



## Final Transcript

### **HUD-US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT: How to Become a HUD Approved Housing Counseling Agency**

June 28, 2017/2:00 p.m. EDT

#### **SPEAKERS**

Virginia Holman  
Paula Lincoln  
Jerrold Mayer  
Ginger

#### **PRESENTATION**

Moderator Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for standing by. Welcome to the How to Become a HUD Approved Housing Counseling Agency and Certification Update for Faith-Based Stakeholders Consult Call. At this time, all participants are in a listen-only mode. Later, we will conduct a question-and-answer session. Instructions will be given at that time. [Operator instructions.] As a reminder, this conference is being recorded.

I would now like to turn the conference over to our host, Virginia Holman. Please go ahead.

Virginia Alright. Thank you very much, and welcome to today's very important webinar on HUD approval and the housing counseling certification process. We welcome our faith-based stakeholders to this webinar. But, before we get into the meat of the webinar, I do want to go over some logistics to the webinar. Next slide, Jerry.

**HUD-US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

**Host: Kristen Villalvazo**

**June 28, 2017/2:00 p.m. EDT**

**Page 2**

As the operator said, the audio is being recorded. We will be providing a playback number along with the PowerPoint and a transcript in about a week, and these will be posted on the Office of Housing Counseling's webpage at HUD Exchange. We'll send out a listserv when that archive is available. All of your lines are currently muted.

I did, this morning, send out the PowerPoint to you all who had registered. They are also available for download in the control panel on the right-hand side of your screen, so if you just go to handouts and then click on the presentation, you'll be able to download it.

We do want to note that this webinar is closed to the press. If there are any press on the line and are interested in knowing about the topic, you need to contact HUD's Office of Public Affairs. Next slide.

We will be having a question-and-answer session at the end. We're not having polling questions today but when we do get to the question-and-answer session, the operator will give you instructions on how to ask those questions. Next slide.

We have some other ways that you can ask questions because it's really important to us that one, we know what your questions are and that we get you the answers. Again, the panel on the right-hand side of your screen has a box that's labeled questions and you're able to type in your question, and we will be able to see that and respond to it as appropriate. We'll try to get to as many of those questions today as possible.

After the webinar is over or at any time in the future you have a question, you can send it to [housing.counseling@HUD.gov](mailto:housing.counseling@HUD.gov) with the webinar topic in the subject line so we get it to the right person for a response. Next slide.

If for some reason we do open all of the lines, please mute your phones at that point so your background noise is not distracting to everyone else. Next slide, please.

There is going to be a brief survey that will come up at the end of the webinar and please take a few minutes and fill that out because it's really important to us, in our constant efforts to improve our webinars and training, to hear what responses and what works and what doesn't work from you all. Next slide.

**HUD-US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

**Host: Kristen Villalvazo**

**June 28, 2017/2:00 p.m. EDT**

**Page 3**

Also, if you have logged into the webinar, you're going to receive a thank you for attending email from GoToWebinar, and that's, generally, within 24 to 48 hours, but the email is going to say this is your certificate of training. Please be aware that there is no attachment to the email. It is that email message, so print it out and save it for your records in case you need to demonstrate to someone that you have, in fact, taken the training. Next slide.

And, at this point, I would like to turn the webinar over to Paula Lincoln, the Director of the HUD Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Paula?

Paula

Thank you, Virginia. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Paula Lincoln, and I'm the Director for HUD's Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Welcome and thank you for joining our webinar and conference call series with faith and community leaders.

We've asked HUD's Office of Housing Counseling to collaborate with us today to host this webinar because we often receive questions about how an organization can become a HUD-approved housing counseling agency and the eligibility requirements that they need to meet before they can apply to HUD.

Additionally, we've learned and we understand that there are some new certification requirements for housing counselors who work for HUD-approved agencies that will come into effect later this summer, and we wanted to make sure that our stakeholders are aware of these particular requirements.

Our goal for today's webinar is to answer those questions for you and any others with the assistance from the staff in the Office of Housing Counseling who are our subject matter experts for this call.

We also want to provide you with outreach and resource information about HUD'S Office for Housing Counseling. As indicated earlier, we will provide a question-and-answer segment at the end of the webinar with the assistance from the operator.

Before we get started, I'd like to provide a little background about HUD's Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnership office. Our office serves as HUD's resource center for faith-based and community organizations that

**HUD-US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

**Host: Kristen Villalvazo**

**June 28, 2017/2:00 p.m. EDT**

**Page 4**

seek to partner with HUD to address housing and community development needs in their local communities and neighborhoods.

The center builds partnerships with organizations and serves as a liaison between grassroots groups and the federal government to ensure that organizations have the latest information about HUD initiatives and programs as well as other federal resources available for their communities.

Today, our presenter from the Office of Housing Counseling is Jerry Mayer, who is the Director of Outreach and Capacity Building for the Office of Housing Counseling. And we also have, providing technical assistance for us today, Virginia Holman, and she's also in the Housing Counseling Office stationed in Richmond, Virginia. So, if we can go to the next slide and look at the agenda. Thank you.

