

**SURVIVORS, from page 4**

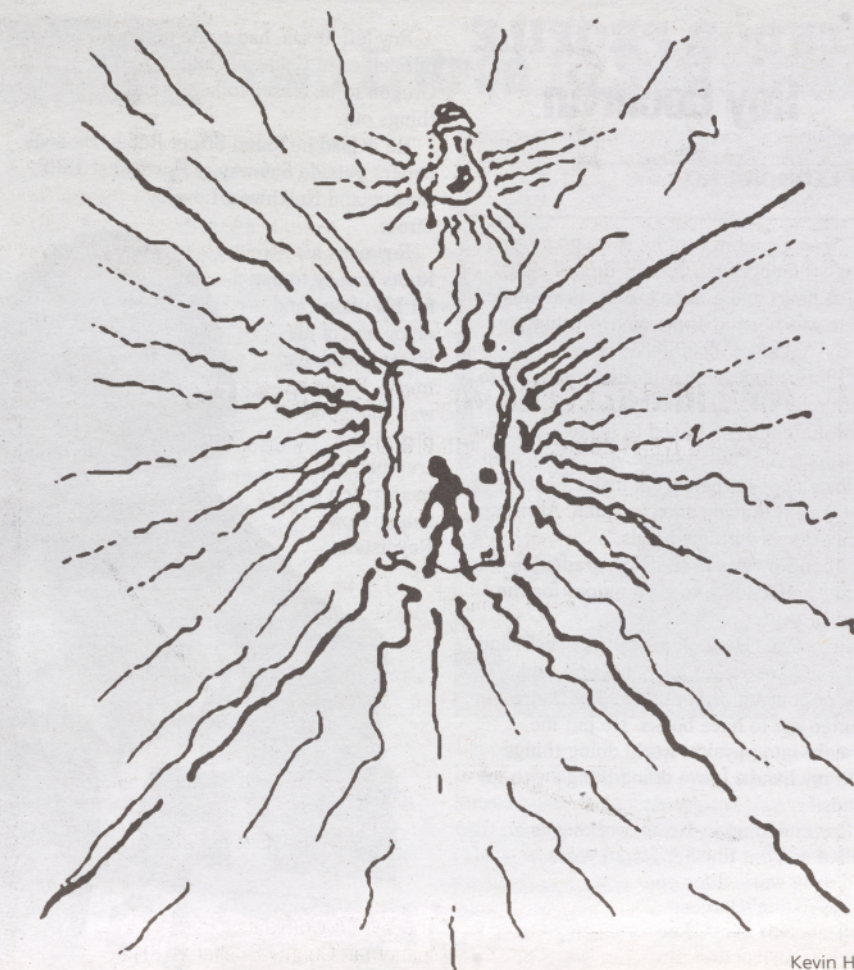
Between July 2014 and June 2015, an average of 1,665 families received TA-DVS funds monthly in Oregon. The average case expenditure was \$748, according to Oregon Department of Human Services.

According to DHS spokeswoman Christy Sinatra, her agency does not have data on why participants aren't using the full allocation, although she said that, according to field staff, reasons vary. In some cases, recipients have other resources to utilize, but "depending on where a client lives in the state, there may not be a wide selection of housing options, or rental costs have risen and some cannot afford the monthly rent, or their credit histories are a barrier."

While the TA-DVS grant is short term, advocates said that even when a survivor has a Housing Choice voucher, which is long-term housing assistance that can be used in the open rental market, it's still taking much longer for them to find an affordable apartment and landlords willing to rent to them.

"I began working for Raphael House five years ago," McGovney said, "and even up until about two years ago, it was just a matter of getting a housing program to help support families, and there was no real concern about availability and affordability for apartments. Now, even with a housing program, we are seeing families time out of these programs because they cannot find housing in the time frame they are given." She said it took a woman who recently stayed at Raphael House six months to find an apartment, and when she did, it was far outside her community.

Beier concurs that in many cases, the only option for survivors is to uproot from their communities. This could mean moving far away from work, child care, their children's schools and support outside the home, which can make transportation burdensome. She said many survivors are



Kevin Hull

moving to Vancouver, Wash., and Clackamas County, where they can find housing they can afford.

