



Final Transcript

HUD: Coop & Emergency Response Plans

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SPEAKERS

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Jerry Mayer
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PRESENTATION

Moderator Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for standing by. Welcome to the Coop & Emergency Response Plans Conference Call. At this time, all participants are in a listen-only mode. [Operator instructions].

At this time, I'd like to turn the conference over to Virginia Holman.

Please go ahead.

Virginia Welcome, everybody, to this really important webinar on the importance of continuity of operations plans and emergency response plans for your

agencies. Before we get started with the meat of the webinar, I would like to go over some logistics.

As the operator said, the webinar is being recorded. We will providing a playback number along with the PowerPoint and a written transcript of the webinar. It will be available on HUD Exchange in our webinar archive section, and that usually takes about a week to happen. The Training Digest will be updated when that happens.

I did send out the PowerPoint this morning to everyone. It's also available in the Control Panel on the right-hand side of your screen where you just need to click on the document name and it will download.

There are going to be polling questions through Mentimeter, and you'll get some directions for how to use that shortly. We're not going to be taking live questions today because of the large audience that we have. But, as always, your questions are really important, so on again the Control Panel on the right-hand side of your screen there's a box that's labeled Questions. Just enter your question in there and we have staff that are monitoring that. If after the webinar is over, or any time in the future you have a question about this webinar, or topic, or any others, send it to

housing.counseling@HUD.gov and put your topic in the subject line so that we get it to the right people.

Again, it looks like we will not be having an open discussion period.

At this point I want to turn the webinar over to Jerry Mayer, the Director of Outreach and Capacity Building, a Division of the Office of Housing Counseling. Jerry?

Jerry

Thank you, Ginger, and especially thank you to all the housing counselors who have joined us today, and also thank you to ICF for their assistance in presenting this training.

Housing counseling agencies play a critical role in preparing consumers and communities for disasters. They also play an equally important role in recovery from those disasters, and today's webinar will help housing counselors learn more about how housing counseling agencies can play a role in disaster preparation recovery.

This is the first of two webinars related to emergency and disaster preparedness. This webinar will focus on what an agency can do to be

prepared to respond and continue operating in disaster situations. And the next webinar in the series is going to shift the focus to the client by providing new materials and highlighting resources that agencies and counselors can use to help their clients be prepared for emergencies and disasters. So, please watch our Training Digest on the HUD Exchange and our Listserv for more information about registering for that second webinar. Next slide, please.

Before we get started with the training itself, I'd like to give you a little background on how the Office of Housing Counseling is organized to respond to disasters. We have a disaster and recovery team, we call it the DART team because we're the government, we love the acronyms. So our DART team is tasked with preparing housing counseling agencies for disasters and helping them build capacity by providing training and technical assistance. They also monitor the activities of agencies that are impacted by disasters, and they participate in HUD's departmental disaster team responses to major and presidentially-declared disasters. They suggest program and policy improvements across the board and they produce a lot of awareness and visibility materials, some of which you can find on the HUD Exchange right now, toolkits, and flyers and other information and guidance for counseling agencies can be found there.

You'll learn more about that in today's webinar. And, also they provide support and guidance and technical assistance and they gather data.

They're a very active team and very essential to the department and housing counseling agencies' role in disaster preparation and recovery.

Next slide, please.

Now, the way the DART team supports housing counseling agencies is they really work with them to help them plan and prepare for emergencies and disasters. They give them good policy advice and guidance so that they can prepare clients for disasters, especially those that live in hurricane or fire or earthquake-prone areas and help those clients prepare their own coop plan as well as the agency's coop plan so that the agency can continue operating. You'll learn more about that today.

The agency needs to have a coop plan so that they have an ability to have continuity of operations after a disaster occurs and then be available to help with FEMA and the insurance companies and local municipalities in recovering from a disaster. And, the DART team also monitors the operations of housing counseling agencies and then offers assistance so that they're able to help clients. Next slide, please.

Our DART team members are listed here. Ginger Holman, who is the lead on the DART team, is joined today by Jane Charida, and they'll be answering questions for you at the end of the webinar that you'll be typing into the Comment section. But these are our other team members and they're all over the country. Many of them actually live in areas where disasters such as hurricanes or fires or earthquakes are frequent and they often deploy to these areas or other areas in the event of a national housing emergency that's related to a disaster. Next slide, please.

Some of the current activities that we're doing right now in response to ongoing disasters, such as the recent hurricanes in the Gulf and fires on the West Coast, we are monitoring the impact of those disasters and really assessing the impact on the operational capacity of our agencies. We're sending out surveys to our agencies and if you are an agency that has in the last three years or so operated in an area where there's a disaster you have probably seen the survey cross your desk. It's really important so that we can make sure that your agency is up and running and if your agency is not up and running and activated [indiscernible] so clients know to go to a different agency so that they don't come to an agency that is closed.