Our agenda for today will cover what is a HUD-approved housing counseling agency, updated on the certification requirements for housing counselors, how to determine if your organization is ready to apply to become HUD-approved. And lastly, the resources available for the housing counseling program. So, I'd like to thank Jerry and Virginia for assisting us today, and let's get started.

Jerry

Well, thank you, Paula, and especially thank you for the opportunity today to talk to faith-based organizations that are interested in becoming HUD-approved and especially their counselors who are interested in becoming certified HUD housing counselors. We're going to have a lot of information for everyone today on a variety of topics as you see in the agenda. So, without further ado, let's get started.

Let's start with the HUD Office of Housing Counseling and what our mission is. Basically, our mission is to help families obtain, sustain, and retain their homes and we do that through our network of HUD-approved housing counseling agencies and their counselors.

Right now, there's about 1,900 housing counseling agencies, and they deliver the services on behalf of the department to consumers. HUD monitors those agencies. We look out for things like conflicts of interest, and we monitor the quality of housing counseling.

We also help connect agencies and clients through our website where we have a search engine that works on a map, and also there's another search

engine out there that's run by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau where clients can search for a counseling agency through zip codes. And, of course, we provide modest grant funding for qualified applicants. There's never enough money, but we do what we can with the amount of money that we are appropriated. And, we'll have more on that later in the presentation.

What is housing counseling? The definition from the Final Rule is, and I'll read it verbatim for you. Housing counseling is independent expert advice customized to the need of the consumer to address the consumer's housing barriers and to help achieve their housing goals. It must include the processes on this slide, and this is very important. I want you to really remember what we have on this because we're going to talk about this a little bit later. A unit of housing counseling, what does it constitute?

Well, it's generally the client intake, which includes collecting their demographic and financial information and their contact information. And the counselor also develops a budget, so they're really looking at things, also, like financial and affordability analysis and helping the client figure out how much money they have and how much they can budget and what they can really afford. This goes for rental, also.

An action plan, so that the client has a roadmap to follow, so that they can achieve their housing goals, and this is except for reverse mortgage counseling, of course because they know what they want. They want a reverse mortgage.

And then, any referrals to other services that might be required to help the client achieve their housing goals, and also a reasonable effort to follow up with the client and find out what the outcome was and how well they did. That is essentially what constitutes a unit of housing counseling. And remember these six items because we're going to talk about them later.

The services that are provided by HUD-approved housing counseling agencies: pre-purchase counseling and education; post-purchase, what to do after you're a homeowner; of course, foreclosure intervention counseling; the aforementioned reverse mortgage or HECM, as it's known in the industry, and that's for senior homeowners; rental counseling, of course, and that could also be landlord tenant disputes or helping a client go from their current rental situation to an improved rental situation; fair housing education, which is critically important because homeowners and

renters need to know their rights; and also most important is homeless prevention counseling.

Our counseling agencies play a very important role in helping homeless folks find shelter and improve their situations. Default education is something our counseling agencies do. Teaching consumers how to avoid problems with their mortgage is very critical.

And, of course, those pre-and post-purchase education workshops that help clients prepare for home ownership and understand what they can expect from the mortgage process and how to find a real estate broker and then how to be a good homeowner, and what to expect there, and how to budget for all of the utilities and things like that.

Some of the other services that our counseling agencies provide, and you may recognize some of these because you may be providing some of these right now. That is down payment assistance, and that's usually education or working with a local municipality to manage down payment assistance, and help homebuyers out with that down payment; emergency utility assistance; job training; daycare; food banks; disaster recovery information, which is a very important field, especially in states that are prone to disasters; homeless shelters and low-income housing.

Just to give you an idea of the activities of the Office of Housing Counseling, in FY '16, and we don't have a full dataset for FY '17, that's why we're showing you '16. We saw through our counseling agencies about 1.2 million clients, and you can see from this pie chart the different activities that our agencies were involved with.

The largest share is the purple share at 32%. That's your group education which is mostly homeownership education, first-time homebuyers, a little bit of rental education in there, as well. But it's mostly first-time homebuyers. Then, pre-purchase, which is the orange slice there, at 19%, is a growing area as well for us. And if you were to add the two of those up, you're up around 50% of our total activities.

Now, the green slice of the pie, that is your mortgage delinquency counseling, and that nationally is up around 26%. There is some variation on this chart when you go state by state. If we were looking at this chart in 2009, the green would have been three-quarters of the chart, but luckily the economy has improved. People are more interested in purchasing

homes, so the group education and the pre-purchase counseling have really grown a lot.

The post-purchase counseling, which is that dark purple at 4%, could also, probably, be included in that total as well. So, we're probably getting closer to 54%, 55% when you add it all up, and it'll probably continue to grow as the mortgage delinquency portion of the pie continues to shrink.

We do about 10%, nationwide, of our counseling total is rental counseling. About 7% is that reverse mortgage counseling and probably, in my opinion, the most important one is homeless counseling, but it's only at 2% and we're looking for an improvement in that area. We're looking for new partners who are homeless service providers to join our network, and we really want to engage more on homeless counseling because it is a huge problem facing communities all across the nation.

