



Sourcing your Shelter Home

A Survey of Residential Programs Across the Nation

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The Samaritan Women Institute for Shelter Care conducts regular surveys, site visits, and interviews with those who operate residential programs serving victims of exploitation and trafficking. Our mission in these endeavors is to provide evidence-based reporting that will inform the decisions and practices of shelter providers so that we can continue to improve the quality of care offered to survivors.

We do this work at no cost to the agencies who benefit from these studies.

If your agency has participated in any of our studies, again we thank you. You are contributing to a national body of work and collective understanding to benefit survivors anywhere.

Background

Here at the Institute for Shelter Care we work with those who aspire to operate residential programs for survivors of domestic sexual exploitation and trafficking. Oftentimes we are asked whether an aspiring program should build, buy, or accept a donated property, what percent of the organization’s budget should be spent on housing, and what housing features are most valuable to shelter operations. To address those questions, we embarked on the following national survey.

Methodology

In early January 2020, an email invitation to participate was sent to 145 organizations nationwide that were identified as providing some form of residential care (or “sheltering”) to survivors of domestic human trafficking. Fifty-two addresses (36%) were recorded as unopened, which may suggest faulty or unattended email accounts. We also posted the survey opportunity on the community listserv for the National Trafficking Sheltered Alliance. Over the course of four weeks, a total of 83 emails were opened of which 33 organizations (40%) responded to the survey.

Respondents

The majority of responses to the survey (67%) were individuals who identified as their organization’s Executive Director or Founder of these organizations. The remaining respondents included Program Director, Development Director, Clinical Director, House Manager, and Admin.

The types of organizations in this sample included:

- 3% Emergency Shelter – 24-72 hour holding, usually in coordination with law enforcement
- 9% Stabilization Program – up to 90 days of residential care; goal is to determine long-term course of action
- 94% Restorative Program – 12 months or more offering comprehensive services with the goal of social re-entry
- 15% Graduate Housing – independent supportive housing with accountability
- 3% Other



Only one organization indicated being part of a national non-profit, while 97% of responding organizations represented independent, private non-profits. The average number of years of providing direct services was 8 years, with the shortest time being one year and the longest time being 20 years. Nine organizations have been providing direct service for 5 years or fewer, 15 organizations have been providing services for 6 to 10 years, and 7 organizations have been providing service for 11+ years. Over 90% of the organizations reported being open and serving residents. One organization was open but not currently serving residents, and two organizations reported being temporarily closed.

Seventeen states were represented in this sample, and one organization in Alberta, Canada.

The represented states included:

AL – 1	FL – 3	KS – 3	MD – 1	NV – 3	PA – 2
AR – 1	IA – 2	KY – 1	NC – 1	OH – 1	TX – 4
CA – 3	IL – 1	LA – 1	NE – 1	OR – 2	

Residents Served

Of the responding organizations, 64% said that they serve survivors of sex trafficking and any other type of sexual exploitation, 24% serve only verified cases of sex trafficking, and 12% said they serve survivors of any type of trafficking.

The majority of responding organizations (55%) serve both domestic and foreign nationals, while 42% serve only domestic survivors, and 3% serve only foreign nationals. Ninety-seven percent of responding organizations take survivors from any state, while 3% serve only survivors that reside in their state.

The vast majority of responding organizations (91%), serve only female survivors, 6% include female-identified survivors. One organization stated that they currently serve females but are soon to open a facility for male survivors.

When asked about the ages served, there was a clustering of population in the young adult range:

- 12% serve minors under 14 years of age
- 21% serve older minors ages 15-17
- 82% serve ages 18-21
- 85% serve ages 22-35
- 67% serve adults over the age of 36
- 12% serve adults with children



According to the National Foster Youth Institute, 20% of the 23,000 children aging out of foster care every year will instantly become homeless, and 7 out of 10 girls who age out of the system will become pregnant before age 21.¹

This distribution is to be expected, given that many states have restrictions on where minors can be placed and there is a significant need for housing and supportive services for those who are aging-out of foster care or other forms of institutional care.

This survey sample suggests that there is still a great need for residential programs that serve males, minors, and adults with children. How the facility requirements change based on those demographics is inconclusive at this time given the small sample size.