Some of the other things that we're doing is using our experience that we're gaining from disasters to provide input to Housing's own coop team, that's FHA, so that the department is better able to respond to disasters on an ongoing basis.

Another thing that the DART team does, and this is really important, is to work with Community Planning and Development, and they're the ones who provide those CDBG, our Community Development Block Grant funds, in order to respond to disasters. Our Disaster Assistance Response Team, or DART team, makes sure that housing counseling is a component of that funding. And also, from our experience we give input to policies and procedures so that the Office of Housing Counseling includes emergency preparedness in all of its programs so that our counseling agencies are well-equipped, well-funded and have the ability to respond when a disaster strikes their community. Next slide, please.

We can now move on to our presenters. Our first speaker is Scott Ledford and he is a Senior Director at ICF with more than 25 years of experience innovating solutions and leading programs for housing and community development organizations and activities throughout the country. He has supported several disaster recovery efforts beginning with Hurricanes

Katrina and Rita, including serving in local leadership roles providing program and policy, advisory services, and delivering training and technical assistance. In addition to his work with ICF, Scott has worked at the local level implementing federally funded programs with a developer for originating new housing tax credit developments and for universities with colleges directing operations while developing future leaders.

Without further ado, I'll turn the mic over to Scott.

Scott

Thanks very much, Jerry. Also joining me in the presentation today will be Joseph Sant, and I'll have Joseph introduce himself when we get to his portion of the presentation. For our Q&A session, as Jerry mentioned, we do have some great folks from HUD Office of Housing Counseling monitoring the Q&A box. So Jane, Virginia, and Julie will be helping in that regard.

As previously mentioned, we are going to be doing some feedback in polling using a tool called Mentimeter. So, we will be asking some questions during this presentation. When you see the icon on the right, we'll introduce those polling questions to you and you can just open up a browser, whether you want to use your computer or if you want to use

your smartphone. You can just go to Menti.com, www.menti.com. And, when you go to that page, you can go ahead and do it now, it will prompt you for a code. If you'll hang tight for just a moment, I will show that code that to you and we will get started with some feedback in polling.

Before we do the first poll, though, we want to just do a quick overview of our agenda. We're going to cover five major topics today. The first one is an emergency response plan as compared to a continuity of operations plan. And then for the second and third items, we'll dive a little bit deeper into each one of these types of plans so that you can get a good understanding of what they are and how you should go about creating these for your organization. For our fourth item we'll go into leveraging community resources and partners, and then we'll do an overview of some supporting resources that are already available to you on the disaster recovery toolkit.

So, I'm going to take us to Menti right now for our first polling question. So again if you go to www.menti.com and here come our first polling questions. Just enter the code that you see at the top of the screen, 5959601. So, if you can enter that code into the box on the menti.com screen, we'll get to our first question.

“Where in the country are you located?” You can see there’s a lot of options here. I’m presuming each person will be in one location and you can see the live results here about where most of our attendees for this session are located. This just really helps us to get a good understanding of the audience that we’re speaking with today. So, right now, we don’t have anybody from the Southwest or Great Plains. Great representation from the Northeast and Southeast. Now, we’re tying up here.

So in the end, about a little over a quarter of our audience—no, we’re getting some action. Northeast is 24%, Mid-Atlantic is 3%, Southeast is also 24%, Midwest just bumped themselves up to 24%, South 18%, Pacific 8%, and again right now we don’t have any representation, voting in the poll anyway, for the Southwest or the Great Plains. Pacific goes up to 10% now.

Well, thanks very much for your responses to that. Pacific is going to keep chiming in here until I change the next question.

So I am going to go to the next question. “How would you describe your agency’s capacity to plan for disasters?” We’ll give this one just a moment. Do you think that your agency has low capacity and you need

more? Or maybe you're on the other end of the spectrum and you have high capacity and you've been doing this, you have good results from the work you've been doing thus far. Then in the middle is we have adequate capacity; we're getting the job done.

A lot of you are feeling like you're in that middle place. You are getting it done. A little bit on either side. Great. I'm going to settle us in here, low capacity, folks who feel like they need more looks like it's about 20% of the audience. High capacity a little bit more, about 22% right now, and then adequate capacity is approaching 60%. So, a good chunk of you feel like you have a pretty good handle on this, which is great.

I'm going to bring us back to the slide deck here. We'll go ahead and get into the first major topic which is an overview of what is an emergency response plan and this emergency response planning as compared to continuity of operations planning. This chart covers a few of the upcoming slides, and the primary takeaway for this, for you from this, should be that the emergency response plan and the coop are different documents and they serve different purposes.