What are the benefits of HUD approval? Number one is credibility in the community, with your partners and lenders and the clients and the families that you serve. When you can say that you are HUD-approved, you have something that you can point to and it gives the consumer confidence that your organization has been vetted by HUD and is a participant in our housing counseling program.

It also gives you access to scholarships for training from our training NOFA partners and that's organizations like NeighborWorks and Rural Community Assistance Corp, NCRC and National Council of La Raza, who all get money from us to train you. They provide scholarships, and sometimes those scholarships also include funds for travel to like a NeighborWorks NTI that might be going on. For instance, there's one going on in August in Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. HUD-approved agencies are able to get scholarships and able to go take that training for their executive and their counseling staff.

You also get access to technical assistance from the Office of Housing Counseling and we help with capacity building and we provide training. All of our training is always free, and like I said, through our training NOFA partners, you can also obtain scholarships. So, there's a tremendous value in terms of capacity building and career development for your counselors when you become HUD-approved.

In addition, you get wider visibility and access to your clients through our website, which we talked about earlier. We also have an app that folks

**HUD-US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

**Host: Kristen Villalvazo**

**June 28, 2017/2:00 p.m. EDT**

**Page 8**

can download to find a housing counseling agency, and we have a toll-free referral number, as well.

Also, third party funders or other funding sources often require as a term of their grants, or funds that they provide, that the applicant has to be a HUD-approved agency. So, HUD approval also opens up some of those other funding sources that you can access to help fund your housing programs.

Now, let's talk about housing counselor certification. We published a Final Rule on December 14, 2016. Now, the final compliance date for that rule on certification is going to be August 1, 2020. And, we also published a Federal Register notice on May 31<sup>st</sup> announcing that we're going to start the housing counselor certification exam on August 1, 2017. The final compliance for that will be three years later on August 1, 2020.

Some of the benefits of certification, and the one I think is most important, is that we're going to be creating really a professional recognition for housing counselors that will put them on par with any other real estate professional that is involved in a home ownership transaction.

Just about everyone has a license or a certificate or a professional designation. Whether they're the real estate agent or the loan officer or the appraiser or the title person, they all have some sort of professional certificate of recognition. And now housing counselors will have that same level of recognition on a professional level.

This will elevate the value of the program for consumers. We're going to be changing up our messaging, and it's going to be more geared towards telling consumers to ask for a HUD-certified counselor working at a HUD-approved agency. And that will set apart housing counselors from other entities that provide advice in the real estate area.

Housing counselors will have broader knowledge, after having studied for the exam, and they will be providing better counseling. This will also help consumers avoid scammers and con artists because they won't be able to show that they are a HUD-certified housing counselor. And, also, again, as we mentioned earlier, HUD-certified counselors and HUD-approved housing counseling agencies will be able to take advantage of various programs that are out there with grants and scholarships for training, and that has tremendous value.



Some of the key provisions, very important, is that all housing counseling provided under or in connection with all HUD programs must be performed by a HUD-certified housing counselor by August 1, 2020. That's three years after we start commencing testing, so it is our grace period.

A HUD-certified housing counselor is a housing counselor who has passed the HUD certification exam and works for a HUD-approved housing counseling agency. Our exam is public information, and anyone can plunk down their money and take the exam, but only housing counselors that will be certified will be those who are actually working for HUD-approved housing counseling agencies.

We're going to develop a system whereby the executive directors of housing counseling agencies will be able to certify and approve those counselors that work for them that pass the exam. If you're not working for a housing counseling agency, you would never come up in the system and would be unable to be certified by anybody.

Housing counselors will need to pass the certification exam, which will cover six major topics. We'll get more into that in a minute. They only have to pass the certification exam once. They are certified for life. There are no continuing education requirements.

Housing counselors will have active certificates as long as they are working at a HUD-participating or approved housing counseling agency, and we'll be watching and verifying this through a system that we're developing. Once a housing counselor leaves the employment of that HUD-approved agency, then their certificate goes inactive. When they pop up back at another housing counseling agency, it will be reactivated. There'll be no need to retake the exam. They will already be in our system.

Now, counselors can become certified as soon as the exam is available on August 1, 2017. You have three years to do this, 36 months. There is no need to rush the system on August 1<sup>st</sup> even though we built it so that it could handle that capacity. We would recommend that, perhaps, if you have several people at your agency, one person take the test and be a pathfinder for your agency and then report back what they can expect.

That way it will help demystify the process for the rest of the counselors at the agency and take the stress levels down a little bit. Some people get

very stressed out when they're about to take exams. So, that's probably a good strategy, but you do have three years to do it, so you don't have to rush out on the first day and do it.

Now, there'll be six major topics of testing: financial management; property maintenance; responsibilities of home ownership and tenancy; fair housing laws and requirements, extremely important to learn; housing affordability; and finally, avoidance of and responses to rental and mortgage delinquency, and the avoidance of eviction and mortgage default.