Facility Attributes¹

The average amount of time that each responding organization has been in their current facility was 5 years, with the shortest time being less than one year and the longest being 13 years.

The majority of residential programs (94%) occupy single family homes. One of these organizations operates several residential programs in single family homes throughout their community along with one very large dwelling. Two respondents have a campus with multiple single-family homes for their residents. Just 12% of respondents operate within multi-family housing units, such as apartments.

¹ NOTE: Some responding organizations have more than one facility used to shelter survivors. Because of this, some of the results for the following categories may add up to more than 100%.

Of these facilities, 55% are in urban areas, 30% are in suburban areas, 24% are in rural areas, and 3% classify their location as a remote area. Twelve percent of respondents reported their facility to be fully undisclosed, meaning only staff know the address. Partially disclosed facilities, meaning staff, volunteers, and some others know the location, but the address is not advertised, make up 27% of respondents. Fully disclosed locations, meaning the address is public knowledge, and organizations with more than one facility having different disclosures each make up 3% of respondents.

Financials

Of the 33 respondents, 9 either did not answer or did not know the fair market value of their property. Of those that did respond, the average market value is \$719,513 and the median market value is \$500,000. Both of these figures exclude the \$13 million property owned by one organization. The lowest reported market value is \$90,000 and the highest is \$1.7 million.

Shelter Home Averages	
\$719,523	Market value
\$47,283	Renovation expense
\$18,150	Furnishing expense

The responding organizations obtained their property, or properties, through various means:

- 36% raised the funds to purchase their property/properties
- 27% occupy at no cost a facility owned by a third party
- 21% rent the property that they occupy
- 15% were gifted their property/properties
- 9% were gifted the funds to purchase their property/properties
- 6% had their property built to their specifications
- 3% had a partial donation and paid the rest themselves
- 3% already owned the property and repurposed it for the residential program



In order to prepare the properties for use as a shelter, the average amount spent was \$47,283 with a median of \$27,000. These figures do not include the 9% of organizations that did not need any remodeling work, the one organization whose \$2 million remodeling cost was covered by the property owners, and 7 organizations that either did not answer or did not know the cost of renovations.

The average amount spent on furnishing each shelter was \$18,150. The lowest amount spent on furnishing was \$800 and the highest was \$100,000. This excludes the 18% of shelters that were furnished entirely by donations. Five organizations either did not answer or did not know the cost of furnishing their shelter.

Facility Features

Of the 33 respondents, 5 either did not answer or did not know the total square footage of their property. Organizations with more than one property were asked to respond with their largest property. The average total square feet (excluding the 14,000 sq.ft. mansion) is 3,413, with the smallest facility being 1,385 sq.ft. and the largest being 8,000 sq.ft.

Bedrooms

The average number of bedrooms for each organization's primary (or only) facility is 5 with the lowest bedroom count at 2 and the highest at 14. Thirty percent of respondents have a second facility. The average number of bedrooms for a second facility is 4.6 with the lowest bedroom count at 3 and the highest at 8. Only three respondents reported having a third property with bedroom counts of 2,4, and 16, respectively.

Bedroom occupancy practices was reported as follows:

- 47% one person per room
- 48% two people per room
- 9% depends on the resident's level in the program
- 9% depends on household composition and interpersonal harmony

