

# GEORGE WASHINGTON

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## REGIONAL COMMISSION

**George Washington Regional Commission (2022)**

104-VHSP - RRH Rapid Rehousing

### Empowerhouse RRH, Domestic Violence FY24



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#### Applicant details

Agency Empowerhouse

Agency Type Non-Profit

EIN/TIN 521142547

#### Applicant Address

Mailing  
P.O. Box 1007  
Fredericksburg, VA 22402  
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#### Application details

**Application Type** Renewal

#### Contact Information

Project Contact Name Kathy Anderson  
 Project Contact Title Executive Director  
 Project Contact Phone +15404555761  
 Project Contact Email kathya@empowerhouseva.org

**Rapid Rehousing Budget.**

Please complete line-item budget. Budget amounts should reflect the VHSP request only.  
 Add another row for "other" line items not listed here.

	Activity	Renewal	Expansion
1	Rent assistance	US\$52,797.00	0
2	Veterans rent assistance (State RRH only)	0	0
3	Rent arrears	0	0
4	Veterans rent arrears (State RRH only)	0	0
5	Housing stabilization financial assistance	US\$10,000.00	0
6	Veterans housing stabilization financial assistance (State RRH only)	0	0
7	Housing stabilization case management	US\$52,617.00	0
8	Housing search and placement	0	0
9	Housing stabilization services	0	0
10	Service location costs	0	0
	Total	US\$115,414.00	Total

**HMIS Budget**

Activity	Renewal	Expansion
1 Computer Costs	0	0
2 Fees and Licenses	0	0
3 HMIS Staffing	0	0
4 Trianing	0	0
Total	Total	

**Admin Budget**

	Renewal	Expansion
1 Admin	US\$4,727.00	0

**Match.** Please indicate sources of match. Match must equal 25% of requested amount and must be spent on eligible VHSP expenses, but does not need to be of the same VHSP Category as the request. Match must be from local or private sources. If the project is requesting partial or full waiver of the match requirement, please explain.

Contributions, \$31,000

**Applicant Eligibility.**

Certify that the project will adhere to the FRCoC Coordinated Entry Policies & Procedures, including the following requirements of the document:

- ✓ Follow the Housing First model
- ✓ Participate in the FRCoC Coordinated Entry Process and/or the Victim Service Coordinated Entry Process (including coordinated assessment for shelter/prevention and prioritization for rapid re-housing)
- ✓ Adhere to established project standards (including FRCoC Rapid Re-Housing Policies & Procedures)
- ✓ Collect data through HMIS or a comparable database

**Household Type.** Please indicate the breakdown of household types targeted by this project:

1	Households with Children	7
2	Households without Children	2

**Project Scope.**

Provide a description that addresses the entire scope of the proposed project.

The Empowerhouse Rapid Re-Housing service assists homeless victims due to domestic violence (DV) in attaining permanent housing swiftly, in an effort to increase self-sufficiency. DV RRH offers financial assistance and supportive case management to individuals and families homeless from DV in PD16. They may be referred through the FRCoC Coordinated Entry or reach out directly to the Empowerhouse 24-hour hotline (FY22-2,112 calls; 1,011 in-person) through the Victim Service Coordinated Entry process for services. RRH will provide rental, deposit, and utilities housing assistance subsidies at participant chosen and rental lease with landlord scattered site apartments and homes.

Participants begin with the Shelter Services Coordinator who implements the prioritization assessment tool and supports them in creating a housing plan (262 people including children were sheltered in FY22). Households most highly prioritized based on the most significant barriers to obtaining housing will speak to the Housing Advocate (HA) who helps prepare the survivor and her family in obtaining housing. The FRCoC shared Housing Locator (HL), Empowerhouse trained in DV, works with each of the RRH clients to identify properties that meet their needs. The Empowerhouse Housing Case Manager (HCM) and the HL attend lease signings to ensure participants understand all aspects of the process and forms. The HA prepares invoices to pay rent and other financial assistance and continues to promote setting short- and long-term goals to increase independence including measures to strengthen safety and economic well-being related to abuse. The HCM continues to meet with survivors at the residences and other locations to work on housing stability goals and employment including attainment, maintenance, promotion, increasing skills, scholarships, education, and ongoing financial stability. This may include solving barriers such as transportation, childcare, and lack of skills.

DV RRH will pay a security deposit and at least the first two months of rent in full. Each client who needs it will receive a set amount of money monthly for utilities, based on what is included in the rent and the size of the unit. After two months the client's financial status will be reassessed and Empowerhouse will determine if a client is able to start paying a portion of their rent and more utilities. Every 3 months the HA performs recertification to determine their current income and eligibility for rental assistance. Once a client is able to take on full financial responsibility, case management services are still offered and available to ensure stability is maintained.

### **Community Need.**

If renewal funding is being requested, explain how the project continues to meet a community need and/or fill a system gap. If expansion funding is being requested, explain how the additional funds will increase system capacity and justify the community need for additional capacity. Be sure to use data to support the demonstrated need and detail the methodology for determining gaps within the system.