The certification exam can be found at [www.HUDhousingcounselors.com](http://www.HUDhousingcounselors.com). That's a special website that we built for this exam. Counselors can go on right now and establish a user account to prepare for the exam, and it's a good idea to go on there right now and look around and establish your account.

We also have our free study guide up right now that you can look at, and we're going to be uploading very soon a free practice exam for you to use before you have to take your certification test on August 1, 2017. The exam will be proctored online, which means you'll be sitting in front of a webcam and the proctor will be monitoring you as you take the exam. Or, it can be done at a live proctoring site, sort of sitting in a classroom taking the test.

The exam will cost \$60 to do it online and \$100 if you want to go to a proctoring site. The cost of the exam is directly related to deferring the cost of running the program in the first place. The exam will be available in both English and Spanish, and you can take the exam multiple times until you pass, but you must pay the fee each time you take the exam, and you see, that's where that free practice exam is going to come into play.

You can hone your skills on that practice exam as much as you want, until you feel confident that you can pass the certification exam when you plunk down your money. This will help save your agency the cost of you having to retake the exam more than once, and it will give you that level of confidence that you need so that when you do plunk down your money and take that test, you'll be confident that you'll be able to pass.

I am very certain that an experienced housing counselor who avails themselves of the free study guide and the practice exams and maybe even takes some courses that are offered for free through our training partners,

will be very well prepared when you consider their experience as a housing counselor.

None of this will be new material to an experienced housing counselor, and I am very certain that housing counselors, if they study, if they apply their experience, if they take the practice exams, will have no trouble gaining certification through HUD. We are going to start, like I said, on August 1<sup>st</sup> with the testing, so get ready by registering with the exam site as soon as you can.

We talked about how you can prepare. Once again, I'll go through it again—study, practice exams, take courses through our partners, and create your user account.

Let's talk about what's not housing counseling. We've already talked about what is housing counseling, but a lot of agencies are wondering how are they going to be affected by this rule, and will they have to provide services with a HUD-certified counselor and become approved or not.

Some of the things that are not housing counseling are services that provide simple housing information or placement or referral services, but don't do what we showed in that early slide, those six items that are a unit of counseling, starting with that client intake and the budgeting and the financial analysis and the action plan and the followup and all of that record keeping.

If you're not doing all of that in the service you're providing now, then that's not really housing counseling and may not fall under the rule. However, you should pay attention to the funder for that program, whoever is providing you a grant to do that or providing funding for it because they may insert into their grant agreement that the service must now be performed by a HUD-certified counselor. So, look out for that because that could change what you're doing right now.

Other things that are not housing counseling are routine administrative activities like program eligibility determinations, simple client intake or simple case management. And case management that provides housing service that are incidental to some larger program like housing of people with AIDS or emergency shelter grants of a continuation of care may not be housing counseling.

And also, fair housing advice and advocacy, which is limited to just processing the complaints and filing claims, that's not housing counseling either. So, if you're doing any of these activities, you may be okay and not have to become certified.

So, what are some of the options for agencies that may find that they are affected by the rule? Well, they can apply to HUD for approval or they can join up with one of our intermediaries or a state housing finance agency and become an affiliate. They could also partner with an already existing HUD-approved housing counseling agency who could do the counseling for them on their behalf.

They could create an informal or a formal referral agreement that would further that. We would also like to see funding agreements so that the counselors are, of course, compensated for what they're doing. Another thing is that the agency could modify their program to be compliant. They could back off some of the things they're doing so it doesn't fit the definition of housing counseling.

If everything is not necessary to serving the client that they're doing, they may look at dialing it back a little bit so that it doesn't fall under the rule. And then the one we don't want to see is to stop delivering those housing counseling services. There are a lot of needy people out there, and we want to see as much counseling going on as possible to help consumers, so that's the one we'd like to talk to you about before you decide to stop doing it, because maybe we could help you out on that.

How to become a HUD-approved housing counseling agency: There are eligibility requirements, generally. You need to be a 501(c)(3) or 501(c), a nonprofit or a unit of local government. We need to have a clear and concise and comprehensive housing counseling and education program that we can review.

There should be a team of counselors at your agency, and you should also be able to identify the industry partners and local government partners that will help you carry out housing counseling and enhance the quality of information that you have.

You would need to demonstrate that your program has the resources to run a successful housing counseling program, and you would need to evaluate your present program to see whether or not you have that track record of

running your successful program for at least one year, since we have an experience requirement.

One thing to keep in mind, recipients of federal funds are prohibited from requiring religious instruction, counseling or conducting mandatory services or exerting religious influence over the client as a provision or a condition of receiving housing counseling assistance.

This is also similar to what we have in our disclosure agreements about, for instance, lending. If your agency were running a lending program, you couldn't make lending and obtaining a mortgage through that agency a condition of receiving housing counseling. So, participants and clients have to have the freedom to obtain housing counseling without any strings attached, basically.

So, some of the eligibility requirements, like I said, are nonprofit status, state and local government are all acceptable, one year experience providing housing counseling or something substantially similar, one year of operation in a proposed geographic service community area and demonstrate that they have sufficient resources to carry out a housing counseling program.

