

Collaborative Solutions, Inc.

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OPERATOR: This is Conference #480078333

Valencia: Hello, everyone, please remember to mute your phones line by pressing star six.

Operator: The leader has muted your line. To un-mute your line, press pound six.

(Slide 1)

Valencia: Hello and welcome, everyone. Please note that this call is being recorded. Your webinar will begin promptly at 12:00 PM Central, 1:00 PM Eastern Standard Time.

Questions during the webinar may be asked by using the chat feature to the left. Listening to this webinar through your computer is strongly recommended. When doing so make sure your volume is turned on and up.

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Please remember to press your mute button or star six to mute if you are using this option. Please stand by we will be begin shortly. Welcome to today's webinar titled Rural Challenge - Operating HOPWA Housing Programs in Rural Communities.

For technical assistance you may post a message in the chat-box or send an email to Valencia@Collaborative-solutions.net. Today's program is scheduled for 90 minutes and includes a question and answer segment.

To interact with the presenters you may submit a question at the time by using the chat feature located on the lower left side of your screen.

You should also use link, the link area where you will find resources related to today's webinar. If you would like to download a copy of today's presentation, click on the link number one and select open in the bottom left-hand corner of your screen under the link box.

And now it is my pleasure to introduce to you today's speakers Mande Ellison-Weed and Crystal Pope from Collaborative Solutions.

Crystal Pope: Thank you, Valencia. Good afternoon, everyone, my name is Crystal Pope and I work with Collaborative Solutions, one of HUD's TA providers. I'm joined today by Mande Ellison-Weed who is the senior program associate at Collaborative Solutions.

She plays a leadership role in carrying out our organization's rural supportive housing programs. Also on the line are Kate Briddell and Christine Campbell who will help field questions and add your comments.

We want to welcome you to this webinar in the HOPWA modernization webinar series. The webinar today will focus on the challenges faced by grantees and providers when delivering housing programs in rural communities.

And it's intended to provide some ideas and some methods, hopefully some discussion for improving your successes in those areas.

(Slide 2)

This webinar is for all HOPWA grantees and project sponsors whose funding will be impacted by HOPWA modernization, whether gaining or losing funds.

It should be of particular interest to organizations that currently deliver housing, HOPWA housing and services in rural areas, but we will also address the responsibility of grantees to serve their entire coverage area, and in order to assure that HIV positive households living in those rural counties are included in outreach and service delivery to the greatest extent possible.

(Slide 3)

This is a list of the remaining webinars in our series, and we just want you to note that some of the dates have been adjusted since this was first announced and further announcements about this will go out very shortly.

(Slide 4)

This is our agenda for today. While we know that webinars don't really lend themselves to as much interaction as we would like to have, we are going to ask you to participate as much as possible, so take a look at the chat-box which Valencia mentioned located on the lower left-hand side of your screen. We'd like you to get ready to use this feature so we can hear from you and also answer any questions you have.

So, let's give that a quick try, and everyone type in "hi" or a brief message and let's see if we can make that work. Let us know you are out there. OK, good. So, keep this on your radar because we are going to ask several times during the presentation for you to enter answers or ideas.

We also have a number of polls and so don't stray too far from your keyboard.

(Slide 5)

Let's start with a review of the values that HUD's Office of HIV/AIDS housing was established for HOPWA modernization which we've reviewed at the beginning of most of these webinars.

And those include that no person should become homeless as a result of HOPWA modernization, that all funds should be used to meet the needs of eligible households with no funds being recaptured.

And that the grantee should ensure that their project design meet the changing needs of the modern HIV epidemic with the goal of positive health outcomes and so forth. Look at this as a real opportunity to revisit your program design going forward.

(Slide 6)

These are our learning objectives for the day.

We'd like you to get some ideas about how to improve the success of rural housing delivery through better marketing, through landlord engagement and eviction prevention. And we also would like you to take a look at your over-all program to make sure you are reaching all areas of your EMSA.

(Slide 7)

One of the things that we wanted to emphasize during this webinar is the requirement HUD places on grantees to serve their EMSA, which is the Eligible Metropolitan Statistical Area that your HOPWA award is based on.

Both city and state HOPWA grantees should pay close attention to those requirements when planning where and how your HOPWA services are delivered. So, the regulatory language is included here but we'll break it down a little further to talk about what the means for grantees.

(Slide 8)

Based on the regulations HOPWA awards are made to qualifying cities within EMSAs and eligible states. So, the requirements are a little bit different for the two and we'll look at that, so City grantees are required to serve eligible persons living anywhere within their respective EMSA, all of the counties that you are charged with covering.

These grantees must reach all eligible people in those counties covered, and that requires some planning and outreach to make sure that it happens correctly.

It's not really sufficient to have all housing and services in one location such as the most populated city or town unless you've got some measures in place to reach out to and serve those people who are living in the more remote county areas. So that's cities.

For State grantees, State grantees receive an allocation based on the HOPWA formula criteria in the areas of the state that are outside of any of these qualifying EMSA cities.

So, the state grantee should serve clients for the Balance of State areas, although we want to point out the regulations also allow states to carry out

activities anywhere within the state including within one of those qualifying EMSAs.

For example, the state of Mississippi could decide that in addition to covering their Balance of State areas, they'll also provide funding for services in Jackson, Mississippi which receives its own HOPWA formula allocation. However, there are some cautions about this that you should be aware of.

If the state decides to fund an area within an EMSA then that decision really needs to be based on some data that shows a higher need for services in that area and they should also be able to show that funding an EMSA provides the highest impact per person throughout the state and will contribute to your overall success. So, that's something if there are any questions people can talk with their HOPWA Mod TA providers about that.

(Slide 9)

So, what do those requirements really mean? In reality, assuring availability to all eligible persons throughout your EMSA may play out very differently depending upon what the needs are and what your resources are.

The best possible scenario that you would have HOPWA housing and services actively located in each area or county with project sponsors funded in those counties and easily accessible to clients.

Of course, we know that's not possible for every grantee, so there are some other ways that you can use or increase your reach.

Some programs have addressed this by co-locating HOPWA staff in outlying agencies to assist with assessments and intake such as having HOPWA office hours at a shelter, a mental health center or health facility that's located in some of those outlying areas.

Other programs have collaborative agreements with outlying agencies to help optimize those referrals. This often takes the form of providing some ongoing education and networking with those agencies to make sure that the

availability of HOPWA assistance is known to all clients and that they can quickly be connected with the help they need.

All grantees should consider having area-wide outreach plans to help assure that people throughout the area that they are covering are aware of the HOPWA program and how to apply. Again, states that choose to direct some of their funding toward a covered EMSA should be able to demonstrate the need in that area.

(Slide 10)

So, getting more to what we're trying to talk about today in program operations, we just want to point out as you all know that not all areas that are considered rural look the same.