So, starting with the topic on this slide of purpose and timing, if you look at the emergency response plan it's about preparing your employees to respond when an emergency or disaster occurs. Contrast that with the coop, which is really to ensure that your organization can maintain a central function and resume operations as soon as possible during and after an event.

So, they have a slightly different focus. Again, emergency response plan, immediate actions that are necessary to protect lives, avoid injuries and stabilize that incident, whatever that incident may be. Whereas, continuity of operations plan ensures that we have a plan in place so that all of our personnel facilities and information are protected and we can maintain those necessary functions and resume our operations quickly.

In terms of when to develop these plans on the timing box, as housing counseling agencies you work on your agency work plans. You submit those work plans. What a great time to also be thinking about your emergency response plan and your continuity of operations plans. So, with the capacity in your agency, if you need to work on one at a time, you might do your work plan then your emergency response plan then your

continuity of operations plan but to be thinking about all of these documents at the same time.

What components are in an emergency response plan as compared to the continuity of operations plan? So, we'll cover a bit more about this actually in the later topics that I mentioned but to give us a quick introduction to them, just look at the different items in these two columns. So under emergency response plan, the types of emergencies and disasters you'll want to make sure we indicate in our emergency response plan. Which ones are in our areas, more likely to happen in our areas? What are the potential impacts of those types of events to your agency? What is our actual capacity to achieve stabilization after an event? That can vary pretty widely based upon the size and type of your organization. Also, efforts to coordinate planning with federal, state and local community emergency response entities.

So that's all in the emergency response plan column. Again, just contrast that with the continuity of operations plan column. Here you're identifying what are those critical functions that we need to be able to perform regardless of the emergency. Which ones do we need to perform even during an emergency and what is our plan for doing that? Who are

our staff, etc.? What additional services do we need to put into our plan that we may need to provide into our community after different types of emergencies? And then if we're going to be providing even our core functions, and additional services, we need to be thoughtful about documenting the personnel and the resources that are going to be needed to perform those functions.

So, again emergency response plan, what are my emergency procedures for my organization, and continuity of operations plan, how am I going to continue to provide my services and my operations?

This slide continues what types of components to include in each of the plans. Again, just highlighting a couple of things in here. Emergency response plan: who to contact, making sure that you have documentation of that; developing your protective actions for the protection of human life, also your facilities and developing specific emergency or disaster procedures.

A slight contrast over here with the continuity of operations plan. What are the procedures if we are unable to perform our regular functions in our regular space, in our regular way? Developing our process to maintain

these essential services during an event to the extent possible, and then also how do we get up and running again after the emergency.

As housing counseling agencies, you're probably aware and hopefully aware that you do have a responsibility to notify HUD in the event that you are unable to continue to provide your services. So, it's a 15-day notification requirement to your HUD POC.

That's not all, though. You also need to plan for how you're going to notify and work with your other partners and clients with regard to any changes in your operations, your hours, the locations you're functioning from, and even the services that you may be providing during and after an event.

When do each of these plans get implemented? Again, in the emergency response plan column it's a short-term plan. It starts when the emergency happens and it remains in effect until you really are triggering the coop at that point. So, an emergency event or a disaster occurs, emergency response plan goes into effect. That needs to be able to carry you through even while some of the continuity of operations plan is in effect to carry you through that disaster situation. The coop really picks up afterwards

when you've protected the life safety and the facilities to the extent feasible and how you're going to be able to continue to run your operations and get yourself back to a stabilized point.

In terms of reviewing and updating the plans, this chart suggests annually. I would add to that that the best time to review and update either of these documents is after an event. It's going to be very fresh in your mind. It's going to be fresh in your organization's experience. And if you are so fortunate not to have an event in a given year, you do still want to have that calendar reminder or other type of tickler that's going to remind you to go ahead and crack both of these documents open and just do a review of them and do any updates because we all know any number of things can change in an organization over the course of the year, whether that's personnel, whether that's you changed service providers for your data backups, something like that.

So at this point I want to hand it over to Joseph. Joseph, you can do a quick introduction and talk to us about creating an emergency response plan.

Joseph

Great. Thank you, Scott. My name is Joseph Sant. I am the Deputy General Counsel at the Center for New York City Neighborhoods, working with ICF. And my background, beginning in 2013, I led programs for response and recovery to coastal flooding in New York, administering federally funded CDBG-DR programs, especially those that integrated housing counselors into disaster and emergency response. I've also advised responders to events such as Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. So, I'm really glad to be able to share some of the lessons from those experiences with you all today.