Here are eight steps that will take you through what the approval process is, and the first is to visit our HUD Exchange website and there's a link to how to become a HUD-approved housing counseling agency that will help you in evaluating whether you're ready and getting your application together.

We just posted recently our housing counseling agency eligibility tool, which is very helpful for prospective agencies. It's sort of a decision tree, and what it does is it takes you through a series of questions. If you are able to answer all of the questions, then you are probably eligible to proceed with an application. If you find that you're unable to answer some of the questions or your answer isn't compliant with the questions in the eligibility tool, it will give you a report that will tell you where your application deficiencies might lie and enable you to work on those so that when you do submit an application, you'll know what to expect.

When you're done with the eligibility tool, you'll be connected with one of our application advisors, and all you have to do is email [housing.counseling@HUD.gov](mailto:housing.counseling@HUD.gov) and ask to speak to an application advisor. We will assign a live person who will talk to you about your application,

help you with those deficiency areas, hold your hand through the process of completing your application and route it properly to a reviewer so that your application can go into our review system.

It generally takes between 30 and 60 days for an application to pass through our system. The completeness and quality of your application would be very important. Really great applications generally make it through in about 30 days, but if there are deficiencies or problems that involve our reviewers having to come back to you and ask for clarifications or missing documentation, that could make the application take a little bit longer than we would like, and of course, than you would like.

So, working with that application advisor is key to ensuring you have a complete and very good application so that it can sail through. The application would include a lot of required documentation, which you will learn about from talking to the application advisor and looking at the website, including HUD form 9900, which really lays out for you everything that you need to assemble in your application.

Then you would submit your application electronically to HUD via email. You would be working with a HUD reviewer during that 30- to 60-day period and then, hopefully, if everything works out and your agency is qualified and your documentation is complete, you would receive HUD approval.

Once you have HUD approval, you will be assigned a HUD point of contact who is another live person who will be sort of your shepherd through HUD's program and help you navigate all of the issues that surround being HUD-approved, from putting in your reports to getting technical assistance and training and also, help by monitoring your organization to make sure that all of the obligations for HUD approval are being met.

Now, that eligibility tool, just to go into a little more depth on that, it basically walks potential agencies through the required criteria for HUD approval. It will plug you into educational materials on becoming HUD-approved that you can review. It really streamlines the process by weeding out agencies that are not eligible for HUD approval, for profits and individuals that would like to be in our program.

Previously, we were accepting applications from all comers, and we really have to, but when you use the eligibility tool, you can really self-assess whether your application makes sense for your organization and meets the requirements for HUD. It has helped us unclog our pipeline of applications and serve qualified agencies quicker and more efficiently.

Really, the best part and my favorite feature is that user report because if you're thinking about putting in an application and you have that user report that you can look at, you can follow up point by point and polish your application to make sure that it would be responsive to all of our requirements and that you're a qualified agency.

The eligibility tool, remember, doesn't replace our formal application review, it just helps you through that review. This is what the eligibility tool looks like. You create a user account on the HUD Exchange, and you can just get started by clicking that sign in button. The link below will take you right to the eligibility tool, so if you download this handout on your screen to the right, you can click the link and you can start using the eligibility tool right away.

Again, to access an application advisor, we want you to email [HUD.counseling@HUD.gov](mailto:HUD.counseling@HUD.gov) and schedule an appointment with an application advisor. Just insert in your email subject line appointment with HUD housing counseling application advisor, and the customer service will route your email directly to one of their advisors who will contact you within 24 hours to 48 hours.

Some of the regulations that you need to know about on eligibility, we have a video that is at the link here that would give you an overview introduction to housing counseling through some online training. It's a self-pace training video. We also have our federal regulation on approval criteria which is linked here, our handbook, of course, and our website, which has guides and tools and toolkits and all kinds of things on it that you can use to help evaluate your program and look at what HUD has to offer and what our different programs are.

Let's talk about applications and some of the common deficiencies that we see on applications. This is in no particular order, but one of the most common things we see is that the entity that is applying has no authorization to perform housing counseling, either from its board or in its charter or in any of its documentation. We need to know that the agency that is applying is authorized to perform housing counseling, so that's one

of the things that you're going to want to look at and make sure that your corporate documents include housing counseling as an authorized activity.

Work plans: We have a toolkit, specifically, on work plans that you can review, but very often we find that work plans are incomplete. And one of the most glaring and oft found deficiency is that there's no description of housing counseling activities in the work plan. Be very careful with your work plan to make sure that housing counseling is one of the functions that you're covering in that work plan.

Another is that applicants get a little check box happy sometimes, and they check off all different types of housing counseling services and areas than they're really qualified for. So, you want to start modestly; you can always add services later as you become qualified in those. But if you check off all the boxes and you don't have the capacity to do all of the different types of housing counseling services that we talked about earlier, chances are your application is going to encounter some questions.

One of the other things we look for is a good quality control plan that includes supervisory, monitoring and some of the documentation on how the agency is going to carry out its quality control process, and very often we see missing or weak quality control plans, so we usually go back and look at that, and that could slow down the process.