They can be very different based on geography, how close they are to urban areas, how many small towns there are, where they even are in relation to highway systems and lots of other considerations like that. However, all these areas face some of the same basic challenges.

(Slide 11)

So, we want to start with a couple of polls that will tell us a little bit about where you are working and what your areas look like. So, the first one if you would respond to this, how many counties do you serve with your HOPWA program.

OK. It's coming in and it's looking like a very high percentage are serving seven or more counties so that goes to how challenging it is to cover areas that broad. Let's go to the next poll.

(Slide 12)

Christine: Hey, Crystal?

Crystal Pope: Yes.

Christine: Just really quick, one of our participants mentioned that they have as many as 125 counties.

Crystal Pope: Right. So, that would be a state...

Christine: I just wanted to point out there's much more than the seven.

Crystal Pope: Right. Thank you for that. And you'll see big differences between the number of counties served by state grantees. Clearly, we did not necessarily take that into account in the city EMSAs, so thank you.

So, for this one, if you would answer which of the responses best reflects the area you serve. OK. And this looks like the vast majority include larger cities plus surrounding rural communities and smaller percentages down from that. Great. Thank you for that.

(Slide 13)

Remember I said don't go too far away from your keyboard so, would you all please go to the chat box on the left-hand side and briefly tell us one or two of the most significant barriers or challenges you face in delivering HOPWA housing and services in rural communities. You have to actually click on the box on the screen and then send.

Christine: So, Crystal, we are seeing things like limited funding, we serve one large -- I think that was answered in one of the questions but transportation, not enough funds, lack of public transportation, lack of available housing stock, small housing stock, lack of landlords and transportation, low FMRs and lack of rental property.

(Slide 14)

Crystal Pope: Great. OK. And this was our initial list compared to that, so I think that people who've responded has hit on just about everything that we have listed here plus some. Wouldn't you say, Christine?

Christine: Yes. A few more regarding finding the landlords that would want to rent to HOPWA clients, access to those communities, rental availability, lack of quality housing even in a large community but there is limited funding and lack of affordable housing, stigma and transportation. The application process for HOPWA is closed, stable sources of income, that's that we're seeing so far.

Crystal Pope: OK. Great. And we will capture all of that and follow up with this as well because it really helps us to hear some of those additional issues that people bring up.

(Slide 15)

So, let's try one more. What resources are most needed to effectively help clients in the rural areas you serve? What's lacking? I know this has to be a long list so, people should be able to answer something.

Kate: So far, I'm seeing transportation and funding. Funding for TBRA and transitional housing. Lots of lack of transportation is coming up, counselling and primary care, not enough homes to rent.

Oh my, funding, this person says they have only five vouchers to spread over four counties. People's ability to pay, agencies ability to pay for birth certificates for clients. One community says they need more HIV providers, rents that exceed the FMR. We have one landlord, one that says communication with rural areas.

Oh, here's one that says that the state HOPWA program office needs more expertise. Emergency shelters, a lot about housing stock, knowing what agencies are available to assist, security deposit help, housing case management funding is limited and the generally more resources and services including medical. Again, more shelters.

(Slide 16)

Crystal Pope: Great. That touches on everything on our initial list plus many, many more. So, thank you, all, for putting in that information. And thankfully, a number of those main points are things that we are going to touch on today.

(Slide 17)

So, what I'd like to do now is turn over this presentation to -- hold on -- to Mande Ellison-Weed. I'd like to introduce her as well and she can tell you a little bit more about herself. She is a senior associate in our affordable and rural housing program and has many, many years of direct experience in creating and operating rural housing programs.

As a TA provider, she conducts many workshops on these topics usually that are a day to two days long with lots of activities. So, we are really glad that she has agreed to be part of this and try to condense all of her information into our very short one and a half our webinar so, over to you, Mande.

Mande Ellison-Weed: Thank you, Crystal. Like Crystal said, my name is Mande Ellison-Weed and I have been providing rural housing services for about 20 years now.

Most of my experience has been in Alabama and Georgia covering all of the most rural areas so, when I was seeing everything that you guys were putting in the chat box, all of that was very familiar and all the things that I had to manage throughout my career.

So, today, I would like for us to talk about enhancing rural operations. We're first going to cover marketing new program -- excuse me -- landlord engagement, case manager/landlord/tenant relationship, we'll touch on eviction prevention and give some program examples and best practices. We'd also like to leave some time at the end for Q&A.

(Slide 18)

So, first, let's go ahead and start talking about marketing your program.

(Slide 19)

One of the things that's really important and obviously this is important in rural areas as well as urban areas but it can be a little more tricky when you're talking about rural landlords is that we need to really focus on understanding that for these landlords, rental housing is a business and sometimes it's their only business.

They are looking to reduce risk. They want to maximize return on investment. And a lot of times they are small landlords and they have the largest supply of affordable housing in the country.

(Slide 20)

Four things that landlords want are basically the same things that we all want in a neighbor. We want a good neighbor, someone who takes care of

property, long term renters and primarily rent paid on time. If rent is paid, there are a lot of things that can go to the wayside as long as that rent is paid on time.

(Slide 21)

It's really important to think about marketing your program because what you're doing is you're selling your program not just your agency but your program specifically. And you have to convince property owners that your product will meet their needs and address their concerns.

And what your product is oftentimes is the services that you as the case manager are providing. Marketing your program is one of the best tools to use in developing the pool of landlords and management companies who are willing to rent directly to your clients.

What we also have to remember a lot of times and especially in these rural communities is that it's about relationship. You are not just marketing your program, oftentimes, you are marketing yourself as a resource for them.

(Slide 22)

When we think about who we're marketing to in rural communities, oftentimes like we said that first topic, that first bullet point is mom and pop landlords, property management organizations and then other service providers.

And all of those different property providers or rental providers are very different in how you want to reach out and how you want to approach outreach and engaging them so that they will work with you.

(Slide 23)

Some of the ways that you market your program -- excuse me -- is through flyers and as in local newspapers, social media, posting landlord events, cold-calling, direct mail, and attending health fairs or community fairs.

I found myself when I was doing this work doing a lot of cold-calling not so much direct mail. I've had some interesting experiences with social media and

I, now four years out of being a direct service provider, am still getting phone calls about people needing assistance.

So, you have to be careful about how you operate with social media, but it can be a huge asset. Also, cold-calling can also be instead of just calling people but also showing up and remembering that you as a person are the face of the program that you are trying to market.

(Slide 24)

Some of the things that I have always kept in my marketing toolbox so that apart from other people who are doing landlord engagement -- sorry, guys, I had a blank -- is agency brochures and a program brochure specifically.

You need a program brochure. That is going to simplify exactly what you're providing and not flood landlords with what your entire agency provides.

They're not really concerned about that. What they're concerned about is what you and your program can provide for them. And that program brochure often needs to be different than what you provide to your client. Your landlords need to have different information than what you are providing for your client.