And so, we're going to get into creating an emergency response plan and this is going to cover how to get started with creating a plan, thinking about the risks that you want to consider and think about identifying risks and how to mitigate those, and then steps to take in developing your plan and managing it over time. So, let's go to the next slide.

I wanted to give a couple of global framing comments about what these plans are and what they're for. Scott did a great job of giving a lay of the land of what each these kinds of plans contains but when we're talking about an emergency response plan we're talking of course about an emergency. These are situations that could be alarming or frightening for

staff as well as members of your community. What we're talking about developing here is a response plan that lays out how your organization is going to ensure the safety of its people and its facilities. And so this is a tool that you can use and you should use to help you prepare so that your organization is going to be able to stabilize itself when an emergency occurs.

Then the second global comment I want to give is that since the purpose of creating this response plan is really to prepare employees for an emergency event, we're going to emphasize how you can be engaging staff throughout this process so they can really co-own the plan. You can have a really beautiful plan written out but if it's not co-owned across staff at the agency it's not going to be as useful as it could in actually helping you respond to an event. Let's go on to next slide.

Again, the purpose of the plan is to protect lives, avoid injuries and stabilize the organization immediately after an event. The sooner you can stabilize your own organization through your emergency response plan the sooner you can start moving ahead with your coop and to the extent you can get back to doing outreach and taking clients and meeting the needs of your community.

So let's talk about some of the individual components to think about and include in your plan. Overall you want to make sure when you're thinking about the kinds of events and risks to address, make sure you're not being too narrow in the kinds of situations you're preparing for. You want to include known types of disasters but also spontaneous events that could occur without warning. So, you want to brainstorm here, think outside the box.

One lesson we've learned in responding to various crises is you don't always know and can't always predict the exact form the crisis is going to take. Many communities hit by hurricanes in the last decade for many of those communities that was the first time that a storm of that nature had impacted the community within residents' lifetimes. So you don't want to assume that the future risks will always look like the experiences of the past and you really want to prepare for a variety of events.

You want to consider the impact of these kinds of events on your client base but also the impact on your agency and that includes your facilities. So to that end, you should include a walk-through of your agency's actual facility so you can assess the risks to your systems and your building and come up with a plan to mitigate those risks. So, let's move on.

Some more plan components, you really want to get down to roles and responsibilities in your plan. You want to be talking about assigning duties with specific descriptions related to those responsibilities, to specific people. And, some duties might be shared or they might be down to one person but you really want to be clear about who is doing what. It could be one person's responsibility to coordinate all the outreach to staff immediately after a disaster hits. It might be another person's role to assess the facilities if it's safe to do so.

You want to include mock drills. Similar to fire drills, the drills should cover how to respond after different types of emergencies, and really practice and develop the organizational muscle memory to these different kinds of emergencies.

You want to consider inviting local emergency groups to speak with the planning and staff regarding preparedness, especially when it's when to stay and when to leave if you're physically in the office in response to an emergency situation. You want to include, as Scott mentioned, who do you contact, and that definitely includes HUD. You want to think about also who else. It's important to get down to the [background noise] level

of who you're going to contact, who is important to notify and get in touch with.

Everyone should really know their role when an emergency arises and you want to create a sense of shared responsibility. On the next slide we'll talk a little bit more about how to involve staff.

So we're going to stay on this topic of employee involvement. Agencies typically involve a core group or a committee of senior management and sometimes the Board develop this plan. And each agency's going to be in the best position to judge who, but you should decide who your core planners are for this work and who's really going to drive it forward.

A good approach is to have that committee draft the response plan and then circulate that plan and get ideas from staff. It might be a simple survey. And as you're updating the plan you want to keep all staff updated on what you've done in response to their feedback.

You also want to work with other agencies. You're going to have your core committee and they're going to have their experiences that they can leverage, but also think about other agencies. You know, consider your

local emergency management agency. Some groups are going to have a bigger emphasis or greater experience in emergency response. You don't want to reinvent the wheel. You want to get their advice.

Once you have your plan drafted and in good shape, you want to really meet with all staff or in small groups as appropriate for your agency and get back to them, brief them on what the plan contains. Again, just continuous engagement with your staff is important and then you're going to finalize it and share it, and make sure you're sharing it with employees with HUD, but also any of the partners that you were in contact with or coordinated with an emergency response. Share it with them as well. And this is going to be a living document. As Scott mentioned, you want to update it annually at least, but also if there is an event that you had to respond to, there's no better time than right after it to document how it went, what should be changed and new strategies.

Okay. So I'm going to kick it back over to Scott and we're going to talk about establishing a continuity of operations plan.

