Indiana's domestic violence shelters are jammed to capacity, leading to limits on the amount of time families may stay there. After leaving a shelter, many face numerous dead ends that can lead to homelessness, repeat shelter stays or returning to the very abusive relationships they were trying to escape. The Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence asks lawmakers to provide additional funding to help domestic violence survivors pay for emergent needs upon their release from shelters.

#1 CROWDED SHELTERS

Indiana domestic violence programs provided services to 46,379 survivors in 2018. The number of victims in need exceeded the programs' physical capacities (rooms and beds) on 116 days out of the year.

Domestic violence programs provide comprehensive support services, but because they are usually operating over capacity, most services are only available on a time-limited basis.

"I think sometimes even when people have shelters, they are full the majority of the time...so if that shelter's full, what do you think they are going to do? They are going to turn around and go back." – Indiana survivor

#2 INABILITY TO PAY BILLS/UTILITIES

More than 90% of survivors report experiencing some form of economic abuse from a partner. 46% of survivors say that their credit report or score was hurt by the actions of an abusive partner. 73% stayed longer than they wanted in an abusive relationship because of financial concerns.

"I was really scared about not being able to pay bills and...losing my job." – Indiana survivor

#3 LACK OF EDUCATION & JOB TRAINING

44% of employed adults surveyed personally experienced domestic violence's effects in their workplaces. 64% of domestic-violence victims indicated that their ability to work was affected by the violence.

"Skills are being lost among survivors of violence, because they aren't able to work and perform according to their abilities. They have skills but not consistent work histories. Maybe they haven't been able to complete their degrees, but they have so many life skills, wisdom and talents." – Indiana survivor

#4 LIMITED SAFETY NET SUPPORTS

Survivors are left to put their lives back together, often needing assistance with:
- Security deposits or temporary rental assistance
- Rent arrears (often intentionally incurred by the abuser)
- Utility bill payments
- Childcare costs
- Transportation
- Items for school (supplies, uniforms)
- Employment permits
- Time-limited and flexible rental assistance
- Child support

"I think there should be a more open way for women in need to get help that doesn't feel like if they leave someone they would be left with nothing. That was one of my big fears—that I would be left out on the streets with nothing." – Indiana survivor

#5 LACK OF HOUSING

The Harvard Center for Housing Studies says achieving safe and stable housing in the United States is nearly impossible for survivors due to the lack of affordable housing and the declining number of units.

"It's very difficult to find a place to rent if you have kids, and then you have to have money up front. You have to have a deposit...and the first month's rent. Well, if I just left, I don't have any money. I would end up staying, because I didn't have anywhere else to go." – Indiana survivor

#6 INACCESSIBLE LEGAL ASSISTANCE

"Sufficiency standards make it really hard to access support. If you have any income, you don't qualify for legal services. You have to give up work in order to qualify for help." – Indiana survivor

Among the myriad social-service programs available, only the availability of legal services in a woman's county is significantly lower the incidence of domestic violence.

"I was really scared about not being able to pay bills and...losing my job." – Indiana survivor

#7 LACK OF RELIABLE TRANSPORTATION

"Transportation is something that I struggled with...My son was sick, and the bus wasn't running. There was nowhere within walking distance to get medicine, and I couldn't afford a taxi." – Indiana survivor

PATHWAY TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Studies of the extended advocacy and flexible funding model have found very positive changes in the lives of women and children within the 18-month time frame. The majority of families engaged in the program (both rural and urban) reported retaining housing at 6, 12 and 18 months after program-entry.

Participating families reported:
- A higher quality of life
- Fewer work absences and fewer school absences for their children
- Greater job stability
- Higher incomes
- Fewer problems with alcohol/drugs
- Less depression and post-traumatic stress disorder over time.
- Better academic performances by their children
- Fewer behavioral problems in their children over time.

INDIANA NEEDS LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE ESSENTIAL NEEDS TO THOSE ESCAPING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

7 BARRIERS TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVABILITY

Sources:
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