One-page informational handouts or fact sheets are definitely needed. It helps them remember that you're not just there trying to get something from them but you're also wanting to give something to them making sure that they know what's happening in their community and how they can be engaged and what all is provided not just along your program or even your agency but what all kinds of homelessness resources are available in their area.

Letters that explain the program or agency are great to have and client success stories or landlord success stories are huge.

I have gotten landlords to work with me to write down a testimonial letter that they enjoyed and have enjoyed working with me because that is a huge way to get other landlords to listen is for them to know that you are working with landlords and that there are landlords who are satisfied with your program.

So, in the brochure for the landlord, you need specifics like starting out with what you're providing. So, if you have a subsidy, you want to lead with your subsidy. If you are providing certain specific case management services, you want to list those case management services.

You don't have to list in that brochure exactly because we want to be really careful with confidentiality, you don't have to list specifically who you're providing services for but what if they agreed to work with you, what you'll be providing for the tenants and for them as a part of that program.

(Slide 25)

So, what we have found is that in most cases, all of us are wearing multiple hats. And it usually falls on the case manager to be the one to engage landlords. You have to convince the landlords that they benefit from working with you and other supportive service providers and we need to inform them of all of those benefits.

And somebody has mentioned exactly in the chat box that we shouldn't list HOPWA. You should not list HOPWA. That's correct. We don't ever want to cause any confidentiality issues for our clients.

Units may be there, it's oftentimes about finding them and building relationships with landlords and property managers. I don't think I can say enough that that is the biggest part of landlord - in rural areas.

It is huge. You showing up, you being the person who shows up over and over and over again, being honest about what you can provide and what is all is going to be a part of the services you give is very important.

(Slide 26)

Crystal Pope: Mande, could you say a little bit more about how you have gone about finding those units because it is true that in rural areas they're just not as evident?

Mande Ellison-Weed: That is true. Yes, you can't always just look on online or look on Craigslist to find units in rural communities. And so, what I did is, again, I'll

talk to you about how we all wear, we are wearing multiple hats oftentimes as a case manager.

And so, there would be times when I would be transporting clients to an appointment and I would take a different route home because those mom and pop landlords are out there just sticking a for rent sign in the yard.

They're not always advertising anywhere. They are sticking a sign in the yard and hoping for the best. And so that would be, honestly, that was a huge way that I managed to find people who may only have one unit or maybe they have five units.

I would also work a lot with other supportive service providers going to sometimes we would have supportive service provider meetings once a month in one of my counties and I would go to those so that I could talk to other providers to see if they had gained any new housing or if they were providing anything different or knew of anyone who might be willing to take a voucher or work with any of our programs so, building those relationships.

Also, I did a lot of mission, what I call five-minute mission moment -- excuse me -- where I would go to community meetings and also to communities of faith, to church meetings.

I would ask the minister if I could have five minutes to speak to the congregation and I would tell them a little bit about the program and what all we provided just to let them know that there was assistance there for people who were experiencing homelessness.

And when I did that, I did find some landlords and I also found some clients or I found people who knew of clients. So, the mission moments were huge. In small towns also, a lot of times your ministerial associations will get together and they may meet casually or it may be more formally.

But even if you can figure out where that casual meeting is, because I have to say my dad was a rural minister and just retired last year so I figured out that

that was a pretty good place to go where the ministers were gathering, because they would oftentimes know of parishioners who had properties.

And so, they could hook me up with somebody who might be interested in renting. There were also times I would go to hardware stores and look at the big bulletin board, because a lot of small mom and pop groups will or landlords do all of their maintenance.

And so, they would be going there to find different things, and I would put up a sign on that particular thing about how I was looking for landlords and I would also go and look for units that might be for rent, because, again, a lot of times they're not social media savvy and they're not putting that information out there everywhere, plus like we said, the stock is relatively low so they've really had to. They can usually find somebody to rent pretty quickly. Do you have anything you want to add to that, Crystal?

Crystal Pope: I have another question that came in and I do encourage people to as you have questions going through the presentation, go ahead and put those in the chat box and we'll answer them if we can. We have a question about how you address increasing rent costs even if you have strong relationships with the landlords.

Mande Ellison-Weed: What I did and what I have done a lot of times is just continue to explain over and over again what fair market rent is.

And if I had consistently provided what I said what I would provide which was long term clients or clients who are receiving support, rent that was paid, they are more willing and likely to keep me in a unit instead of having to turn that unit over if everything has been going smoothly.

So, oftentimes, I mean, it always is about the relationship and maintaining that relationship. And then there are also times that, I won't lie, there are times when they're going to decide to renovate their entire property or whatever and you're going to have to find other units.

But having those relationships and really talking through and explaining what FMR is, a lot of times I work) to kind of tweak people's emotions on that like keeping this person stably housed, helps us keep homelessness down in this community, could you give me another year. Let's talk about it for another year.

And so, I might get somebody to agree long, long term but I was willing to have a conversation and try to figure out some compromise, while also just continuing to explain what was possible in that community, like, OK, you might could get \$50 more or you might could get \$100 more money but you also might could get an eviction issue that you're going to have to deal with and in this situation, you've got somebody who's pretty steadily and stably housed.

I'm seeing a question that 2019 FMRs have gone down from 2018 in many rural areas, meanwhile rents have been going up. It's true.

That is true. And I had one particular landlord in rural Alabama who had 10 units and he was a former -- he was a veteran and he decided to renovate everything. And when he renovated it all and he upped the rent, he couldn't find anybody to rent the properties.

This did happen to be a pretty impoverished area. But he and I were able to work together because the particular program I was working with at that time which was to provide some housing for veterans.

We were able to work together to talk about what the FMR was in that area and what he was willing to accept that would cover his cost. Does anybody else have any questions around that right now? Great.

Crystal Pope: I think we're OK so far.

(Slide 27)

Mande Ellison-Weed: Thanks. So, if we're talking about landlord engagement -- sorry, I'm seeing some more questions, guys. I'm trying to keep up with these, other housing programs. That's a really good question because of the

confidentiality issue, Adam. You don't tell them that that's the only program that your agency operates.

You just explain to them that your agency can provide housing assistance for people with certain disabilities or for veterans or you even just leave that out. You can just say we provide housing assistance for people who qualify for the program.

Just because you're an HIV housing provider or a service provider, it doesn't necessarily mean that that's the only housing you could be operating. It's sometimes about the spin. And as long as you -- you can just reframe how you explain to them what that program is, as long as the rent check don't ever say HOPWA or HIV clinic.

So, the question I also see is because that HOPWA is so similar to Section 8 and/or HUD VASH, how do you get landlords to understand that there is a difference.

That's a really good question. Oftentimes, I don't really have to. More of an issue is when they don't want to accept Section 8 or any type of vouchers, so just explaining to them that this is another program that just provides assistance for people who meet the criteria.

