

# **Survivor Advocacy & Safety from Violence**



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## Overview

Survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking in Bellevue face significant barriers to accessing support. Stigma, language challenges, immigration status, and financial dependence often compound the trauma of violence. Survivor advocacy and safety services provide critical pathways to healing, housing, legal protection, and long-term safety. Bellevue organizations play a vital role by offering confidential counseling, legal navigation, culturally competent outreach, and emergency relocation support. Strengthening this network ensures that all residents—especially women, children, and LGBTQIA2S+ individuals—have trusted resources during times of vulnerability.

*Photo provided by Refugee Women's Alliance*



## Key Findings & General Trends

- **High Prevalence of Domestic Violence Statewide:**
  - In 2024, domestic violence offenses made up **49.5% of all crimes against persons** and **5.2% of all crimes against property** in Washington (Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, Crime in Washington 2024 Annual Report).
  - King County, which includes Bellevue, consistently reports **high rates of gender-based violence**, with most cases involving women ages 25–35 (King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, 2025).
- **Bellevue-Specific Case Trends:**
  - From **January–May 2025**, Bellevue Police recorded **404 domestic violence cases, 9% above** the five-year average (369) for the same period.
  - DV-related cases accounted for **50% of all “persons crimes”** (e.g., assault, harassment) reported during this time.
  - In 2024, Bellevue reported **926 DV cases**.
- **Progress in Sexual Assault Response:**
  - Washington cleared its backlog of **over 10,000 untested sexual assault kits** after decades of delay, aided by reforms and federal investment (Washington State, Office of the Attorney General, 2023).
  - This effort has **reopened criminal investigations** and **improved survivor trust** in the justice system.
  - In 2024, the state launched the **“Seek Then Speak”** confidential reporting and resource website, offering a **trauma-informed**,



- **accessible** platform for survivors.
- **Ongoing Systemic Challenges:**
  - Survivor advocacy networks remain **strained by high caseloads** and **under-resourced investigative units**.
  - The King County Sheriff's Office's Special Assault Unit staffing dropped by **nearly 50%** since the pandemic, delaying case processing and follow-up (Publicola, 2022).
  - Federal VOCA victim services funding in Washington declined by **~38%** from its peak, threatening **legal advocacy, shelter services, and culturally specific outreach** (Washington State Standard, 2024; Washington State Women's Commission, WSWC Testimony, 2025).
- **Local Response Needs:**
  - Bellevue's investments in **legal advocacy, crisis counseling, and supportive housing for survivors** remain essential.
  - Gaps in funding and investigative capacity at the state level mean **cities must actively ensure services are accessible, culturally responsive, and adequately resourced**.
  - Providers emphasized the **need for culturally responsive advocacy and safety planning resources** to meet the needs of diverse survivors.

## Community Voices & Lived Experiences

Survivors often face immediate safety crises combined with long-term emotional, legal, financial, and cultural challenges. Limited emergency housing and support systems leave families vulnerable in moments of



extreme crisis.

“We had a client who came in with her kids fleeing an abusive situation, and we had to scramble to find shelter.”

– SME

Complex and fragmented service systems increase survivor stress, especially during trauma.

“When someone is in crisis, they can’t be expected to figure out a dozen websites and phone numbers.”

– Focus Group Participant

“Safety from violence isn’t just physical—it’s emotional too. Survivors need trauma-informed services.” – SME

Fear of judgment, deportation, or custody loss deters many, especially immigrants, LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, and low-income households, from





seeking help. Confidential, culturally competent services are critical to breaking these barriers.

“There’s still a lot of stigma when people seek help for abuse. We need more safe, anonymous options.” – SME

Existing services are often perceived as underfunded and therefore insufficiently tailored to individual survivor needs.

### City-Funded Initiatives & Impact

Survivor advocacy and safety from violence are urgent and complex priorities in Bellevue’s human services landscape. The prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault demands robust, trauma-informed, culturally responsive systems that offer immediate safety and long-term healing. Investing in a continuum of care, from crisis intervention to legal and emotional support, is essential for creating a city where all survivors feel safe, supported, and empowered to rebuild their lives.

To meet the culturally and linguistically specific needs, **Consejo Counseling and Referral Service** provides domestic violence services including mental health counseling, substance use treatment, housing support, and advocacy tailored for Spanish-speaking survivors. Services include crisis intervention, safety planning, legal system navigation, financial assistance, relocation support, and empowerment-focused





support groups **Refugee Women's Alliance** supports Eastern European immigrant and refugee survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault with victim advocacy, support groups, outreach, and holistic case management services. **Project Be Free** support BIPOC survivors of domestic violence through Crisis Response, DV Advocacy, DV Family Support Groups, a Youth Mentorship Program, Monthly Family Resource Night and Survivor Wellness Symposium.

**LifeWire** offers survivor advocacy, resource referrals, legal navigation, and individual and group behavioral health counseling to meet a broad range of needs. **DAWN (Domestic Abuse Women's Network)** operates a confidential domestic violence shelter and offers mental health services, personalized case management, and community advocacy across King



County. DAWN and LifeWire also maintains a 24-hour crisis line providing safety planning and crisis intervention.

For survivors of sexual trauma, **Harborview Medical Center's Center for Sexual Assault & Traumatic Stress** provides outpatient medical care, therapeutic services, prevention, and education. **King County Sexual Assault Resource Center** offers a 24-hour resource line along with legal and general advocacy services in English and Spanish for survivors and their families.

In addition to advocacy services, the city has invested in housing stability at **LifeWire's Hope Start Here Apartments** for domestic violence survivors supporting 25 units of affordable, on-site supportive housing survivors earning less than 30% Area Median Income. Leveraging \$1.6 million in capital from Bellevue and Housing Stability Funding (HB 1590).

#### *Bellevue Funded Program Outcomes for 2024*

- **4,443** hours of domestic violence survivor advocacy support
- **912** hours of sexual assault survivor legal and general advocacy services
- **649** hours of domestic violence survivor counseling
- **342** hours of sexual assault survivor counseling
- **96** hours of domestic violence support groups

Together, these programs provide critical supports for survivors to help them heal and thrive.