Empowerhouse served over 3,500 people exposed to domestic violence (DV) last year. Race and Ethnicity Demographics: 47% White, 21% African American, 16% Hispanic, 13% Unknown, 1% Asian, 1% Native American. 11% had LEP and were served by 2 full-time bilingual (Spanish) and bicultural Empowerhouse employees. This past year was the highest number of DV survivors we were able to house and sustain in their own housing for a total of 123 people (76 of which were children) which was a 38% increase in people helped and sustained in housing over pre-pandemic levels. We sheltered and housed clients for 38,279 bed nights at a 51% increase this past year over pre-pandemic levels 2 years ago. Empowerhouse increased rent assistance payments last year with 35% increased expenditures over pre-pandemic levels of spending to keep survivors in housing and to continue to help new families enter housing to change their situation safely and independent from abuse. Renewal funding for Empowerhouse RRH assists individuals and family household DV survivors (42 people in FY21) to re-enter and/or stabilize in housing as soon as possible. They become homeless because they fled or are fleeing DV and have no other options for themselves and their children or they have tried other options and were unable to achieve housing stability and as a result seek entrance to the Empowerhouse DV shelter. As the only DV services organization serving our 5 localities, Empowerhouse maintains the Victim Services Coordinated Entry Process through its existing 24-hour DV hotline. In FY 21, of the 118 adults and children supported in their own housing through the Empowerhouse housing supports, we supported and subsidized 42 households with 76 children with rental subsidies, case management, employment and education as they entered or stabilized in housing. 42 households, 34 of which were households with 76 (4 adults) children and 8 of which were single households, received financial support from Empowerhouse RRH. DV Survivors experience their own barriers to re-housing as well as those experienced within the general homeless population, sometimes compounded. Many DV survivors in housing experienced victimization by multiple relationships with violence and exploitation. For some this has led to substance use to cope with pain and for others, forced substance use was part of the abuse and coercion used by their abusive partners to control them. Once housed, many are coping with mental health needs, other chronic health conditions, and disabilities as they gain stability in their housing. Most of them are voluntarily working on GEDs or certificate programs, employability skill building,

transportation, and continued legal matters related to DV, custody, and support as part of their self-driven goals. This subset of homeless individuals and families receive the support to enter housing quickly while receiving critical DV trauma informed services for their eventual success in housing stability.

**Changes.** Describe any significant changes in your application and programming since your FY23 application. Include leadership, staffing, and programming changes as well as data, trends, and any other information you would like to share with the CoC.

We did not experience any staffing or leadership changes since our FY23 application.

An ongoing issue is the continued housing shortage, inflation and housing costs in our area which appear to be rising faster than incomes. Advocates note that many of the survivors find that they have limited affordable housing options in our area. Many survivors of DV coming into the housing program have significant concerns when considering entering housing. Rentdata.org lists Virginia as having the 19th highest rent in the country out of 56 states and territories with the average rental cost ranging from \$1,020 to upwards of \$2,263. Fredericksburg area rents are as high as Fairfax County. Thus far, for FY22, Empowerhouse has spent \$202,469.00 in rental assistance alone. While housing first and RRH assistance allows Empowerhouse to remove barriers to housing entry, there are factors that give pause to survivors desiring to take on a lease out of legitimate fears about their ability to eventually stabilize and sustain. Though there are employment opportunities, good paying jobs require background checks, which is an issue for some survivors due to having criminal histories. Survivors express extreme anxiety with the thought of doing the simple task of checking their mail for fear of potential bills. Many of our survivors find that they have less money left over to pay for food, transportation, healthcare, childcare, and other necessities. These economy and housing trends coupled with the impacts of the pandemic have contributed to a higher average of rent assistance spending per household while participants are in the DV RRH program.

We are receiving survivors in our RRH program with significant health issues especially as we come out of the pandemic. Domestic violence significantly affects health outcomes. According to the CDC, many other negative health outcomes are associated with intimate partner violence. These include a range of conditions affecting the heart, muscles and bones, and digestive, reproductive, and nervous systems, many of which are chronic. Survivors can experience mental health problems such as depression and PTSD symptoms. With mental health needs on the rise and limited local resources, the waitlist is long for a survivor to obtain much needed affordable mental health counseling support in PD16.

Our pool of available landlords and property management companies continues to grow, and the relationships being stronger than ever. Currently, we have two clients residing at Heritage Park, with four more slated to move in soon. This will help our families enter into affordable housing supporting their long-term stability. At present, we work with 7 landlords, the bulk of our clients with one property management company since they were the only ones willing to work with us and our clients during COVID as the pandemic put a strain on everything. The housing team continues to search and seek out landlords that are willing to work with Empowerhouse.

**Projected Spending.** Does the project anticipate being able to fully expend 100% of the funds currently contracted for FY23? Yes

**Findings.** Are there any unresolved monitoring or audit findings for any grants operated by the applicant or potential subrecipients? No

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