And they don't really have to know except around the habitability thing, like I would explain the difference between housing inspections for Section 8 and housing inspections for HOPWA and for other programs when I was talking with them and explain because they would at first say that I'm not doing Section 8, I don't want to go through all of that.

So, I would re-explain how what our habitability standards were and how we went through the process of finding housing and explain the difference that way. I was also really clear up front and over and over and over again about what services we were providing and what financial resources we were providing.

So, when you're working with landlords, proactive outreach is the way to go. You cannot successfully show up and get a landlord if you walk in with the client. If you walk in an emergent situation then you have -- you are asking something immediate of them and you're not having an opportunity to establish a relationship.

So, I would always, and I highly recommend always calling on the front end, constantly be looking, doing those drive-bys, calling other service providers, whatever it takes, but reaching out specifically to the landlords before you're showing up with an ask. It's really important to be patient and persistent.

I've joked about this a lot of times, but I used food a lot of times if I had a way that I could show up even if it was with a bag of candy, whatever I had found that was on sale or it was discounted and I'm not telling anyone to spend your own money. I'm just saying this was something that I did a few times. Food always seemed to work.

I also had really one time this super grumpy admin front desk person, and I knew that the manager, the property manager was in his office because I could hear his television, but she would tell me all the time that he wasn't there.

And finally, one day I walked in and I happened to have been the girl scout mom that year I had a whole lot of girl scout cookies so I walked in and I gave her some girls scout cookies and she looked at me for the first time and she smiled and she said you're just not going to go away, are you.

I was like I'm not, I really need this housing and I happen to have driven by the complex and I know you got empty units. And so, it really just took that patience and persistence and honestly just being as nice as I possibly could every time I went in there.

The next bullet is "know fair housing law". What I will say about that is I'm not a lawyer and I never pretend to be. I know the basics of fair housing law, I know how to explain it, I know who to tell people to call to understand more housing law, fair housing law and I understand enough to be talking with a

landlord to say and always kindly as possible, what you're doing may not be legal, let's look at how we can better protect you in this situation.

We need to always remember that they're business owners and that renting houses -- renting housing is their livelihood and that's even more important in rural communities where you may have some big renting agencies, but you often have just like I said before, those landlords who have five or six units to rent.

When I worked with landlords, what I really just reminded myself over and over is to not focus on the negative, not get pulled into any negative conversations or preconceived notions they may have about subsidies or people who apply for subsidies, and just constantly redirect it to how I could be helpful and how I could best respond to their needs.

(Slide 28)

So, we talked a little earlier about how working with landlords, understanding their priorities, that they want the rent payments, they want things to be, the apartments or the units to be maintained, a peaceful community, keeping units filled, and assistance with tenant issues. Let's see, we have low volume landlords who really resent us having to 1099 them to the (IRS), they refuse to rent to our clients.

I have dealt with that also. And I don't have any magic there except that I would just continue to tell them kind of over and over again that you're going to have a full unit and you could rent to anyone, you could rent to anyone, that's true.

But they wouldn't have a case manager and in this particular situation you have a support team of people who are really wanting to keep this person housed and you're going to be consistently getting your rent paid.

And there were some -- you're right, they would refuse to rent to our clients, I couldn't turn everyone but I tried by just re-spinning all of that information just constantly changing it to the positive so that it was solution-based and not so much about the negatives that they had to go through.

One of the things that landlords don't even realize that they need is appropriate program education telling them about available services, knowledge of tenancy expectations, positive experiences with their landlords sometimes something as simple as this is what a valid lease looks like, would you like for me to help you find a draft of a lease. Or do you have rules and regulations for your program.

Oh, you don't; well, I have some examples of things that you can use here, just various ways that I could work with them to let them know that I had other things and also I knew of other resources in the community that could help the tenants but also could help the landlord's family or someone else that was having an issue in that community.

That's a good question, Jaclyn. The question is, "is that because there is a term, the term AIDS or HIV in the organization name on the 1099 or because it's extra paperwork they have to do?"

When I was doing a lot of that, I didn't have the term HIV or AIDS in the organization name or on the paperwork. Does anybody else have an answer around that, what their experience has been around the paperwork or the name issues?

Crystal Pope: Well, I mean, that could go both ways. And the 1099 is the big glitch with disclosure, it really is. And it's something that we've struggled with as people have changed the names of their organizations or are doing business as or using a very generic term for the program. The 1099 is always going to come back in the legal name of the organization, so it's just something to keep in mind.

(Slide 29)

Mande Ellison-Weed: Thank you, Crystal. So, the most key element to developing a creative landlord partnerships are honesty and integrity. Don't ever promise more than you can give.

Be clear over and over and over again about what your role is and honestly, what their role is as a landlord because I have had landlords try to get all up in business that wasn't their business to get into so I would just have to honestly say this is what we're asking and expecting of you.

This is what's appropriate in this situation. This is what I can provide and I was truthful. I also really highly recommend that you always follow through with what you say you will provide or what you will do. If someone calls you, you always call back.

Even if you don't always know the answer, you're still accountable to that landlord and sometimes your response may just be I don't know the answer to your question right now but if you give me a day or two, I can find out and I'll get back in touch with you.

And it's very important to keep them informed of any changes on the front end. If you know that the changes are coming, if you see how it's going to be happening, talking to them over and over about how if the market changed or different issues that there might be in that community, keeping them informed of that is part of what really helps these partnerships with landlords work.

(Slide 30)

So, this is a list of what providers bring. Providers bring pre-existing relationship with the tenant, knowledge of the tenant's wants and needs, translation skills, ongoing ties with the tenant and motivation to help the tenant stay housed. I think one of the most important things on this list is a pre-existing relationship with the tenant.

There are definitely some things that need to be done on the front end as much as you can with the client before you engage with those landlords around that specific client. It's also really important to have that pre-existing relationship with the landlord like I said earlier.

Translation skills are probably the biggest actually. If we look at what's really important having, you being as the provider the person that can help with that conversation in the middle and making sure that everyone is understanding

one another is huge because I found many times that that was really the problem is that they didn't seem to be able to speak the same language at each other and everyone was getting frustrated.

So, when there was a case manager who could be there and help translate what was happening and what was going on, it usually ended up helping smooth things out. Ongoing ties with the tenant, that is one of the things that you're constantly telling your landlord that you're going to bring. There's going to be someone doing house visits.

There's going to be someone having communication, calling, whatever, having a relationship with this tenant to help things stay positive.

(Slide 31)

And, obviously, what the landlords bring are a home, an eye on the situation, and a partner in the effort the tenants stay stably housed.

After I would talk about all the things that our program could provide for landlords, I would also talk about what they were doing to help provide in their community by being a part of a program like this.

