



Supporting Survivors • Strengthening Communities • Empowering Change

February 28, 2023

To whom it may concern:

ODSVS funds are extremely vital for our program to be able to provide the services that survivors need. Being in a rural community the resources are very limited. In my experience, housing has been the biggest barrier for survivors. Application fees, first month's rent, last month's rent and deposit can be very expensive and difficult for a survivor to pay on their own. If we don't have funding to assist a client with move in costs, that could mean they lose the opportunity of securing a safe home when it comes up. It could be several months to years before they find another rental. Housing is so scarce here, and survivors absolutely need the funding readily available, when an opportunity is there.

I'd like to share two survivor stories that illustrate the critical nature of this support. First, a single mother applied and was accepted into our transitional housing program while staying in our shelter. She participated in our financial empowerment program and one-to-one savings programs; we matched her savings of \$1000. She was able to pay off past debt that hindered her ability to rent a low-income apartment. We paid her application fee, move in costs and partnered with her to cover a years' worth of rent. That allowed her the time to get a section 8 housing voucher. Her voucher kicked in before her rental assistance ended. She would never have been able to afford the move in costs or rent if we didn't have the funding available to assist her. During that year she was able to focus on healing, she attended college, and she secured a full time job , so she could maintain her home. She remains in sustainable and stable housing to this day. Had we not been able to provide the assistance that we did, it is very likely that she would have moved back home to her abuser. She had gone back before, when she didn't have the support, she had this go around.

Second, a transgender survivor fled to our county from the other side of the country. The survivor reported that they were on the autism spectrum, had extreme PTSD, and many other barriers. We were able to find a program that specialized in the type of services the client was seeking and partnered with them to support their needs. We helped by providing shelter, referring them for an emergency housing voucher, networking to obtain the most appropriate shelter in the area they desired to be. We paid for the client to take a cab the long distance to the other shelter. We typically would send someone via bus or other transportation but with her vulnerabilities, safety concerns, and disabilities this was the best option. Once arriving at the shelter, it did not take her long to find and secure housing. If we didn't have the funding to pay for the cab fare and other needs along the way, she wouldn't have considered going to that shelter out of town. Going out of town to that shelter was the best thing (in her words) that she had done for herself. She was at two shelters prior out of state where she was the victim of abuse. She fled to her home state of Oregon where she was met with compassion. She was able to find safe stable housing, that started with a safe, expensive cab ride.

We couldn't do what we do if it wasn't for the financial support of grants like this. Thank you for your consideration in this essential decision to support survivors in finding safety and stability.

Sincerely,

Ashley Cushing
Sexual Assault & Shelter Advocate