

**Teal Talk S2:E9 – Providing Safe Housing for  
Survivors of Sexual Violence with Jazmin Vera of OAESV**

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

Welcome to Teal Talk, a podcast brought to you by the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence. That's OAESV for short. We're your hosts Taylr

**Laurie Hamame**

and Laurie

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

and each episode, we speak with professionals in the field to dive deep into the intersectional issues that affect survivors in Ohio.

**Laurie Hamame**

Before we begin, we want to give a content warning that we will be discussing sexual violence and other issues that may be upsetting and triggering. If you need help, please feel free to call our resource line at 888.886.8388 during regular business hours, or the Ohio Sexual Violence Helpline 24/7 at 844.644.6435. Please take care of yourself.

**Laurie Hamame**

Hello, hello, and welcome to Episode 9 of Teal Talk. I should have started this episode out by saying Ho! Ho! Ho! Welcome to December. My name is Laurie Hamame. I'm the Resource & Communications Coordinator at OAESV.

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

And I'm Taylr Ucker-Lauderman. I am the Chief Engagement Officer at OAESV. And it's really funny that you said that, Laurie, because I was thinking we need to insert the "It's Time" Mariah Carey sound. I can't sing it at all. So I'm not going to do that to anybody, but I feel like... 'tis the season, right?

**Mariah Carey**

\*It's tiiiiiiiiime!\*

**Laurie Hamame**

Yeah, it's time for Mariah Carey to wake up and be played in every single department store and shop across the nation.

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

Absolutely.

**Laurie Hamame**

Well, today is especially special because we have another OAESV staff member along with us. We have Jazmin Vera. She's our Housing & Economic Empowerment Manager. She has had several years of experience providing direct service advocacy to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. As the former Family Advocate and Case Manager at Safe on Main in Warren County, she continuously has had the opportunity to empower a diverse scope of survivors. She currently maintains a registered advocate status with the Ohio Advocate Network. And she grew up and currently still lives in the Greater Cincinnati area. Hi, Jazmin.

**Jazmin Vera**

Hi Laurie. Hi, Taylr, thank you so much for inviting me on. I'm so happy to be here and to talk about everything and all housing-related we have going on here at OAESV!

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

We are really proud of the Meaningful Access Housing Program, so (we're) really excited to have you here today to tell us and our audience a lot more about what that all means. So do you want to just go ahead and kick us off?

**Jazmin Vera**

Yes. So our Meaningful Access Housing Program is a temporary hotel program that we launched at the beginning of this year, which offers short-term hotel stays to survivors of sexual violence throughout the whole state of Ohio. It's been a few months now. And we currently are in the three hundreds in number of stays. But by the end of December, we will be well in the four hundreds. So we are working our way up there.

**Laurie Hamame**

I wanted to mention too, if you wanted to hear more about this program, we chatted a little bit about it with our CEO, Rosa Beltre in Episode 5. So definitely check that out if you have not yet. So Jazmin, people might hear about housing when it relates to survivors of domestic violence, but I'd love to hear more about why this matters for survivors of sexual violence as well.

**Jazmin Vera**

Of course. So housing for survivors of domestic violence has been a resource that has been available for some time now, and the funding has been allocated a lot of times to programs who do domestic violence and intimate partner work. So it is very special that we have been able to do the hotel program, specifically for survivors of sexual violence since that is something that hasn't been done before, and was often not a priority area. It's because a lot of times when you think of housing needs, you think of individuals who might be actively fleeing or trying to get away. Some survivors of sexual violence might be doing the same, but some might not be actively fleeing, necessarily, but are also impacted by the housing crisis that there is for a lot of individuals throughout the whole country, not just Ohio. So it's something that is an issue for a lot of people. So most people are perhaps maybe one paycheck away from losing their homes or not being able to afford the basic necessities to be able to sustain their home, this program and OAESV being able to provide housing program services is a major step to help access for those survivors who previously couldn't get access to it or just weren't eligible for certain services.

**Laurie Hamame**

The numbers talk, right?

**Jazmin Vera**

Yes, I would estimate that probably by the end of the year, we will be around the five hundreds, but that's just like an estimate. So we will be well on the four hundreds for the month of December, and maybe get to the five hundreds by the end of the year. But we shall say.

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

Yeah, so obviously, there's a huge need. And did you already say when we launched the program?

**Jazmin Vera**

It was in April of 2023. So it wasn't even at the beginning of the year that it was launched. And we've already got a lot of stays.