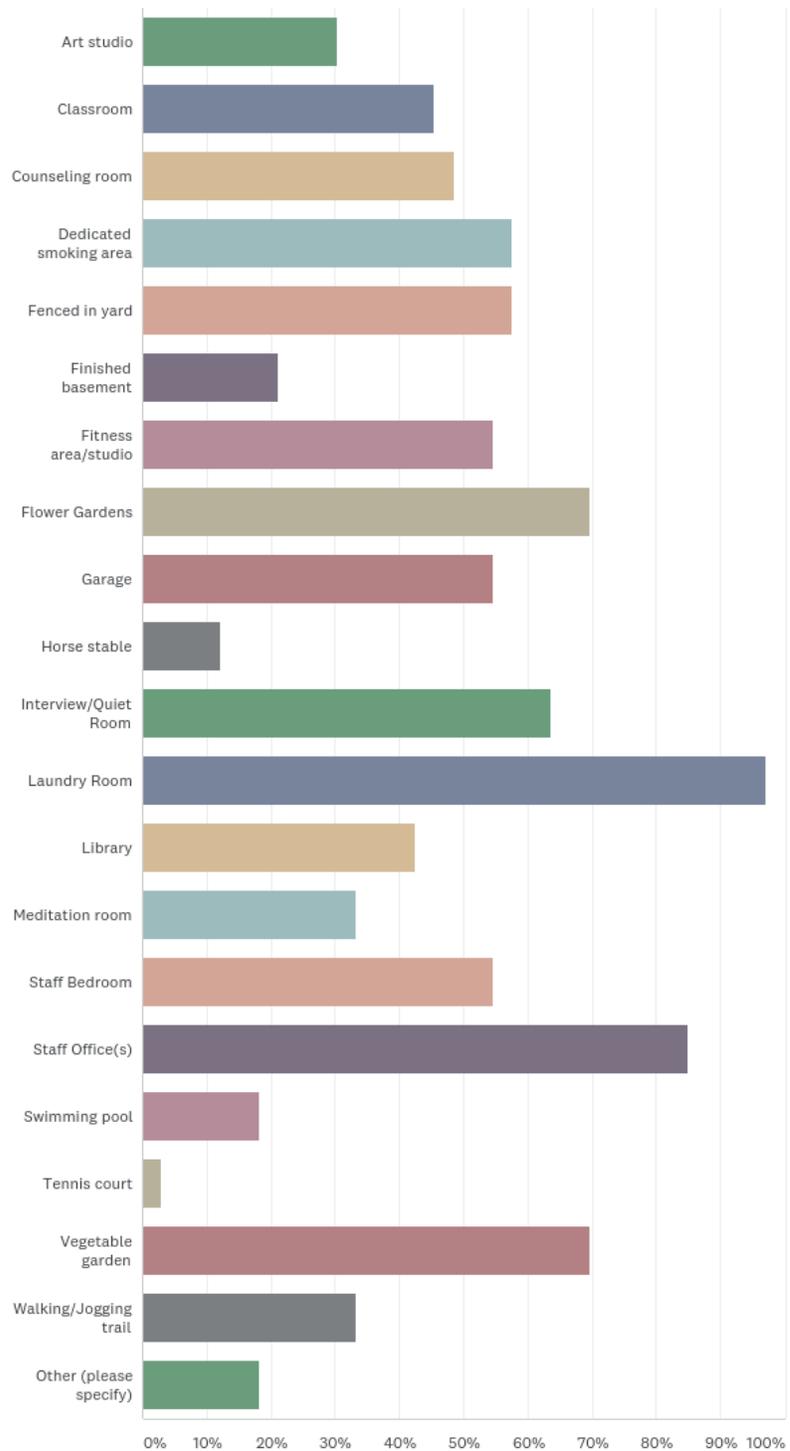
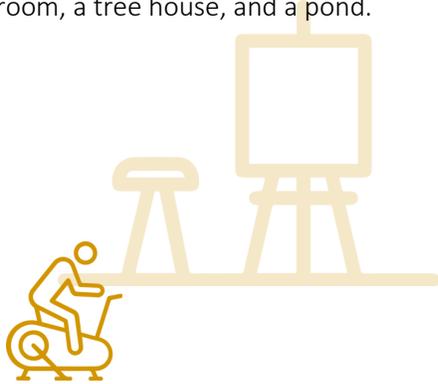
It is worth noting that none of the respondents reported a rooming strategy of more than 2 persons (or a dormitory style) per bedroom. In our 2017 study, respondents indicated that their bedroom occupancy was more influenced by the size of the room than any other consideration.



Other Rooms and Amenities

As can be seen in the chart, the most common amenities in these shelter homes were a laundry room, staff office(s), vegetable gardens, flower gardens, and an interview/quiet room.

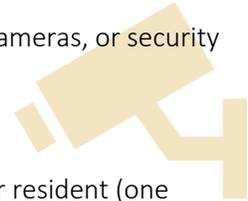
Some notable write in answers included cameras inside and out, a separate wellness center, a sensory room, a tree house, and a pond.



