Deaf/blind victims of domestic violence, sexual assault or rape can get free and confidential services, such as counseling, parenting classes, safety planning, and case management, and assistance at the hospital or in court.



Show Visual 59.

Disability Services ASAP (A Safety Awareness Program) is a SafePlace abuse prevention and counseling program for people with disabilities, their families, caregivers, and professionals working in the sexual assault, domestic violence, disabilities, and criminal justice fields. The program also provides training and education to help increase awareness about and prevent sexual and domestic violence and abuse.



Show Visual 60.

Provide contact information.