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

Right, absolutely. Okay. Jazmin, can you tell us a little bit more about what some of the challenges might be for providing a program like this?

**Jazmin Vera**

Yeah, so one of the major challenges is that since the hotel program is only temporary, survivors also need access to long-term sustainable housing. So being able to get survivors into those programs is a challenge. And also not having long term programs that are available to the survivors is a challenge just because once the hotel stays up, or after a few days, we don't want the survivors to go back to an environment that's unsafe for them or is uncomfortable for them, or the survivors just end up being without a home after their stay. And since it is a short-term program, we want to look into what their options are going to be once they leave the program, or how they're going to be able to sustain their homes long-term.

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

Right? Like, obviously, any help that we can provide is something but we really want to be able to provide a solid foundation and truly set people up to be in the situation that they want to be.

**Laurie Hamame**

I was going to add, it's helpful that they're already connected to us, because we have a lot of, you know, connections across the state and are able to kind of brainstorm ways that we can help them longer term, versus a survivor that doesn't have access to this housing program or doesn't know about us. So I'm wondering what work you've been doing to advertise this program and reach survivors who don't know about us.

**Jazmin Vera**

So one of the early things that we did was trying to reach out to local programs, just to let them know that this is a service that's available to them. And being able to talk with the local advocates at those programs who are in their communities to know that it is available for them, and how to apply. We have a few of our member programs already using the housing program, as we have quite a few number of states. But we obviously want more remember programs to know and to be engaged with it as well. It is new for a lot of standalone rape crisis centers that maybe have never been able to provide housing resources or housing access. So it is like a learning curve for a lot of advocates who are working at standalone centers and just don't know that it's available, or also don't know how to manage the housing process with the survivors they're working with, since it is a lot of work. And it's hard depending on the community you are in just because there might not be a lot of housing resources or housing options within your community. So just trying to get everybody engaged in learning more.

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

Jazmin, are you seeing a lot of awareness within the local program communities about this need? Like is it a conversation that has often come up and until now, the service just wasn't there? Or is it something that a lot of advocates don't even sometimes know that they should be talking to survivors about?

**Jazmin Vera**

It's honestly both. So there is a big housing need throughout the whole state that I think a lot of advocates have realized but they were kind of limited and didn't have anything to provide. So because they didn't have anything to provide they would do their best to refer out to maybe their county Housing Authority, or what resources are available through the county that they're in, which in a lot of rural counties are very limited. So it was just a combination of both. A lot of advocates know there is the housing need. But then a lot of advocates might also not be aware that this is a resource now for them that they can utilize.

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

A lot of different people listen to our podcast, a lot of folks who actually work in the field, but also some people who don't. So for those people who aren't doing this work, but they want to support making sure that survivors of sexual violence can get access to housing, what could they maybe do to support this?

**Jazmin Vera**

So anybody who's interested in getting involved with housing and how they can help is obviously getting in contact with their local community agencies and centers and seeing what housing needs are immediate needs for their community. At OAESV, there's many ways to get involved. So if you go online to our get involved section, on our website, there's plenty of ways to help out.

**Laurie Hamame**

I just want to hype us up. Because you were talking Jazmin about how prior to this housing program, if survivors went to their local rape crisis programs and had housing issues, the only real option was to refer them to the county Housing Authority. And we don't know if what they're doing is trauma informed. So I think it's really amazing that we have this program and this funding specifically to help survivors of sexual assault. It's really unique.

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

And we know that the people that are doing the work are well versed in what survivors of sexual violence particularly need, because while there's crossover with a lot of other things like houselessness, in general, or domestic violence, or the gamut of issues that people might have to face, dealing with sexual violence can be specific and particular and have its own things that come along with it. So yeah, I think it can be even more effective.

**Jazmin Vera**

Just to add on to that before, if a survivor reached out to a local program that didn't have housing options available, or perhaps that shelter available, the only other options also were homeless shelters, which were obviously not the best for those survivors, just because there is a huge risk of re-victimization through that system. And even in the areas where there is a shelter available for those survivors, perhaps it is a dual agency that does work with domestic violence and sexual assault survivors that can provide that shelter. A lot of times the kind of shelter guidelines and shelter work that a lot of those shelters work with are centered around domestic violence. And a lot of those needs can be intersected with survivors of sexual violence, but also every survivor is a bit different. So some of those might not really apply to those survivor. A lot of them might have certain guidelines regarding confidentiality that might not necessarily apply to a survivor of sexual violence just because there might not be anybody actively looking for them or following them. So them following certain guidelines might not make sense for their need.