Scott

Great. Thanks, Joseph. And when I turned my eyes back to the chat box here I noticed that I might have been a little bit more difficult to hear. So

hopefully I've been able to make some adjustments and I'm coming across a little more clearly now. I'll apologize for that previously.

So in this topic I'm going to cover how to get started on your continuity of operations plan for your organization and then maintaining it over time.

So revisiting what a coop actually is and does, it focuses on ensuring protections are in place for your people, facilities and information so you can function during and after an event. So it's critical to think about all aspects of your agency when you are creating your coop.

Another important notion here is that a good plan will take some time. This is not something that's likely to occur in or be completed in an afternoon or a day. When you really step back and assess your entire agency, it can take a good amount of time.

You know, when we look at what does it mean coming back to regular services, I think we have all learned a lot recently about what is a "regular service" and how do we get back to that. You know, some examples might be working at different locations, working with limited staff, things like that. So I think we've all had to adapt a lot more recently and so

hopefully we can apply some of those lessons and put them into our coop for other types of emergencies or disasters that might occur.

One thing I like to point out on the data front here is that things have changed a lot even in the last decade, in the last 20 years for sure about the accessibility of data in a remote context. When I was working in the Katrina and Rita recovery there was a lot of focus on where the servers and where the backups for the servers and all those kinds of things. And even since then now we start talking about the cloud and obviously we start talking about data security and everything else when you're connected to the cloud, but it's really important to kind of think through how is your data going to be available so that you can continue to access it and provide your services.

So now back to what components make up a coop. Again, it's not a short list and it would be really, really hard to try to do this in a day. So we want to make sure that we're including in the plan the various types of scenarios that might be possible in our community. I noticed in the questions that someone is commenting that they have a pretty unique situation, seemingly unique, in that they're in the zone of a nuclear power plant. That is probably something that is not the case for every agency

and you may not need to address that in your coop, but for that specific agency definitely need to contemplate that type of disaster or emergency in your coop.

You need to be looking at a full inventory of your facilities, that's supplies, furnishings, again coming back to these critical functions and you can almost create a hierarchy of your functions and the services that they provide in the community and which ones do we need to absolutely make happen, they are the high priority, which ones may be medium, which ones may be lower priority.

Again, coming back to any additional services that you can contemplate might be useful or necessary after disaster in your community. The example of hurricanes comes around a lot and the roles that housing counseling agencies can play after a disaster with helping their clients and even have a new client and providing assistance with everything from mortgage situations to federal programs that might get up-and-running, whether it's FEMA or the longer-term CBGDR [ph] programs, certainly a lot of roles that can be played by housing counseling agencies in that.

And then if you want to get into some of those things, what are the staff and resources that you're going to need in order to not only perform those high priority, medium priority, maybe even low priority, but also your additional services. If you don't have those resources on hand, you could put into your coop your plan for recruiting and onboarding folks to provide those additional types of services.

Let's see. Also how the agency will conduct its business if the staff or the clients should not be reporting to the agency's facilities. So when you're dealing with a facility situation you can have various levels at which it's okay for staff to be there but not okay for clients to be there, and that exists whether we're talking about our current context or other contexts as well.

So basically know and plan for what you need to be able to continue to do. Now is the time to put that in writing. Work with your service providers and have a plan for changes that might come down the pike. Again, a lot of this is going to be very dependent on the types of emergencies or disasters that you can anticipate in your community and hopefully if one comes along that you haven't anticipated, you're still able to use a lot of your coop.

I've been speaking with an agency lately who had a coop in place, and several years ago who would have thought that a major super storm would come and essentially be a hurricane in New Jersey. And they were able to rush off a coop and use that, since have updated it, and then were able to apply it to our current situation. And through constant revisions to that plan, they were able to use it for situations that they had not even anticipated in their plan. And so again lastly, making sure to identify other potential services, what are your necessary equipment that you will need and even additional manpower needs.

So sticking with coop components, this slide talks about adequate data security. I would add in there data availability, access controls on your data and obviously the management of your networks. It talks a little bit about backups of data and how that environment has evolved recently as well.

You want to make sure that you write down your processes that you're going to use to maintain these essential functions, not just the notion that we're going to do it but how are we going to do it. What are the processes that are in place to maintain these essential functions? Then by writing them down it will actually make you think of things that you had maybe

not even considered yet. Again, any procedures, if you are going to be providing new services you want to make sure you do the same thing. Write them down. How are we going to do it? Who makes the decision that we're going to actually activate that new service? So, think through that methodically. Write it down. Challenge yourself and you will probably find some things you might not have thought of.

