

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 13, 2011

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Program Expansion: Preventing Homelessness for Survivors of Domestic Violence

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation doubles efforts by adding nine new service providers to Domestic Violence Housing First

The Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV) announced today the expansion of its program to help prevent homelessness for survivors of domestic violence by working with nine additional service providers. With the aim of eliminating housing as a reason to stay in an abusive relationship, Domestic Violence Housing First focuses on helping survivors of abuse retain or access safe permanent housing quickly, often bypassing emergency shelter.

WSCADV has been awarded a grant of \$455,000 from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to provide technical assistance to the domestic violence service providers participating in Domestic Violence Housing First. Nine domestic violence programs across the state will each receive three-year grants, representing a total investment of \$1,927,852 from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to implement this promising new practice.

The programs selected include: New Hope Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services (Grant & Adams County); Kalispel Tribe of Indians (Pend Oreille County); Spokane Tribe of Indians (Stevens County); Lummi Victims of Crime (Whatcom County); Salvation Army Domestic Violence Program (King County); International District Housing Alliance (King County); Healthy Families of Clallam County; Forks Abuse Program (Clallam

County); and Crisis Support Network (Pacific County). The funding will allow these programs to provide domestic violence survivors and their children tailored services based on their unique needs, including such supports as transportation subsidies, career training, help with job-related expenses, child care, and temporary rental assistance.

Additional grant support totaling \$50,000 has been awarded to Kalispel Tribe of Indians and Spokane Tribe of Indians by Empire Health Foundation.

“Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and children,” said Nan Stoops, executive director of WSCADV. “Shelters meet an important short-term need in communities across our state. Domestic Violence Housing First is providing another, equally important option. We are seeing that the flexible approach gives survivors the ability to establish a home and the freedom to choose how best to rebuild their lives.”

Modeled after the housing first approach that has proven successful with homeless populations for more than a decade, WSCADV launched this program in late 2009 with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The service approach was piloted with four domestic violence programs: Eastside Domestic Violence Program in King County, Womenscare Shelter in Whatcom County, the YWCA of Kitsap County, and the Family Resource Center of Lincoln County.

“We must do all we can to stop the cycle of family homelessness,” said David Bley, director of the Gates Foundation’s Pacific Northwest Initiative. “This includes helping to build important connections between domestic violence services and housing providers who are all working to stabilize families and children after a crisis that can impact overall health and the ability to succeed in school and in life.”

The first two years of data from the pilot sites are preliminary, but extremely promising. Ninety-four percent of participants who received services for at least 6 months accessed or retained permanent housing, and were still housed 6 months later. The program has demonstrated that it is a safe alternative to shelter stays for many families, and may offer a new pathway to the prevention of homelessness.

About the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Founded in 1990 by survivors of domestic violence and their allies, the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence is a non-profit network of over 70 domestic violence advocacy programs across the state of Washington. We improve how communities respond to domestic violence and work to create a social intolerance for abuse. Our work includes research, training and technical assistance, producing educational tools, promoting domestic violence awareness, and public policy advocacy. To learn more, please visit www.wscadv.org.

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