And a lot of times in rural communities, homelessness can look different and so, there were plenty of times that I've been told we don't have homelessness here. And I had stories and I was able to talk about how we do have homelessness here. It may look a little differently but let me tell you a story about what that does look like.

And I was able to get in on a more community-oriented level for them so that they felt important yes, they're bringing a home, but it would also be an opportunity for them to start to feel important in their community in what they were doing around the issues that we were dealing with.

And I can honestly tell you, I have never had a landlord who did not have an eye on the situation somehow or another whether it was through a neighbor, whether it through another tenant doing, talking, whether it was through their maintenance provider, whatever, many of my landlords especially the mom

and pop knew what was going on and I get a call from them before I could even have a chance to have a conversation with the client.

They were the ones who let me know, OK, something is going on, I need you to come out here. And that was really good because oftentimes that obviously they need to be really careful about what kind of relationships they have with tenants but it would give me the opportunity to get in with the tenants and have the case managers get in and talk to the tenants before things went really bad.

(Slide 32)

So, next I'm going to talk about the case manager/landlord/tenant relationship.

(Slide 33)

The case manager's role really is a make or break relationship. It is a relationship with the participant; it's also a relationship with the landlord.

Knowledge of the participant's wants and needs are is huge because you have hopefully worked with your clients and how they have a housing case plan or a way that they want things to go throughout and so you'd be aware of those things and keep things moving forward when you are working on those translation skills and talking with the landlords.

(Slide 34)

So, the relationship between the landlord or the property manager and ongoing supportive services to the tenant is the foundation of helping clients maintain their tenancy. The roles do need to be clear and consistent. Information and communication are key.

But what's also key is relationship. It is that being in, that talking to the landlord over and over again, making sure that everybody understands repeatedly what the program can and can't provide; and just being likeable and being the person that the landlord can call when they have an issue takes you a long way with your landlords.

Crystal, do you have anything that you want to add around the coordinating case management in housing?

Crystal Pope: No, but I was just thinking of your freezer story.

Mande Ellison-Weed: I can tell the freezer story.

Crystal Pope: OK.

Mande Ellison-Weed: When you're doing case management and you move someone into a unit, you're helping them move in, they're excited, they're just happy to be getting a place to live. They're not really focusing on everything that you have to say in that moment. They're thinking, I'm here. Here's my key, let's go.

One of the greatest things that was ever told to me was making sure that your clients have a big Ziploc bag that they can keep all of their important documents including their lease in this big Ziploc bag and they can put it in the freezer because if they keep it in the freezer, that's the last place to burn if something happens in the house and it's a place that you can always go back to when you go to do those home visits you can always say why don't you go get your important stuff out of the freezer and let's look over your lease again and make sure that we understand because when you're providing that case management, going over that lease is not something that should happen in that one first visit.

That's something that needs to be over and over and over again making sure that everyone continues to understand who's responsible for what.

And so, I just thought that was a really neat key that was given to me a long time in the past about how to keep up with stuff was to get it all into that Ziploc bag and keep it in the freezer.

(Slide 35)

So, when we're talking about building a landlord relationship, you need to practice, you need to have an elevator pitch, it's what we call it.

You're just going to have your little pitch so if you're going to call them or you're going to walk in, you want to have what you're going to say to those landlords already kind of built out in your head.

And, honestly, that way that I worked on that was to say it -- and I'm pretty much an extrovert so I can talk to most people -- but what worked for me, too, so that I knew that I could keep it down to a minimum, was practicing out loud.

And now, I still practice out loud on some things because I have a 15-year-old and I promise you there is no harder audience to stand in front of and pitch something to than a 15-year-old girl.

But this is really important for you to think about what you're doing, how you're going to say it to them and how you're going to say it succinctly so you can get in there and get an opportunity to be able to go and meet them.

So, let's say, your elevator pitch is something that you're going to do on the phone where you're calling people over and over, you want to get that out there, give them the information, those two key benefits that you'll provide and what you want to ask of them for their next step.

Usually, the ask needs to be: could I come by and meet with you and talk about this a little further because it's really, really important for them to be able to have a face to put with the program.

(Slide 36)

So, here we have a Flood the Chat Box about case manager responsibilities -- excuse me. Let's look over these really quickly and if you guys could just flood the chat box with what you think your answers are, that would be great, what you think the responsibilities are.

So, first question, what are your responsibilities to the client? Let's go ahead and answer that one first. What do you guys think of as responsibilities to your clients? Have we got anything? Yes, confidentiality.

Crystal Pope: We know you're out there.

Female: (There are I think more).

Female: Yes, we got ...

Kate: Yes, be available to them. Provide them with safety, decent housing, confidentiality, consistency, education and housing assistance, explain the program and what the client should expect from the program, provide the client with the tools necessarily to live independently, persistence -- that's a pretty good one -- assess the client need, responsive to their call, provide them with fair services, protect them as far as confidentiality, and make sure we do everything, and be accessible.

Make sure they are involved with their housing plan. Somebody else said make sure a housing plan is in place. Put them in touch with additional resources. Be their housing advocate; the go-between between the client and the landlord. Again, advocacy, know the landlord/tenant rights, or can make good referrals.

Assure clean, safe housing. Be there for difficult negotiations with landlords especially when landlord does not respond to their repair requests. We got a lot of really good ones here. Let's see, make sure they understand the importance of paying their tenant portion on time to prevent fees.

Mande Ellison-Weed: Yes. That is something we say over and over and over again or we should be. Thanks, Kate, I appreciate you calling those out.

Kate: Sure.

Mande Ellison-Weed: Let's go ahead and move on to what are your responsibilities, as a case manager, what do you think your responsibilities are to the landlord?

Christine: So, we are seeing things like be responsive, make sure that they understand every step of the way, meet them where they are and teach them appropriate -- oh, that was probably part of to the client. Under promise and over deliver.

Mande Ellison-Weed: I love that. Thank you, Marie.

Christine: Yes. Pay rents on time. Deliver your promises. Assure that they will be paid on time. Explain the program in detail. Educate and stress building relationships. Clear communication if there was a delay payment, inform the landlord of any changes.

Make sure that they get the agency's portion of the rent; communicate with them. Fully explaining the program and most importantly FMRs, give kudos, respond quickly.

Mande Ellison-Weed: Yes.

Christine: Yes. Responds quickly to their concern. Honesty, integrity, remember they are a business. On-time payment. Assistance with client. Honesty and transparency.

Ensuring the tenant understands their responsibilities and being responsive to the needs of both tenant and landlord. Provide follow-up calls to check in; inform them of their rights and responsibilities.

Mande Ellison-Weed: Yes. Thanks. Thank you, Christine. So, what I think we can see when we're looking at these two particular questions, your responsibilities to your client and your responsibilities to your landlord are oftentimes very much the same.