Of course if you are in a situation where you have a lead agency, you want to make sure you're communicating with the lead agency and you're notifying HUD. We have talked about your schedule for reviewing and updating these plans. So you know, basically create backups for everything. Understand your regular services. Understand what additional services you will want to provide. Be in a place to offer your expertise to other agencies and take on new roles.

If you have an event that is predictable, such as a hurricane, and you have some time to review your plan before that event is imminent, it's also a great time to make any last minute tweaks, and make sure you communicate those out to all your employees who are going to be trying to operate based upon this plan. Then after the emergency or disaster,

come back, be brief, talk about what you learned and build it into the next iteration of your plan.

One thing to contemplate here is that returning to operations can mean different things and it could be a slower process than maybe you have anticipated. So it's really going to depend upon the severity of the event, and again with our current situation right now I would be surprised if a lot of people had plans in place that were looking at several months of functioning away from their office. So just incorporate that into your thinking and into your design and recognizing that we may not be back a week later. We may not be back two weeks later, but what can we do? How can we provide as many services as possible during the time we're not back to our "regular selves"?

Lastly I will just comment that the amount of time you're going to spend on this coop is really going to depend upon the size of your agency, how many services you're providing, how many activities are happening. So if you're a large agency and you're going to be starting from scratch, you could probably anticipate several weeks or months of working on a continuity of operations plan.

I'm going to pass it back to Joseph to talk to us about leveraging community resources and partners.

Joseph

Great. Thank you, Scott. So we're going to take a little bit of time here to talk about communicating with and leveraging other partners and resources around you and talk about communication with those partners, ways to identify resources with your community as well as gaps and overlaps with your services and networking and forming those relationships in advance.

So let's talk about what you should be doing prior to an event. When possible you really want to be reaching out to your partners and your potential partners and reaching agreements with them and those agencies prior to an event. A common experience that housing counseling agencies and agencies that we've worked with have found is that partners during and after an emergency could be really different from the partners you're used to working with kind of in "normal times."

So doing this thinking in advance is really important. And to the extent you can, try to write those understandings that you've reached with those agencies down and to some type of non-binding document even that lays

out how you plan to work together. Sometimes that's the best way to get a clear idea of how you're going to cooperate.

You want to be prepared to make referrals to resources your clients may need and possibly your own staff, and doing this in advance is important. If people are going to be turning to you for aid in a time-sensitive way, you really don't want to be having to figure this out on the fly amid all the other critical tasks you will be managing after an emergency.

And so these resources could come from a wide range of public, private and philanthropic sources. You have federal partners like FEMA. You have state and local government partners that might be administering benefits programs. And again, those programs might be different from in the context of a disaster than they would be normally. For instance, you might see that something like disaster food assistance programs get activated on the local level.

You want to think about other non-profits and faith-based groups. These can be really critical sources of especially philanthropic cash assistance for clients. If you think about an emergency that's widely publicized where there might be donations coming in from the public, other non-profits and

faith-based organizations might be the ones distributing those donations that are intended to help the community. So you want to be coordinating with them.

Think about regional recovery networks like VOAD, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters. These are entities that coordinate the activities of a wide range of responders. A great place to kind of go and handle a lot of coordination at once by getting involved in your VOAD.

I want to point to this tool that's here on the HUD Exchange, Partners for Disaster Recovery. That is a tool that's available on the HUD Exchange. There's been a lot of work to pull together resource ideas and here we're showing it on screen. They give you a bunch of ideas for specific partners that you should think about who might be able to coordinate with you in response to a disaster. So just touching on a lot of the types of organizations that I just mentioned. If you have that resource handy, I'd encourage you to use that resource.

So let's talk a little bit more here on the next slide about communication. What's important to communicate about with these partners? So as you're going around to [indiscernible] organizations, a good place to start is I

mentioned local VOADs. If you're not sure how to get in touch with your local VOAD, you could reach out to the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, the national version of that entity. That's a great way to find your way to your local potential partners.

When you're communicating with partners, a lot of housing counseling agencies find that it's really important that they explain what housing counselors are good at, what their strengths are. What can counseling do that sort of other agencies that have been responding and meeting community needs can't do or maybe you don't do as well. So figuring that out and avoiding overlap is a really good thing to figure out again before an event occurs.

You want to be asking questions about what they can provide in response to a disaster or emergency event, but reciprocating is important, providing that information back so that you're really coordinating who can do what and meet what community needs. So again, that coordination is so important because after an emergency, if the planning isn't great you're going to have a lot of members of your community who need help but they end up getting bounced around from organization to organization trying to get the right help they need and that can be really exhausting and

confusing for those clients. You really want to minimize that by coordinating in advance.