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

Do you have any statistics about how survivors of sexual violence are often impacted by housing security issues?

**Jazmin Vera**

Statistics from the national lines and sexual violence show: 40% of all sexual assaults occur in the victim's home; an additional 20% of assaults occur at the home of the victims friend, relative or neighbor; 92% of homeless mothers have experienced severe physical and/or sexual assault at some point in their lives; 43% reported sexual abuse in childhood; 61% of homeless girls and 19% of homeless boys reported sexual abuse as a reason for leaving the home; a study of African American survivors of sexual assault found that 76% attributed their rate to the riskiness in their living situations; 58% of respondents to a national survey reported instances of landlord-against-tenant sexual assault, and 79% of those cases, victims reported that their landlords refused to repair locks supply heat and hot water or make the living space safe, made sexual propositions to tenants, stalked tenants, and engaged in unwanted sexual contact with the tenants.

**Laurie Hamame**

I mean, all of those statistics just point towards the need of housing for survivors and I don't think we can expect victims to heal and stay safe without a place where they can heal and stay safe from sexual assault.

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

It's a basic need, right? One of those foundational things that you need to have in order to be able to build true safety and health and happiness in your life.

**Jazmin Vera**

Even with those survivors who might not have experienced the assault recently, during their healing journey, there might be a time that it might come back to impact them in their personal but also professional life. So that might also mean not being able to work for at certain time, or not being able to hold a job for a period of time that is needed to be able to get paid to even afford the basic necessities, much less rent.

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

Mhm. And I think those are the like the snowballing of things that a lot of folks don't talk about, of how sexual violence impacts you. It's not just that initial attack or harm that happens to you, but all the other things that can continue to be added on to that throughout your life. So as much as we can mitigate that and provide support, the better.

**Jazmin Vera**

Healing for the survivors doesn't happen at one time or gets done. And then it's over with, it's throughout their whole lifespan that it will impact them. So at any point in their life, something might come up that influences their day-to-day living or what they're able to do in their day-to-day.

**Laurie Hamame**

So as we wrap up this episode, I would love to pose a question to you Jazmin, if you won the Mega Millions lottery, and you could turn this housing program into anything you wanted, what would you do? What would it look like?

**Jazmin Vera**

Well, it would be able to launch a long-term transitional housing program, which OAESV is already

in the works of doing. But obviously, being able to offer it to a whole lot more of survivors, and those in need. Definitely being able to have a long-term program that can help many people.

**Laurie Hamame**

Have you seen the Barbie movie?

**Jazmin Vera**

No.

**Laurie Hamame**

I imagine OAESV having a collection of houses, the same way that BarbieLand did.

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

Oh my gosh, I love that. Yeah, like the little cul de sac.

**Laurie Hamame**

Yeah! Well, thank you so much, Jazmin, for joining us and for teaching us and everyone else a little bit more about housing needs and the OAESV housing program.

**Jazmin Vera**

Thank you, Laurie. Thank you, Taylr. Thank you, audience for joining in. And definitely get involved with housing needs. Everybody needs it. Even you, and me.

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

Absolutely. Thank you.

**Laurie Hamame**

Before we hop off Jazmin, could you share your email or ways that advocates can apply?

**Jazmin Vera**

Yes. So if you would like to get in contact with me directly, you can email me. My email is [jvera@oaesv.org](mailto:jvera@oaesv.org). And if you want to get in contact with anything housing related or have housing requests, feel free to reach our housing email. That is just [housing@oaesv.org](mailto:housing@oaesv.org)

**Laurie Hamame**

Awesome. We will have all the information in the show notes as well.

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

Thank you. Bye, everyone.

**Laurie Hamame**

Thanks for listening to Teal Talk. We hope you enjoyed our deep dive into intersectional issues affecting survivors in Ohio. If you like what you heard, subscribe and leave us a five-star rating and review, recommend us to a friend, and follow us on Instagram and Facebook @OAESV and Twitter @OhioAllianceESV. If you'd like to learn more about us and the services we offer, sign up for our email list, or read a transcript of this episode visit [oaesv.org](http://oaesv.org)

**Taylr Ucker-Lauderman**

Want to share a comment or ask a question for a future episode? Just click on the link in the show notes to leave us a voicemail. And remember, we're here to help. Feel free to call our resource line at 888.886.8388 during regular business hours, or the Ohio Sexual Violence Helpline 24/7 at 844.644.6435. See you next time!