They are like everyone just touched on all of them, it's making sure that everyone understands their rights and their roles and their responsibilities. It's making sure that you are honest and that you are moving forward and I think it was Marie who maybe touched on giving kudos. I cannot tell you how much this is true.

There are times when you do a landlord event or when you even just go and see landlord, when showing up with anything that is a thank you note or a handwritten thank you note often works really well to send then something that says hey, I just want to say thank you for the work that you're doing with us.

I will tell you that I love to get a trophy. I'm sitting in my office and I have a few little trophies sitting around that people have done as part of projects and programs that I've been a part of in the past.

Everybody loves a certificate or a trophy not because so much of what it is but because it's someone acknowledging that they're doing good work. So, giving kudos is a huge one both for your landlord and your client.

Your client also needs to hear the positives of the way that they are interacting and being a part of their case plan and letting them know that you see what they're doing well and how hard that they may be trying in that situation. Does anybody have anything on that?

Crystal Pope: There were quite a few comments about honesty and follow through and I think that really resonates in a lot of ways.

In one of the recent trainings that we did, Mande, there was a young man who was running the mental assistance program in a rural community who ran into problems with landlords because the person who had come before him had promised many things that they have not followed through with and that made them very reluctant to engage with him.

And he was very persistent and was able to work through that, but it was just a good illustration of why those things are so important.

Mande Ellison-Weed: Thanks, Crystal. That brings up what we all might run into is that maybe we haven't been working in this program forever, maybe we're coming on as the new case manager or the person who works in landlord engagement. And you can't do anything about what happened before you.

But you can say, and I have had to say, I hear you, I hear you got burned by this situation. I'm sorry that that happened. Now, let's talk about what I can do and maybe you can give me a chance to change your mind a little bit and let's have a conversation about this.

And once that wasn't defensive, once there was that opportunity for communication and that persistence it's like I want to talk to you about this, I would like to repair whatever has happened in the past, people are more open than you might think to having a conversation with you about that.

There is a possibility that you can change a landlord's mind even if they've been "burned" by some -- the program or some situation in the past.

So, when you're thinking about your responsibilities to your organization or your program as a case manager, can you guys list some of those in the chat box for us? Reporting, that's a huge one, yes. Representation, definitely, you are the face in a lot of these situations. You are the face of the agency. Fiscal responsibility, definitely.

That's right, knowing how much time you are allowed to offer and sticking with that. Honesty goes across all of it. I think -- I like the document if it isn't documented, it didn't happen. Program delivery.

Continuing to educate ourselves about the program, that is key. Thank you, you're right. Making sure that we know what's going on and what the changes are in our own program and what else and we might be able to provide is huge. Assuring eligible persons are receiving it, yes.

So, one that I don't think I see yet - be available and responsive, yes, thank you. So, one I haven't seen yet that is just to me really important is making sure that not just through your documentation but definitely through your documentation that if you leave this program, that the next person who takes your role is going to be able to pick up with your clients and your landlords and continue having that program and your agency move forward successfully.

So, kind of if you're in this situation because we all oftentimes leave jobs, move to other jobs, it's our responsibility to our organization to make sure that we have a good exit strategy, that we have a plan and that we've done

everything we can to provide what's needed for the next person who's going to be running or who's going to be doing that (position).

A succession plan, thank you, Bob. Crystal, do you have any that you might want to add to the responsibilities to your organization or program or, Kate, Christine?

Crystal Pope: I think it's just important and people have pointed that out that you are the face of the agency and that's very meaningful in lots of ways as well as letting the agency know and your supervisors know about anything that's going on because there should never be any surprises there.

Mande Ellison-Weed: Exactly. Exactly.

Crystal Pope: Also, when we're talking about people working out in the community the way we are with these kinds of programs and this stands true in urban areas obviously as well as anywhere else is safety of staff is the most important thing and safety of your clients very important, too. So, all of those things become agency issues and agency policy issues that help the program be strong and safe.

Mande Ellison-Weed: Exactly. And I think a huge one, too, is to remember and always keep in focus your agency's mission and vision and realize that you are out there representing that mission and vision over and over.

Every time you leave the office, every time you have a phone call with whether it's a client or a landlord or another supportive service provider, you want to make sure that you're the best representation of your agency that you can possibly be.

Does anyone want to add any more? Thank you, Scott, I really appreciate you doing so well with the Flood the Chat Box; this has been fun.

(Slide 37)

So, the most important, what are the most important things to remember. This goes back to those translation skills.

You're the bridge between the landlord and the property manager -- between the landlord or a property manager and a potential tenant. You are that person in the middle that can kind of make or break something.

Yes, our clients can definitely make or break things themselves. But when we're talking about that front end and what you can do to manage when there are problems and concerns, if you're not doing the things that -- if you're not being honest and have an integrity and working well with your landlords, they're going to be much more likely to not lease to you again or be more difficult to work with.

(Slide 38)

So, next let's talk a little bit about eviction prevention.

(Slide 39)

These are some reasons for eviction. Go ahead, Crystal, what you got?

Crystal Pope: Well, I just want to start with while what you're talking about is working to prevent eviction of clients by their landlords, we think this is also a good time for a reminder that HOPWA guidance tells us that termination should always be a last resort to happen only under the most severe of circumstances. So, whether we're talking about termination from a program such as TBRA or eviction from a unit by the landlord, many of the agency and case manager responsibilities are very similar, right?

Mande Ellison-Weed: Right.

Crystal Pope: And the result is that you want the clients to remain stable in the program and in appropriate housing with a valid lease. So, that's just kind of a reminder up front. The bottom line is to help in preventing eviction through good information and exchange of information.

It's all of the things that people have brought up so far or many of them especially in relation to clients is sharing information with them and helping teach them and model for them what being a good tenant is like which

sometimes takes on a lot of different forms from helping with house-cleaning to understanding the lease, to understanding how best to interact with neighbors which people may not have done before.

Mande Ellison-Weed: Right.

Crystal Pope: So, all of those things I think are true but what plays in to this sometimes is not just the lease but also when we have clients that push the boundaries or have some really big difficulties with adjusting then it can become a program termination question. So, I'd just throw that out there in addition to what you're covering.

Mande Ellison-Weed: Thank you, Crystal. And that actually takes me back; thank you for the reminder on this.

(Slide 37)

One of the things that you are also as a bridge between your landlord and your tenants is that we understand that sometimes things are not going well for whatever reason.

Maybe something has happened and the landlord has decided that they're going to evict. Or maybe the client had some major problems and is causing issues in that particular unit. It's really important to remember that you can also -- it is also our responsibility, to be that person who helps things end well. It doesn't always have to end in eviction or program termination if we have that person in the middle or if we can be that person in the middle that just can say, can have an open conversation this is obviously not going well, I hear that you haven't gotten rent in six months or whatever the situation is, can you give me 30 days.

