

As domestic violence spikes, many victims and their children have nowhere to live

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COVID-19 has left many victims of domestic violence facing difficulties feeding their children and accessing services for safe housing, transportation and childcare once they leave shelters, according to a Rutgers study published in the journal *Violence Against Women*.

"Many survivors exiting [domestic violence shelters](#) are reporting difficulties in accessing resources within the community. Survivors in our study voiced concerns regarding access to food and transportation and securing safe [housing](#), employment and affordable child care," said lead investigator Amanda M. Stylianou, a director at Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care.

The researchers conducted three interviews with some 83 survivors over nine months in six emergency domestic violence shelters providing supportive services to victims of crime and abuse.

Participants reported a lack of choice in both housing options and the communities they could move into, as well as an overall lack of stability and structure in the transition process and beyond. They also identified difficulties in accessing community resources and stressed that additional

resources are needed to protect domestic violence victims and their children in the community.

After leaving, many respondents moved into overcrowded apartments, returned to [apartment buildings](#) where the abusive partner resided or returned to the abusive relationship after being in need of housing. Parents shared their children's concerns about feeling lonely, missing family and friends and the difficulties they experienced in moving in and out of shelters.

"In our COVID-crisis world, families exiting domestic [violence](#) shelters are facing a range of stressors impeding their ability to gain independence and remain free from their abusive partners," said Stylianou. "Finding creative ways to support survivors in accessing [financial assistance](#) and/or safe housing are critical opportunities for communities to support survivors."

Provided by Rutgers University

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