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Media Contact: Narissa J Adams – 512.934.4445 (Cell) / NJAdams@SafePlace.org

Homelessness and Domestic Violence

Keeping Survivors from Choosing between an Abusive Home or Homelessness

November 19, 2009, Austin, TX – Throughout our city we see the homeless. Many times, the face is a woman, with her children, in well-worn clothes; asking for help, seeking food and shelter. These are some of the faces of homelessness, and of domestic violence. In 2008, SafePlace helped 134 families avoid becoming homeless by providing transitional services and supportive housing to survivors.

A survey for the U.S. Conference of Mayors in 2003 identified domestic violence as the primary cause of homelessness in nine of the 25 cities surveyed. In 2007, studies found that 13 percent of homeless families left abusive homes to live on the streets. And the anecdotal evidence from across the country continues to reveal domestic violence is among the most frequently stated causes of homelessness.

At SafePlace, survivors who enter the emergency shelter stay, on average, just over 40 days. Those same survivors also have the opportunity to participate in the Transitional Services program. As a part of the program, SafePlace offers supportive housing designed to assist families and individuals who need homes as they work to become independent. In communities without shelters, those survivors would need to make decisions about how to begin re-building their lives free of abuse without access to resources that are available here in Austin.

“Think about how you would go about re-building your life, from the ground up, in a couple of months,” Narissa Adams, SafePlace’s Director of Communications stated. “SafePlace offers services that help the survivor feel safe so they can begin to heal and rebuild their lives without having to face the difficult decision of returning to an abusive home or homelessness.”

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24-hour Hotline 512.267.SAFE or 927.9616 TTY for the Deaf community
P.O. Box 19454 Austin, TX 78760
www.safeplace.org

For most, participation in Transitional Services is a one-year program during which survivors receive case management, counseling, LifeSkills classes, access to on-site childcare for very young children, and after school and summer activities for school-aged children. With access to supportive housing, survivors can focus on healing from the emotional trauma their family has experienced while building a self-sufficient life.

In this way, SafePlace keeps survivors and their children out of the cold and with food on their tables. As they become more self-sufficient, they will be able to live on their own rather than on the streets of Austin where they may never find the help they need.

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About SafePlace

SafePlace is ending sexual and domestic violence through safety, healing and prevention for individuals, families and our community. With 35-years of experience working with survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence in Austin/Travis County, SafePlace is an internationally recognized leader for its innovative and valuable programs. By providing a state-of-the-art emergency shelter; extensive transitional services; hospital advocacy for rape survivors; counseling, prevention and education programs, SafePlace offers critically needed services to survivors and engages the community in advancing alternatives in attitudes, behaviors and policies to impact our understanding and responses to sexual and domestic violence.