We also want to make sure that in any area of approval that you're applying for, like let's say you're applying for reverse mortgage counseling as one of the programs you want to work on. We want to make sure that you're trained in reverse mortgage counseling, so your application should include strong documentation that shows that any area that you want to be approved for, whether it's rental or home ownership or homeless counseling, that you're qualified to do that. One of the ways you do that is to show us that you have been trained and that you have certificates of training for your counseling staff in those areas.

Then, a very important one is disclosures. Now, disclosures really identify the conflicts of interest, the identity of interest that could exist between an agency and its funders and its community partners and the lenders that it works with and the real estate agencies that it works with. One of the most important things is that the disclosure should identify all of these partnerships, but it should also make very clear to the client that obtaining services from any of these partners is not a condition of housing counseling and no one would be turned away because they didn't get a



**HUD-US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

**Host: Kristen Villalvazo**

**June 28, 2017/2:00 p.m. EDT**

**Page 17**

loan through one of those partners or didn't obtain services from a real estate brokerage that's listed as an agency's partner.

Another common deficiency in an application that we find is that resumes for the staff are not provided or they don't provide enough background information. We also often find that experience is not well documented in some applications. So, you want to talk about the other HUD programs that you have experience with because substantially similar experience can support your housing counseling application. Some of the things that right now you may now consider housing counseling are experience that we will consider. You want to make sure that your application really identifies all of your experience.

We also want to know about your funding sources that may not be specifically for housing counseling but could be related, which would help us evaluate your financial capacity to operate in our program. We want to make sure that you're financially able to undertake this program when you put in an application.

HUD housing counseling funds are rather meager, and no agency can really subsist solely on a diet of HUD housing counseling funds. The money just isn't enough, so those other funding sources are going to be very important to identify in your application.

We would also need a copy of your projected and current housing counseling budgets. We want to make sure that you have budgeted properly to run the program, and that's one of the things that we're going to evaluate.

We want to make sure that your list of community resources includes the names and addresses of the organizations that you have established relationships with. Very often, we will get names of entities, but we won't be able to contact them to verify information, so make sure in your application you give us the full information for your community resources so that we can contact them.

Now, some of the options for agencies that you can undertake if you want to comply with the housing counselor certification rule, you can join a HUD-approved intermediary or a state housing finance agency. In addition to becoming HUD-approved, we have intermediaries out there that have networks, and the advantage of joining an intermediary is that they apply for grant funding and trickle down the money so that you don't

have to. They also provide technical assistance and quality assurance work. They help problem solve some of the issues that you might be facing. They can help you build capacity.

An intermediary is a really good choice if applying for approval yourself is not what you want to do. You can also partner with a HUD-approved housing counseling agency, as we talked about earlier, to help deliver housing counseling services to your clients. Again, you can modify your program in order to become compliant. And, of course, the one we didn't want is to stop delivering housing counseling services.

The benefits of partnering are that you can help your constituents make sound financial decisions from a confidential and unbiased professional counselor that's experienced in the local market, and by partnering, you don't have to have this as an onboard capability at your agency, but you can partner with someone who has already been doing this and is well experienced.

You can also, when you're doing home buyer fairs and education classes, your partner agency counselors can then come to your events and can talk to your clients about different opportunities for home ownership and rental and things like that.

Also, when you're a partner, you'll be part of a larger network so when there are notices and warnings on scam alerts and new initiatives and other information that's out there in the community, when you're partnered with another agency, you'll benefit from that communication as well.

And, also, by partnering with a HUD-approved housing counseling agency, should you decide not to apply on your own, you can join a larger community of partners and lenders and expand the number of families that you're able to serve.

In order to find a HUD-approved agency, we have a locator on our website that we talked about the other day, and the web link is there at the bottom. It's Find a Counselor. We receive about 2,000 calls a day at our voice system, and the number is right there, 800-569-4287. You can also search by zip code on our website as well as looking at the map.

When you log on to or click on the HUD website, you will find a map, that's right here, and you click on a state or scroll down to a state that you would like to see, and it will take you directly to our list of HUD-approved

and participating housing counseling agencies. This is what the list looks like. There are email links, there are website links. It will identify the services that are being provided, and it's organized by the address, the towns where the agencies are. Right here, we're looking at Colorado.

Also, the name of an intermediary or parent organization, if they're affiliated with it, will be over there on the right side right next to the languages that they provide counseling in. And, you can see this one down here at the bottom provides American Sign Language in addition to English and Spanish, so there's a lot of opportunities and for clients that are seeking housing counseling.

Another thing when you're partnered with a HUD agency is that you'll be able to make great referrals to your clients. Sometimes, they're going to have something that you can't really handle, and you're going to need to hand off to somebody else. One of the important things is to know that there is no shame in consulting with a housing counselor.

Many clients find that a housing counselor will advise them on some really difficult areas like budgeting or some rental problems that they're having, some fair housing issues, or whether or not it's advisable to get a reverse mortgage, for instance. We find that our clients are generally really helped and some find it a great relief right after they talk to a housing counselor because now they have a path forward to solve their housing issue.

