

The Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario

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<https://www.acto.ca/>

THE JOURNEY TO HOUSING STABILITY FOR SURVIVORS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



Advocacy Centre
for Tenants Ontario

Tenant Duty
Counsel Program

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



AGENDA

1. Introduction
2. Research Process
3. Key Findings
4. Policy Recommendations
5. Specialized Housing Legal Service
6. How to Use This Report
7. Q&A

Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario

A specialty housing legal clinic:

- Legal services
- Tenant duty counsel program
- Law reform
- Community organizing
- Education and training





Your Way Forward

- Funded by the Canadian Department of Justice
- Collaborative, multi-disciplinary project between 9 Ontario legal clinics to expand access to justice for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV).

TERMINOLOGY

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

GBV refers to the violence that women, girls, and gender diverse individuals face disproportionately because of their gender identity or expression, perceived gender, and/or sexuality. The term GBV contextualizes the various forms of violence within structural power dynamics.

RESEARCH PROCESS



RESEARCH QUESTION

How do survivors of GBV experience the process of securing and maintaining permanent housing in Ontario?

- How well does the legal context meet survivors' needs?
- How well do housing services meet survivors' needs?

ONTARIO

INTERVIEWEES AND SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

 SERVICE PROVIDERS

 LIVED EXPERIENCE

 KENORA

THUNDER BAY 

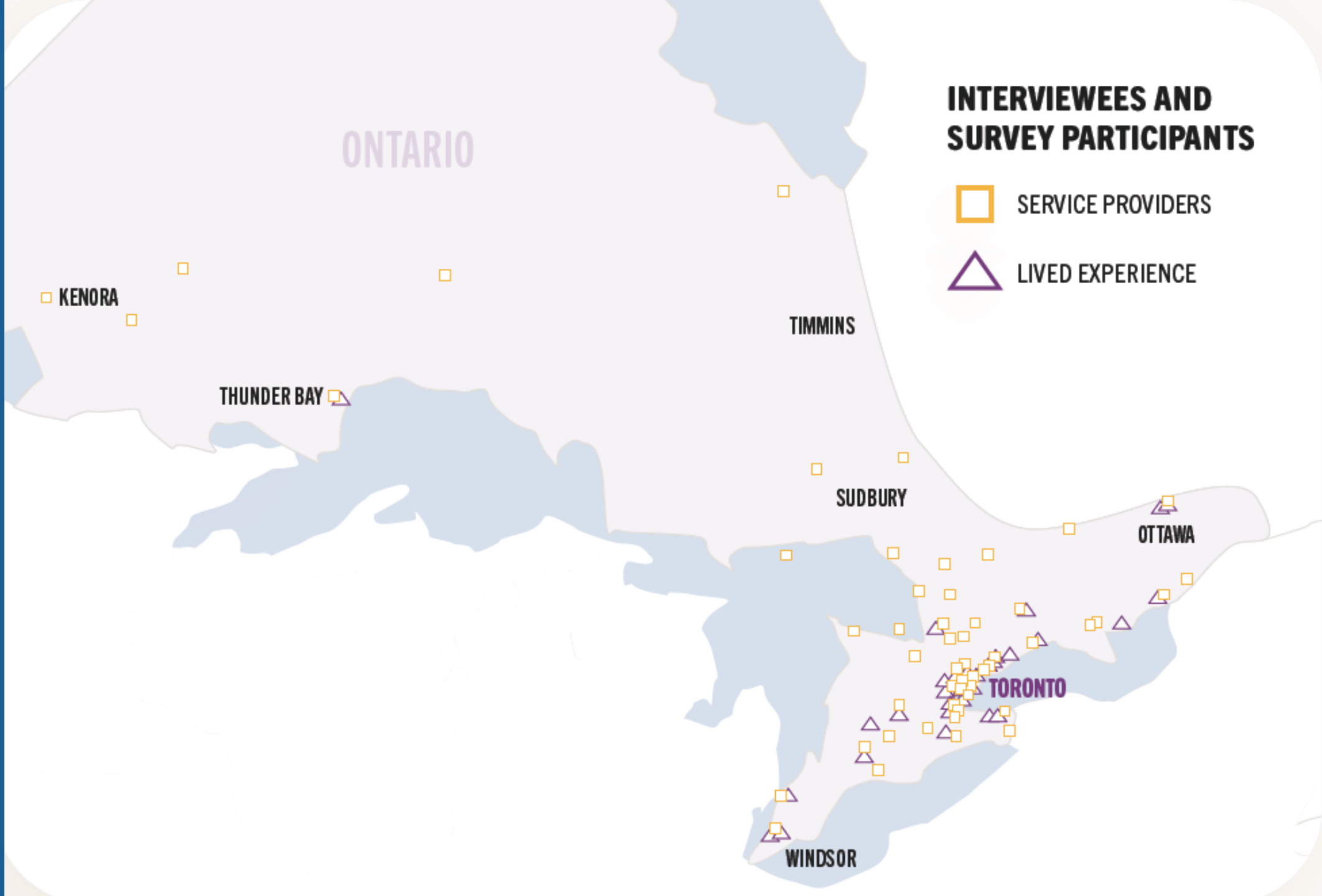
TIMMINS

SUDBURY

OTTAWA

TORONTO

WINDSOR



TRAUMA AND VIOLENCE INFORMED (TVI) RESEARCH

6 GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH



KEY FINDINGS



HOUSING CONTINUUM:

Homelessness



Survivors likely to experience hidden homelessness

Rise in numbers of encampments

Increased risk of more violence

Couch-surfing not considered homelessness

HOUSING CONTINUUM: Emergency Shelter



Always operating
at or above
capacity

Length of stays
extending past
guidelines

Often inaccessible
& feels unsafe to
survivors

Pandemic funding
ended in 2023

HOUSING CONTINUUM: Transitional Housing



Residents have better outcomes

Limited availability
- especially in rural communities

No core funding in Ontario

Can't attain affordable housing in time limit

HOUSING CONTINUUM: Supportive Housing



Various levels of
supportive housing

Improves long-
term housing
stability

Long waitlists due
to limited
availability

No specialized
supportive housing