"Landlords at this point have jacked up their rents so high that they are way outside of the allowable expense for a voucher," Beier said. "If you're talking thousands of dollars to move in, then there's not a whole hell of a lot you can do."

**Coerced debt**

Additionally, in a competitive rental market, domestic violence survivors, whose rental and employment histories are often imperfect – a known side effect of domestic violence – are having trouble competing.

For Julie McCurdy, finding housing after leaving an abusive husband proved difficult.

**"It's not just about income. When people leave, the risk for serious violence or homicide goes up significantly."**

**ANNIE NEAL**  
DIRECTOR AT MULTNOMAH COUNTY  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATION  
OFFICE

"My job history and my credit history were wrecked because of domestic violence," she said.

McCurdy is not alone. A 2012 study by California Law Review found that what it referred to as "coerced debt" affects most domestic violence survivors. Financial abuse can take many forms, from abusers forcing their partners to take out loans to using their checkbooks and credit cards without permission. One survey noted in the study found 84 percent of survivors reported their partner decided when and how they could use their finances, and 68 percent reported they were forced to give their abuser money, their checkbook, ATM card or credit cards.

"Coerced debt," wrote the study's author, "appears to have a major, negative impact on the financial lives of domestic violence victims and survivors. It can interfere with their ability to obtain jobs and housing and thus to become economically self-sufficient."

At age 45, McCurdy found herself living on the streets in Portland.

"I was shell-shocked," she said. "Now you're not worrying (about) him hitting you; you're worried about assault and rape on the street."

Street Roots went with McCurdy, now housed and advocating for survivors' rights, to a Portland church that provides services to the homeless. Several women shared their stories about how domestic violence has contributed to their lack of stable housing.

**See SURVIVORS page 7**

**KNOW YOUR RIGHTS****Housing protections in place for domestic violence survivors**

**BY EMILY GREEN**  
STAFF WRITER

**D**omestic violence survivors renting in Oregon have several protections under the law put in place to help them find and maintain housing. These laws generally protect victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking.

**Discrimination is prohibited**

Landlords are prohibited from evicting, failing to renew rental agreements, increasing rent, decreasing services or refusing to enter into a rental agreement for any of the following reasons:

- You or your child has been a victim.
- A violation of the rental agreement caused by domestic violence.
- Police or criminal activity related to domestic violence.
- A negative landlord reference based on an incident related to domestic violence.

**You cannot be charged for damages**

As of Jan. 1, 2016, a tenant will not be responsible for any damages caused by a perpetrator's conduct relating

to domestic violence. A landlord may require verification that the tenant is a victim. This includes court documents, police reports or a statement from a victim's advocate or health professional.

**If your abuser is on the rental agreement**

You can take legal action get your abuser out of your home.

- You must acquire a court order, such as a restraining order, that requires the abuser to move out.
- Your landlord cannot allow the abuser back in unless court ordered.
- The abuser's lease is terminated once the court order is final.

**Your landlord can evict your abuser**

- If your abuser commits a criminal act of violence against you or your children, the landlord may terminate the abuser's lease agreement without terminating yours.
- The landlord must give the abuser 24 hours' notice of eviction.
- Your landlord cannot charge you any additional fees as a result.

**Your landlord must change your locks**

If you request (in writing is best) your locks be changed, your landlord is required by law to do so promptly. You will be responsible for the cost. You are not required to provide proof of abuse.

**You are allowed to break your lease**

If you have been a victim within the past 90 days, or if you have a current protection order, you can end your rental agreement early, without incurring fees for doing so, with a 14-day written notice. You will be required to produce proof of abuse.

The information above was compiled by Legal Aid Services of Oregon and the Oregon Law Center. For more information about these laws, and for sample forms, visit [OregonLawHelp.org](http://OregonLawHelp.org).

The Portland Women's Crisis Line provides 24-hour support and resource referral for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Call 503-235-5333 or toll free at 1-888-235-5333. In Multnomah County, survivors can call The Gateway Center from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday at 503-988-6400 to be connected with an advocate and resources.