Vital Features

When asked what features of the shelter home were vital to the program, the most common answer was the communal areas, followed closely by staff office(s), a home-like feel or appearance, and outdoor spaces. Other vital features included:

- garden or other outdoor spaces
- bonus room or other multi-purpose room
- staff or caregiver bedroom
- counseling or therapy room
- classroom
- designated smoking area
- storage
- remote or rural location
- located close to services, opportunities, or public transportation
- safety, security cameras, or security gate
- privacy
- equine therapy
- one bedroom per resident (one facility also has one bathroom per resident)
- one bedroom per family
- small size which limits the number of residents



Desired Features

When asked what features their facilities did not have but that the organizations believed would be beneficial to their programs, the most frequent response was a classroom, followed closely by outdoor activity areas. Other desired features included:

- bedroom privacy for residents
- more bathrooms
- more bedrooms
- security fence
- staff office
- staff bedroom
- prayer room
- counseling room
- fitness room
- larger kitchen
- larger dining room
- children's center



Problematic Features

When asked which features of the facility, or facilities, are problematic, the most frequent response was the age of the house which causes the need for frequent repairs and HVAC difficulties. Other problematic features included:

- leasing instead of owning the property
- basement flooding
- staff offices in the residence which can make productivity challenging
- sound traveling too well
- layout creates supervision difficulties
- staircases that are too narrow
- shared bathrooms
- insufficient septic system
- small kitchen
- inaccessible to disabled residents

A staff office or private room appears frequently across these responses. Start-up residential programs would do well to take heed and ensure that they are selecting properties that will allow staff a space that will allow them to engage in confidential conversations, store personal items, regain composure during challenging times, retreat for prayer, or attend to paperwork uninterrupted.

The chart below compares required residential features laid out by the Council on Accreditation (COA) and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) with the findings from respondents of this survey led by The Samaritan Women Institute for Shelter Care (ISC).

CARF Standards include:	COA Standards include:	Survey Respondent deemed this feature...
Homelike/Comfortable setting	“Homelike” Settings	Homelike feel or appearance (have)
Access to nutritious meals and snacks	Dining and/or kitchen area	Larger Kitchen (desired)
Personal Privacy	Personal accommodations for residents	47% - one person per room
		48% - two people per room
Community meetings/ group interactions	Common room	Communal areas (have and vital)
Quiet Activities	N/A	Interview/quiet room
Guests/visits	Private visitation with family and friends	N/A
Therapeutic Activities	N/A	Counseling or therapy room (vital)
Meals	Dining or kitchen area	Larger dining room (desired)
Recreation	Space for indoor recreation	Fitness area/ studio (desired)
Outdoor setting, if possible	N/A	Garden or other outdoor spaces (vital)
N/A	Private bathing, toileting, and personal hygiene facilities	More bathrooms (vital)
N/A	Adequate space for admin support functions	Staff office(s) (have)
N/A	Laundry	Laundry room (have)
N/A	Private sleeping accommodations for overnight personnel	Staff or caregiver bedroom (vital)
N/A	Adequate space for storage	Storage (vital)

Maintenance and Repair

Most respondents, 76%, reported that their facility(ies) requires a typical amount of maintenance and repair. Six percent reported a below average amount of maintenance and repair. Eighteen percent reported that their facility(ies) require a higher than average amount of maintenance and repair, the most common reason being the age of the building. Other reasons included:

- the number of residents, especially those who are unfamiliar with how to care for a home
- residents who are intentionally destructive to the property
- the large size of the property
- the extra attention required by gardens or animals on the property.

Organizations use several different strategies to meet their property's maintenance needs:

- 9% have a full-time facility manager
- 3% have a part time facility manager
- 36% have volunteers to care for the facilities
- 18% incorporate maintenance into staff duties
- 3% incorporate maintenance into resident duties
- 12% have a combination of staff, residents, and volunteers
- 3% have a combination of staff, residents, and a maintenance person



Conclusion

An important takeaway from this survey is that shelter homes come in all shapes and sizes; there is no one ideal kind of property or location for serving survivors of human trafficking. The information collected in this survey can serve as a guide for those planning to open a residential program, to know what to expect when raising funds, to identify essential features, and to anticipate maintenance responsibilities.