So let's go to the next slide here. Just a few more tips here. You know, once you've kind of established that coordination really actively communicate that with those agencies and partners over time. Think about linking to them in your newsletters or your Listserv emails. Make sure they're getting your communications so that both before and during an event you're all in the loop with each other. And consider inviting them to talk to your staff or to your leadership.

So let's get to the last section here just on during an emergency. So as you're going about implementing your plans and you're executing, hopefully thanks to the preparation you've done, you're going to hopefully find there's not that many gaps in how you can respond as there otherwise might have been thanks to your planning. You're not spending a ton of energy scrambling and you're really present and have the ability to focus on the situation at hand. But there might have been some parts of your plan services that you can't deliver, so you really want to make contact as soon as you can with your partners. Let them know your status after an emergency. Let them know your needs and let them know how ready you

are to kind of deliver the services that you thought you were going to be able to provide.

So you don't want to be getting a whole bunch of referrals into your organization for a service that for whatever reason you're not able to get online yet after an emergency. Of course with your staff you want to make sure that as you're executing your plan you have all your staff activated. You've touched base with each of them about their safety and they know what their next step is as you go into response and eventually into longer-term recovery efforts.

So I'm going to stop there and I'm going to pass it back to Scott.

Scott

Thanks, Joseph. And before we get further, we want to do another Menti poll. If you noticed in the right-hand corner we had time for Menti icon there. So we will move on to the next question. Again, if you need to do this all over again just go to Menti.com and use the code 5959601.

The question on the screen is, are you part of a community-wide disaster preparedness group already? And we're hovering in the neighborhood of one-quarter to one-third of folks are already part of a community-wide

disaster preparedness group. So it looks like we have a good amount of folks who are and a few folks who aren't quite yet and maybe they will be coming into this for starting one in their area.

I'm going to move on to the next question. So, are you currently partnering with other agencies in your community to prepare for and recover from disasters? So the distinction here being there may not be an organized group, but you're already in coordination with other agencies in your community. Looks like we're coming closer to half. Great. So that's good to see. So for those who are answering no to this, again, hopefully some of what Joseph has been talking about can inspire some ideas for who to get in touch with and how to even potentially start a communitywide preparedness organization.

I'm going to go ahead and bring us back to the slides here, as we're getting closer to the end. I do want to take just a couple moments and give you a quick highlight of the disaster recovery toolkit that is available online and some of the materials that are here to support you with your work in creating an emergency response plan and a coop.

So this is the landing page of the Disaster Recovery Toolkit for Housing Counseling. That word landing or words landing page is actually a link. If you have the PDF version of the slides you can link into these. And again, this will be made available online.

So rather than clicking on that and kind of wandering through in the interest of time, I will just show you these. This is what the landing page looks like. Within there you saw two sections; one is preparing for a disaster and the other is operating post-disaster. You can see in each of these that there's some subtopics in there; organizational recovery, community recovery, client recovery. There are a series of tools that you can download from either of these. So in the preparing for a disaster you can also see there's a download all tools and here we're talking about organizational preparedness, community preparedness and client preparedness. So you have a focus on each one of those within the toolkit.

Just to highlight a couple of the tools. You know, wanted to make sure that you knew that there is guidance on an emergency response plan as well as a template for a coop. So you don't have to recreate the wheel. You can use these resources. They've been pulled together for you so that you had easy access and you could use them freely.

A couple other resources to highlight. There is a pandemic continuity of operations plan out there. Again, these are active links, so from either the PDF or if you go to the archives and download a copy of the slides there you will be able to just click on this. Also the partners for disaster recovery, which we showed previously, is another great resource that really gives you a nice list of where to start.

As Jerry mentioned at the top of the webinar, we do have another webinar coming up in November, November 5th at 2:00 Eastern and this one is going to focus on counseling clients for emergency preparedness. So you will walk out of this webinar with tools that you can adapt for your local counseling situation and you can deliver group trainings for clients. So again, there will be materials that you will walk out of this with and you could use in your local environment.

And I've been watching the question box a little bit. I haven't seen many new questions. Just recognizing our time here, I might just take us to the Mentimeter questions which would be great for us to—go ahead.

Virginia

Scott, this is Ginger. The only question in the question box that really doesn't concern operational stuff was one agency is in the evacuation zone

around a nuclear power plant. Is there anything different that they should do? My immediate thought was that they would still do both the coop and the emergency response plan. It's just a different kind of emergency, but if you have any thoughts—

Scott Sure. And as I mentioned during the presentation, like that is a pretty unique one. I think that the answer that was provided in the box is actually quite right. Try to get in touch with that plant itself to understand what their emergency procedures are and really developing both your emergency response plan and your coop for that specific type of incident is going to be really important. Joseph, any other thoughts?

