



THE MEDINA FOUNDATION'S
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
**STABLE HOUSING
INITIATIVE**

Increasing Survivor Stability through Flexible Funding





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A WOMAN IN THE UNITED STATES
IS ASSAULTED OR BEATEN.

A CHANGE IN APPROACH: FLEXIBLE FUNDING FOR SURVIVORS

Funders and advocates working in the domestic violence field are making a shift to a new kind of support: flexible funding that enables survivors to remain in their homes or move directly to permanent housing.

The primary challenge to this approach is the restrictive nature of most funding, which is typically provided by governmental sources and carries with it strict guidelines for how the money can be used. Outside of rent, moving costs and utilities, there are very few instances where agencies can use public dollars to offer solutions other than emergency shelter.

The Medina Foundation's **Domestic Violence Stable Housing Initiative** aims to address this lack of flexibility.

“The flexibility of the funding allowed us to focus on the individual needs of the survivors we serve. We were able to pay for a survivor to take driving lessons, which gave her the independence to travel to and from school and her place of work, which, most importantly, enabled her to leave her abuser.”

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: THE LEADING CAUSE OF INJURY TO WOMEN

Every nine seconds, a woman in the United States is assaulted or beaten. Every day, more than three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends. Given these grim statistics, it's not surprising that domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women—more than car accidents, muggings and stranger-rapes combined.

One of the most devastating consequences of domestic violence is the loss of housing and the resulting instability for survivors and their families. While emergency shelter is necessary for some, temporary housing can sometimes compound stress and further traumatize families that have already experienced great suffering and adversity.

The displacement families face can have far reaching effects: kids lose time in school, family connections and social supports are disrupted, and even beloved pets must be left behind.

Keeping survivors and their families in stable housing is one way to mitigate the impact of violence and trauma, and flexible funding is proving to be an effective way to achieve that goal.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STABLE HOUSING INITIATIVE: SHIFTING THE STATUS QUO

Building on groundbreaking work of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, in the fall of 2011 the Medina Foundation made eight special grants to domestic violence service providers. The grants ranged from \$12,000 to \$20,000 and were awarded with no strings attached—the funds were fully flexible and could be used in any way that helped keep a survivor and her family stably housed.

“With so few resources in the community for this type of assistance, it has been empowering for both clients and staff to directly connect people with what they need to stay housed.”

The flexible funding allowed service providers and survivors to chart a path to stability by addressing discrete and individualized needs. Rather than automatically allocating resources to rental or mortgage assistance, advocates were able to steer the flow of funds toward more targeted solutions for individual survivors—resulting in not only improved stability but also greater overall self-sufficiency. What did this support look like?

- Repairing shattered car windows so a survivor could continue to get to work
- Paying for job-related licenses that allowed a survivor to re-enter the workforce
- Fixing broken teeth to make one survivor more employable



“One survivor had been a long haul trucker. Because of the violence she experienced, she allowed her license to expire. The flexibility of funding allowed us to cover the costs of her license renewal. The license fee was all that stood in the way of her and self-sufficiency.”

TESTING NEW SOLUTIONS: WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Grant recipients overwhelmingly reported that the initiative helped survivors avoid homelessness. The vast majority of the 187 survivors served either remained in their own home or secured new, permanent housing. Many of those who did not attain permanent housing were already in a shelter or transitional setting when the funds became available.

Flexible funding allows for rapid, responsive and creative solutions. Providers reported that, because the dollars weren't limited to a certain kind of support, they were better able to meet the individual needs of survivors.

External partnerships make a difference. Many providers found that the flexible funding allowed them to forge partnerships with community businesses that would otherwise not have been possible, affording greater opportunities for survivors. For example, one provider created a connection with an auto shop that agreed to repair cars for survivors at a reduced rate, effectively reducing the transportation barrier to stability.

Staff and survivors feel a sense of control and empowerment. Providers reported that clients felt heard and that their requests for help were respected. Providers themselves felt they were able to be responsive, effective and see the positive outcomes of their work.

MOVING FORWARD: WHAT'S NEXT?

The **Domestic Violence Stable Housing Initiative** demonstrates that flexible funding and a focus on survivor-driven solutions can immediately and positively impact the stability of survivors and their families. The impact is often greater and more cost-effective than would be possible with traditional, restrictive funding. Making resources more flexible will also have both short- and long-term benefits for survivors.

In the words of one provider, "The success of this funding comes from Medina Foundation's understanding that the stability of a person's housing allows them to stabilize their life in general. Many of the things that our clients needed would not be covered by any other agency or resource."

ABOUT THE MEDINA FOUNDATION

The Medina Foundation aspires to improve lives by funding human service organizations that provide direct support to Puget Sound residents.

Today, the family continues Norton Clapp's legacy by funding innovative organizations that approach tough problems with new ideas and solutions, as well as proven programs that have been meeting the needs of the community for many years.

The Medina Foundation would like to thank the commitment and dedication of Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Abused Deaf Women's Advocacy Services, API Chaya, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services of Whatcom County, LifeWire, WomenCare Shelter and YWCA Seattle/King/Snohomish, YWCA of Kitsap County and YWCA Pierce County.

801 Second Avenue, Suite 1300 | Seattle, WA 98104
P 206.652.8783 | F 206.652.8791 | [medinafoundation.org](https://www.medinafoundation.org)

All quotes provided by domestic violence service-provider organizations that received Domestic Violence Stable Housing Initiative funding.