for survivors

HOUSING CONTINUUM: Social Housing



Often the only
affordable housing
option for survivors

176,804 people on
waitlists (2022)

Accessed through
choice-based system

Pressure on
applicants to take
inadequate housing

HOUSING CONTINUUM: Affordable Market Housing



Financialization of
housing

Rental housing
affordability crisis

Rise in economic
evictions

COHB: limited &
no long-term
guarantee

HOUSING CONTINUUM: Market Housing



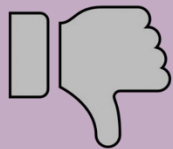
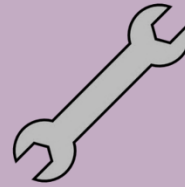
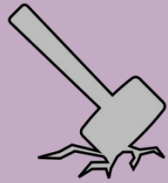
Discrimination in
housing access

Survivors being
exploited by
landlords

Survivors live in
inadequate
housing

40% of tenants
paying
unaffordable rent

THE HOUSING LEGAL CONTEXT



LIMITED LEGAL PROTECTIONS



Residential Tenancies Act

Cannot remove person causing harm from the lease

LIMITED LEGAL PROTECTIONS

**Tenant's Notice to End my Tenancy
Because of Fear of Sexual or Domestic Violence and Abuse
N15**
(Disponible en français)

To: (Landlord's Name)	From: (Tenant's Name) <i>include the names of all tenants giving this notice</i>
Address of Rental Unit:	

I am giving you this notice to end my tenancy.

The last day of my tenancy will be

		/			/				
--	--	---	--	--	---	--	--	--	--

 .
dd/mm/yyyy

I will move out of the rental unit on or before this date.

The law states that I must include one of the documents listed below with this notice. I have included:

☐ a completed LTB form "Tenant's Statement About Sexual or Domestic Violence and Abuse"

OR

☐ a copy of a restraining order or peace bond issued by a court within the last 90 days that orders the alleged abuser not to contact me or the child and/or not to enter the rental unit

Residential Tenancies Act

Early termination provision (N15) has limited usefulness in the affordability crisis

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Declare Intimate-Partner and Gender-Based Violence an Epidemic

- All levels of government must declare an epidemic
- Declaration would compel all levels of government to increase funding to end GBV
- Declaration would be used in legal proceedings to increase access to justice

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Increase the Supply of Transitional Housing, Including in Northern and Rural Locations

5. Increase the Supply of Specialized Supportive Housing for Survivors

- Transitional housing is a critical pathway for survivors towards independent housing
- Expanding supply of supportive housing would improve housing stability for survivors with complex needs
- Expanding specific Indigenous housing supportive services as an essential step towards justice and safety for Indigenous survivors