Virginia Actually I'm also in an evacuation zone for a nuclear power plant. So I sort of know of what I'm speaking because we do coordinate with the local [audio skipping] and participate in their exercises. They're always very willing and excited to have community organization involvement. So I would encourage [indiscernible] to do that.

Scott Yes, could not agree more.

It looks like we have had another question come in and I just want to do a check to see if Joseph is still with us. Okay. So the next question that came in is, “What are some ways to create a disaster preparedness group for the community?”

Again, I think Joseph covered this pretty well but one way is to use that resource about partners that you might get in touch with and really start to bring some folks together. I know it’s a little unique in our current situation, but at least getting on the phone and talking with others about what your organization is. You can learn about the other organizations and start to kind of build that network locally. You can do it specifically around disaster preparedness and just let folks know like that’s obviously great to interact with other community members, but we really want to have a focus on preparing our community for a disaster situation. So reaching out, identifying who those entities are doing that outreach and even offering to be the lead entity who will start with introducing everybody to your organization and maybe be the coordinating entity.

Well, we do want to make sure we ask the audience what other types of training or technical assistance resources would be helpful for your agency to prepare for and/or recover from a disaster? So you should see a box

that allows you to kind of freeform type in a response to this. Again, we will have a record of these and it will be just really great to hear from audience members about what else might be helpful. So we will leave that up for a moment. Again, just go to menti.com. Type in that code 5959601.

Practice response scenarios. Quarterly training for staff. Great, great. The upcoming November 5th webinar. Good. Okay. I do want to move us along. Unfortunately this one doesn't let us because I want to ask the next question as well.

So let's see, regular refreshers in trainings, ideas on how to engage with customers who don't have technology access. That's a great one. Very helpful seeing sample coop plans. Again, I really encourage you to go to the HUD Exchange website. You take advantage of that disaster toolkit. Saw something about technology updates. Homeless and displaced persons assistance. Okay. Funding options to cover the extra cost for coops. Buy-in from leadership. Wow. Hopefully a conversation with leadership about these things would inspire them as well. Certainly understand. Okay.

I'm going to go ahead and just get the last question up here so we can get responses from the audience. We want to know if this webinar was useful. So if you could just please provide a response in one of these three categories; yes, it would be useful for my organization; yes, it would be useful for my clients; or no, it wasn't be useful. That would be helpful for us for planning additional activities in the future. And I think I can leave that one up while I just go to try to round out the PowerPoint slides here. So you should still be able to vote on that question in Menti in the background.

So if you logged into this webinar, you're going to receive a thank you for attending email. Note that there is not an attachment to this email. That is your certificate for training. You can also go to the Housing Counseling Webinar archives. These materials will be posted. Once again, it will take a little bit of time because a transcript is created before the slides and the recordings are posted. Then you can also get credit on the HUD Exchange. You can click on the "Get credit for this training" button.

Here's some additional ways to reach out to the Office of Housing Counseling through the HUD Exchange. At that website there is also the counselor training and testing website at Hudhousingcounselors.com. You

can always email the Office of Housing Counseling at Housing.counseling@hud.gov and that link is to the *Bridge Newsletter*, which if you haven't subscribed it is a wealth of information that comes to you on a regular basis and I've always found it to be super-interesting. So I'd really encourage you to subscribe to the *Bridge Newsletter* if you are not already.

And in conclusion, we want to thank you for attending this webinar. And, Ginger, I will pass it back to you for any closing comments.

Virginia Alright. Thank you. Did we get responses on your last Menti question?

Scott Yes, they are not displayed, though. They are recorded in Menti, but they're not responses that get displayed. Yes, we have 20 responses on it.

Virginia Okay. Well did most of them find it useful?

Scott I actually have to get out of that and log back in differently to see what those responses are.

Virginia Okay. Well actually we certainly hope that you found it useful. We want to begin to do more of these. I think everyone has recognized the importance of the emergency planning, both the coop and the response plan. It's something that a couple years ago nobody thought of, so we're going to do more.

As Jerry mentioned, the DART team is always available for any assistance that we can give you. So reach out through Housing.com plan at HUD.gov and say, "Help, I want the DART team to do something."

But again, thank you for attending. Please watch for the November 5th webinar which, as was mentioned, is primarily going to be a Train the Trainer webinar, where we're going to give you the materials and the guidance so that you can do workshops and other training for your clients. But again, thank you for attending, and we'll look forward to seeing you at the next session.

Scott Thank you, everybody.

Moderator Thank you.

M Thanks, everybody.

Moderator That does conclude the conference for today. Thank you for your participation and for using AT&T Teleconference Services. You may now disconnect.