Generally, the first appointment with a housing counselor will last about 45 minutes, and it's usually a lot of talking and processing of some documents. After that 45 minutes, they'll have some initial ideas of what they need to do. We know that housing counseling works and there will probably be an effective outcome after they've had that first session, and there will be follow-up sessions after that. So, the client will have a relationship with the counselor and the agency that they refer the client to.

Some resources and other information for you. We have a frequently asked questions database on our website. It's keyword searchable, and there are right now over 350 or so frequently asked questions. We add to it on an almost daily basis. When we receive questions at [housing.counseling@HUD.gov](mailto:housing.counseling@HUD.gov), if it is a question that looks like it should be in our frequently asked questions database, we will include it, so that everyone can benefit from that question and the response.

**HUD-US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

**Host: Kristen Villalvazo**

**June 28, 2017/2:00 p.m. EDT**

**Page 20**

You can search for questions on a variety of topics, including certification, how to become HUD-approved, or program requirements. You can really zero down to individual programs like reverse mortgages or homeless counseling or rental, and it's a great resource.

If you have a question and you don't see it in our database or frequently asked questions, send it in to [housing.counseling@HUD.gov](mailto:housing.counseling@HUD.gov) and we will get you a response within 24 to 48 hours, and your question will help other people because it may become part of our frequently asked questions.

We do a lot of outreach. This is part of it right now, and you can find training in our webinar archives that we've done in the past year or so. We have a training and event calendar that you can access to see what's coming up. We have a lot of training partners that you'll be able to access on our website.

Now, it says here we have listserv that some of you are probably already subscribed to that will advise you about what we have coming up in terms of training and other resources. You can find us online at this web address, [www.TheHUDEXchange.info/counseling](http://www.TheHUDEXchange.info/counseling). The housing counselor certification training and testing website is [www.HUDhousingcounselors.com](http://www.HUDhousingcounselors.com).

Again, you can email us at [HUD.counseling@HUD.gov](mailto:HUD.counseling@HUD.gov) and to join our listserv and also see our newsletter, which is called *The Bridge*, and that goes out to about 18,500 housing counseling industry subscribers nationwide every month, and the listserv publishes on a near daily basis with all kinds of great information on training and grants and disaster relief notices and employment opportunities, contracting opportunities, program guidance, very important, and updates. All of that can be had through our listserv, and you can subscribe right there at that address.

Now, we have a handout here from the faith-based office, and Paula, would you like to talk about this handout?

Paula

Hi, Jerry. This handout we have for our faith and community leaders, it kind of takes a lot of the information that you provided today, what is a HUD-approved housing counseling agency? How do faith-based organizations participate in the program? How do they become HUD-approved? How do they contact us?

You see at the bottom, you can get an electronic version of this document at [www.HUD.gov/offices/FBCI](http://www.HUD.gov/offices/FBCI).

Jerry

Alright. Well, thank you, Paula. Thank you for providing this handout because it's a great one-pager to help you decide about housing counseling and whether it's right for your organization. Especially, I love the Contact Us resources that are there.

And again, Paula, works for the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Here is her information. You can email them at [Partnerships@HUD.gov](mailto:Partnerships@HUD.gov), and there is their web address there at the bottom. This is, of course, included in the handout for today's presentation, the PDF file that you can click on right now, if you want, and you can have this and click the links at your leisure.

And here is my information as well, and you can see, I'm in California. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions. You can also contact [housing.counseling@HUD.gov](mailto:housing.counseling@HUD.gov) and if you'd like to be subscribed to our listserv, I can help you with that directly, so feel free to just go ahead and email me.

With that, we are ready for some questions. So, Grace, our operator, if you would open up the lines for questions and start queuing up questions. In the meantime, Ginger, do we have any questions in the GoToMeeting on our system?

Ginger

Yes, we have a couple. One gentleman was pondering the value of taking the exam if they didn't work for a HUD-approved agency, the example being, accountants like to become CPAs even though they don't, necessarily, work for an accounting firm. So perhaps, you could explain your version of the value of taking the exam even if you don't work for an agency.

Jerry

Well, that is a great question, and I'm really glad that question was asked. As I said earlier, and I'm sure the person asking the question knows, that only folks who work at HUD-approved housing counseling agencies, only those counselors who work there, will become certified by HUD through our system.

That's not to say that there's not value in taking the practice exams to increase your skills and knowledge. If you want to plunk down your money, and take the certification exam, you can do that too; however, you

would not receive any certification or documentation as to whether or not you passed the exam or whether you're certified.

So, anyone that does that is really doing it for their own information, and that's fine because this is public information but they wouldn't be certified. Knowing this information is really worthwhile for anyone in the real estate or lending or nonprofit arena, but just know that just because you pay the \$60 and take the exam doesn't mean you're going to become certified. You'll only become certified if you work at a HUD-approved agency. I hope that answered the question and then, can we move on to the next question?

Ginger Sure. "How long do we have to associate with an approved counseling agency after we pass the test?"