Can you give me 45 days; whatever you think that you can get from that landlord to help your client not end up with an eviction on their record and being able to keep that landlord so he would be willing to work with you again, as long as you're honest about what you can provide in that, that is a key part of that relationship to have with the landlord.

I've had landlords who wanted to evict my clients and who were determined that that's what they were going to do.

And because I would call weekly and check in with the landlord just as I check in with my client, I was able to say can you give us just a few days, give me a few days and I would do something so that we don't return somebody to homelessness. I understand that this situation is not working. Can we work to figure out a better solution than eviction?

(Slide 39)

So, these are some reasons for eviction when we're talking about when the end is possibly coming and we're trying to keep that from happening -- unpaid or late rent; criminal activity; unauthorized guest; neighbor disturbance; poor housekeeping and other breaches in the lease.

Can someone give me an example of another breach in the lease? Any other reason that you can think of for eviction? Pets. That's true. Yes. Thank you. Having the utilities being cut off.

Christine: Pets, having pets.

Mande Ellison-Weed: Property damage, that's right.

Crystal Pope: Running a business out of your home that might not be authorized.

Mande Ellison-Weed: Domestic issues, yes. They're not being able to operate the property. There was one up here, Crystal, that I wanted – if I can get back to it, if someone is evicted – I think there was a question.

If someone is evicted from a property, is that termination for eviction or for stopping the TBRA program? Crystal, do you have any answer to that?

Crystal Pope: Well, that's a more complicated kind of thing.

Mande Ellison-Weed: Sure.

Crystal Pope: I'm trying to read it right now. So, that's even if the landlord does not evict and the tenant refuses to pay their portion of rent, are we allowed to terminate their assistance?

But I would suggest that there are hopefully better ways than terminating their assistance and that becomes a case management issue and looking back at budgeting and trying to come up with something other than terminating them to help this move forward with a repayment plan and something that will allow them to stay in the housing, but make sure that those payments are being made.

There's no one simple answer to that. But, what we're in the business of with the permanent housing such as this is trying to keep people in that housing and working with them as much as possible to make sure that they stay stable and that's not always an easy thing.

Christine Campbell: There was also a question of is an eviction grounds for termination from the TBRA program.

Crystal Pope: The landlord eviction?

Christine Campbell: Yes.

Crystal Pope: No. No. I mean, that is not – it depends upon the circumstances of course. That's something that the program would have to look at. That does not automatically in any way terminate you from the TBRA program. The program would obviously then be working with that person to find another unit and find an appropriate place for them to be, but those two are very separate.

Mande Ellison-Weed: Thank you, Crystal. Another one, long-term absence from the unit that's unreported, I think the key there is unreported. They are oftentimes we can have some flexibility if we have something going on with the client but it definitely needs to be something that's being communicated about.

I see a question. This person has received a transfer voucher in another city but our fear is she will not lease up. Is it OK to terminate services if her

household is no longer eligible for a two-bedroom unit? Crystal, do you happen to know a specific...

Crystal Pope: I would suggest that there's probably more to this than we can discuss on this webinar.

Mande Ellison-Weed: Thank you.

Crystal Pope: For this or anything else that may not get answered, please, folks, put your questions into the AAQ through the HUD Exchange and we will work with you to get complete answers.

Mande Ellison-Weed: Thank you, Crystal.

Crystal Pope: Sure.

(Slide 40)

Mande Ellison-Weed: So, we're back here to take management responsibilities around eviction prevention. We want to make sure that we help our clients understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to eviction and their lease and that is not something that you said your clients want.

That is something that we continue to communicate over and over and over again and remind them during our home visits when possible what could lead to eviction especially if we see that there are starting to be problems that arise. But even in just a regular conversation or meeting with your clients, reminding them of their rights and responsibilities is definitely part of your responsibility.

Providing clients with possible housing options to keep clients from reentering into homelessness, this is what I touched on a few minutes ago about if you could be that bridge, you could be working with your client and your landlord to see where else you could possibly help someone find housing if the housing that they're currently in is not working for them, advocating for tenant to the landlords for fair treatment during the eviction process.

Yes. It is definitely one of our jobs to advocate for our tenants in any part of this as a part of the case manager relationship that we have.

Crystal Pope: So, let me add one other thing here about – and we know that some programs have put in place a flex funding or mitigation funding. That's not something that we can pay for with HOPWA but very often, people use other unrestricted funding to put together a pot of money that can be used to help with those damage situations where people maybe kicked out because of damages they've done to the apartment. And we frequently get questions about "How can we pay for this? How can this be covered?"

So, just having something like that if an agency is able to put something like that together, you might be able to offer for difficult situations double deposits, or dealing with repair kinds of things.

(Slide 41)

Mande Ellison-Weed: Thanks, Crystal.

Crystal Pope: Is that something you found helpful?

Mande Ellison-Weed: So, for me personally when I was using, did I ever use mitigation funds? I will be honest, back at the time that I was doing this, I didn't really have an opportunity to use mitigation funds.

But I had heard as we've been doing the trainings all over the country that there are people, there are agencies who have had a lot of success with those programs. And what they've realized is that when they have that offered to a landlord, they very often, most often did not have to access those funds.

For whatever reason, just knowing that that money was there really kind of smoothed over certain situations and, yes, there were times where they might have had to use a little bit of it, but offering that double deposit for a client who's been hard to house or whatever the situation may have been.

It would happen on that end more with the double deposit maybe or with some other thing that we have this assistance to provide for you, but not a lot of

agencies reported to us that they actually access that money or used it with landlords on a regular basis.

It was just, I think, a nice cushion for landlords to know that it was there and also for the agency to be able to cover when there were damages or like we said before, clients who might have been harder to help find housing.

Crystal Pope: Right. And we'd love to hear if people have done that and whether that's been successful. So, I would just say before we move on to the next section that some of this seems went very basic information and basic case management.

But I think just like we look at rental assistance programs under HOPWA as being more than a voucher and having a program philosophy behind that and a whole set of services.

The same thing is true with TBRA units that it's really more than having a list. Unfortunately, it's not that easy to find affordable housing or appropriate units whether it's in rural areas or urban ones.

But, in some settings, we can have more of an ongoing list of landlords where in more challenging outlying areas and rural communities, it appears to take much more to be able to generate that ongoing list of places that you can access.

Mande Ellison-Weed: So, I see a question about where do mitigation funds come from. What has been reported today when we've been doing trainings before because some people have done it through crowd sourcing? Some agencies have done it through private foundation money. There was one agency that I talked with that that became a fundraiser for a certain community of faith in their area. I think there are a lot of creative ways.

And there were also some states that have set up that mitigation funds that people were able to access.

(Slide 42)

So, Crystal, I'm going to go ahead and turn over the leader back to you here. We're talking about tenant rights and then I think we have about 15 minutes until we close.

Crystal Pope: Right.