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

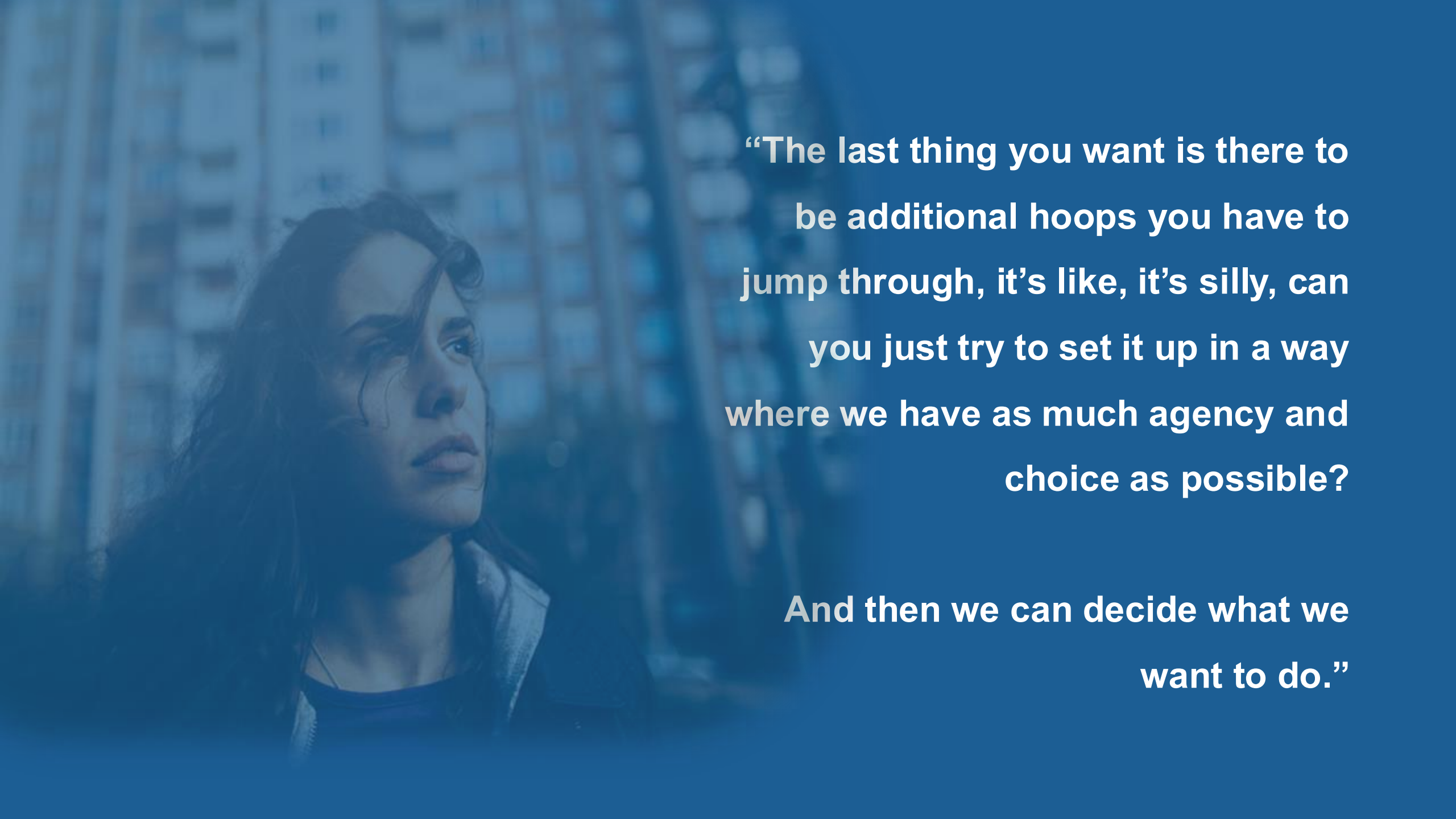
13. Improve Access to Justice for Renters Experiencing GBV

15. Provide Trauma-informed Legal and Housing Services

- Increasing access to legal support for survivors prior to and during LTB proceedings
- Providing legal professionals and housing system workers with adequate training and ongoing support.
- Investing in specialized wraparound services



SPECIALIZED HOUSING LEGAL SERVICE

A woman with long, dark, wavy hair is shown from the chest up, looking upwards and to the right with a contemplative expression. She is wearing a dark top under a light-colored jacket. The background is a blurred cityscape with tall buildings, all overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

**“The last thing you want is there to
be additional hoops you have to
jump through, it’s like, it’s silly, can
you just try to set it up in a way
where we have as much agency and
choice as possible?**

**And then we can decide what we
want to do.”**

SUPPORTING TENANTS EXPERIENCING GBV



HOW TO USE THIS REPORT



HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

Legal
Advocacy

Policy
Advocacy

Future
Research

Academic
Use

Educational
Tool

Service Model
Replication

THANK YOU & QUESTIONS

Your Way Forward
Lawyer & Social Worker

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