(Slide 43)

There we go. OK. So, what we want to do is swing back around to some of the initial barriers that we talked about and while we know that what was presented today will not give you information to resolve all of those barriers.

We wanted to revisit that and Mande and I, plus, Christine and Kate, if they have something to add, we're just going to walk through these with a few thoughts. And we would certainly during this like to hear from you. So, we're going to watch the chat box as well.

Transportation and covering large, remote areas is obviously one of the big roadblocks here. One of the things I want to point out in – at the very end of the presentation, we have a few resources listed and one of them is a toolkit or a set of tools on rural transportation from the rural health information hub.

This is really a health focused organization, but – and some of the ideas that they have may require more partners than just HOPWA, but that speaks to wanting to do more collaborative work within communities, but there's lots of good information in there about ways to improve access to transportation, models for overcoming barriers.

They use voucher models, volunteer models, ride sharing and other kinds of things like that. So, I would just encourage people to take a look at that and see if it's something that resonates for you and we'd also like to hear from you if you have had some successes with certain kinds of transportation things. Mande, did you have something to add about transportation or coverage areas? Did you go on mute?

So, I think in addition, the importance of doing home visits, which I think most people have pretty much accepted in rental programs, should be

emphasized and when you're doing large coverage areas, that means a lot of planning and division of labor and so forth.

Mande Ellison-Weed: I'm sorry, Crystal. For some reason, it would not let me un-mute. I apologize for that.

Crystal Pope: Yes, no problem.

Mande Ellison-Weed: I was just sitting here pushing the button over and over. For transportation, one of the things that I did – it took a lot more planning.

You do have to think about things in terms of how many clients can you see in one area while you're there and then also we kind of looked into some local churches who were willing to help with some transportation.

And so, there were ways to reach out. That really made – that first time it happened, the church reached out to me and then after that, I started to reach out to other churches to see if they were willing to help with medical appointments or taking people to grocery stores or whatever the need might be and had some reasonable success with that.

Crystal Pope: OK, great. How about lack of rental housing stock and lack of engaged landlords? I mean, I think we've really – Mande, you've really touched on the whole landlord engagement information about marketing the program and so forth.

But it is really – and I've heard this a lot recently from grantees that we've been talking to is just lack of rental housing available.

So, I think that the kinds of things that Mande has pointed out in this presentation is to be able to find things that are not as evident and also to generate those relationships that will let you access it.

But there are other options related to development and might mean connecting directly with or with other partners, with developers in the area, also leveraging the other housing by working with housing authorities which are not always easy to develop partnerships with, but very important, working

together with home programs, other kinds of things like that. Any other things you can think of, Mande or Christine or Kate?

Christine: So, this is more of a long-term strategy, but I know that several communities are looking at how they can partner from development on in terms of mixed-use housing, being part of those packages and – so that we're actually creating more housing stock in some of these communities.

So, I think not only do we have to look short term, we also have to look long term and how we're working within our communities and the communities themselves addressing some of their housing issues.

Crystal Pope: Right. Thank you. So, one of the additional things that comes up frequently is the substandard housing that we see people in – and that happens anywhere – anywhere, whether it's urban or rural, but it is something that we run into a lot with trailers and other claims of housing that may be not in the best condition in rural areas.

I know that we've seen some successes in getting church groups in those areas to help with repairs, especially with smaller kinds of things, adding ramps and so forth, also, looking into homeowner repair programs in your area.

And, Mande and the rest of you may have some additional things, but I think that bottom-line here is that we have to be careful about not continuing to use hedge funds to keep people in seriously substandard housing, so being aware of whether it meets HOPWA habitability might not be absolutely the greatest housing, but it does have to meet those HOPWA habitability standards or you can't have people stay long term in that housing.

Mande Ellison-Weed: Right.

Crystal Pope: Regarding confidentiality, I would say the usual cautions and we saw a lot of people, a lot of you all put things in the chat box about ways that you keep HIV or HOPWA out of the mix in the information that you share with the community and with other people. Sometimes, there's a particular rural telegraph about personal information that happens and so, you're just using

some skill in those conversations. Mande, I know you've run into this a lot when people really push for information.

Mande Ellison-Weed: I have and I mean, throughout my career, I did a couple of different things. I was an outreach worker. I did HIV education. I worked for an HIV clinic for about 12 or 13 years.

And honestly, because of these small communities and how much I was in the communities, I did in some ways started getting called the AIDS lady. I was the one who showed up to hand out condoms at health fairs and to talk to people about help information around HIV.

But the way that I did when I started doing more housing, the way I did change or shift that for me was just saying and for my reputation as a representative of the agency was just to say that anybody can apply for funds to help people – for subsidy funds to help people maintain stable housing.

And so, it doesn't – isn't just because an agency is an HIV clinic or is recognized as that, it doesn't mean that that's the only type of funding that they could have applied for. And so, we just continue to turn it back around that. So, it didn't always necessarily mean that this was just money for people who had HIV.

Crystal Pope: Great. Thank you. And the last one is improving access to health and mental health care which is an ongoing case management challenge and I think that's – we don't have a lot of time left to discuss any of that.

But I think the things that have been pointed out to us and in our practice is to make sure that if assessments are included related to their need – to the client's needs for these services and kind of keeping them ongoing eye to that and what kind of connections are being made and checking up during business on whether they're taking meds, their meds or how the meds are working for them as a regular part of your check in is something that can go a long way to making sure that health issues are now health issues are caught early on.

(Slide 44)

And I want to pretty much conclude here by providing some suggested program planning questions that we would like to suggest you take back and talk about within your communities as grantee within your system, any of those things that relate to some of the issues that we covered today particularly taking another look about are we really covering all of our coverage area, our EMSA and if not, how can we improve that.

There are a number of things that the answer to that question may lead you to discuss about the need for additional strategic partners, whether you're doing an appropriate level of outreach and marketing of your program because really you want to make sure that everybody within that coverage area has equal access and has knowledge of the program. So, all of these things I think could just be helpful for people to discuss back at your agencies.

(Slide 45)

And we've had Q&A throughout. I think we're within just a minute of ending here. So, if anyone has additional questions, you can go ahead and put them in. We will try to get those answered.

(Slide 46)

But I'd like to also point out these resources pages that contain a lot of information, excuse me, and tools that may be helpful to you as well,

(Slide 47)

including the rural health initiative, transportation models, be interested in seeing what people think of that.

So, with that, I want to thank everybody for taking this whole hour and a half to join us to talk about rural challenges and share with us some of your thoughts and ideas and we hope that this has been helpful. So, thanks all.

Mande: Thank you, everyone.

Female: To access today's webinar, please visit your link box by clicking on the number one button "Rural challenges for operation HOPWA housing programs". Hit open and you can download the slides directly from there.

We will also send out an email that would include instructions in the link from today's webinar. Thank you, guys, for joining us and we look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

END