Jerry Well, to remain HUD-certified and active, you have to be working at the agency. So, you can't, and if I understand the question right, you can't take the exam, work at a HUD agency and then leave the agency because the moment you leave the agency, your certification goes inactive and the executive director will collect up that certificate, which will also have the name of the agency where you work at on it. So, your certification is active as long as you work at that HUD-approved agency. It goes inactive when you leave that agency.

It can become reactivated when you go to a new agency and you would get a new certificate with your name and the name of the new agency that you're working at printed on it. I hope that answered that question.

Ginger People were wondering whether they would get this information, the PowerPoint and stuff. Just a reminder that probably in about a week, the PowerPoint, a transcript of today's webinar as well as an audio replay number will be posted in the archive section of the Office of Housing Counseling page on HUD Exchange, and we'll send out a listserv notice when that happens. So, watch for that, you'll have that opportunity to go to our archives.

Let me see, we have a growing number of questions.

Jerry While you're doing that one, can we go back to Grace and see if we have anything queued up?

Moderator Thank you. [Operator instructions.]

Jerry Paula, did you have a comment?

Paula Yes. We have a question that came in from an agency that does homeless counseling, and that's all that they do. They want to know whether or not there are any agencies that do homeless counseling because they are in the process of looking to become HUD-certified and approved.

Jerry That is a great question. The answer is yes. We have agencies on our HUD-approved list that only do homeless counseling, and those are super important agencies doing a great mission, and we would welcome an application from an agency doing only homeless counseling and be really happy to add them to our network.

While we're waiting for the operator to bring up any questions, Ginger, shall we return to our GoToMeeting questions?

Ginger Sure. Okay, we have a couple trickling in. The egg [ph] questions where the agencies are sort of a startup and they want to get their experienced certified housing counselor to make that process go better, so what do they do first, become an approved agency or employee certified counselors?

Jerry Well, that's a great question, and a lot of counseling agencies encounter this or perspective counseling agencies encounter this because they may not have one year of experience, they may not have been operating for at least a year. What we're looking for is the corporation submitting the application, the 501(c) corporation, have at least a year of operational experience under its belt.

After we have the certification process underway, the testing process, hiring a HUD-certified counselor is really the way to go in order to strengthen your application. But what we're looking for is that one year experience from that agency because a startup agency is great, but we need to see a track record as well.

We need to know that agency has ties to the community as a financial capacity, all the things that we talked about in this presentation. We will look at substantially similar experience by that corporation. So, if they're doing something very similar to housing counseling, we'll certainly consider that as well.

Now, if you find that your agency doesn't have that experience yet, one thing that you could do is partner with other housing counseling agencies or non-profits in your area to gain that experience. So, there's a lot of ways that you can get the experience.

No two applicant agencies are the same so we would really like to have one of our application advisors talk to you directly to really find out what your agency's experience level is and how we could advise you best with your application, because like I said, no two agencies are alike in this respect.

Okay. Next question, please.

Ginger Okay. We have one about the taking the exam and failing in terms of will they know what areas they failed in? Do they have to take the whole exam again? How is that handled?

Jerry Well, this is where our study guide and our practice exams come in. Of course, you can take the exam again. You would have to take the entire exam again, but the best way to find out where your knowledge deficiencies are in that practice exam because that will tell you when you finish the practice exam, where your deficiencies are and where you need to study so that you can be prepared for taking that actual certification exam and plunking down your \$60.

Also, bear in mind that if your agency is currently receiving a HUD housing counseling grant, for instance if you're already approved and you just want to know about certification, you can defer the cost of the exam from your HUD housing counseling grant funds that you may have.

But in order to be really prepared, those practice exams will tell you exactly what you need to study, and you can keep taking them until you're proficient and ready to plunk down your \$60.

Next question, please.

Ginger Okay. When applying to be a HUD-certified agency, would the agency be able to begin with just one counselor or do they need to have at least two on staff?

Jerry Oh, yes. That is a very good question because in our certification Final Rule, it requires that each HUD-approved agency by August 1, 2020 must



**HUD-US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

**Host: Kristen Villalvazo**

**June 28, 2017/2:00 p.m. EDT**

**Page 25**

have at least one HUD-certified housing counselor onboard. Now, there's sort of a reasonableness test here or factor. If you're seeing 2,000 clients a year, one counselor is obviously not going to handle it. If you're seeing 30 clients a year, which is the minimum number that you need to see in order to maintain HUD approval, then one counselor is probably sufficient.

So, you really have to look at the volume of clients that you see per year and then certify an employee, the number of clients that is reasonable to service that larger portfolio. So, this is another case that's going to go agency by agency because no two agencies are exactly seeing the same number of clients.

Ginger                    Okay. Once you pass the exam, how long is that successful passing of the exam in the system?

Jerry                     Forever. As long as you are employed at a HUD-approved housing counseling agency, it will remain in the system. The database will contain your information so that if you leave the employment of the agency that you started with, the next agency will be able to find you in the system and activate your certification.

Ginger                    Okay. What if you take the exam and then start working for a HUD-approved agency, will you then get your certificate?

Jerry                     Yes, you will. The executive director of that agency will be able to go into our system, find your name, click on your name and print out your certificate and tell HUD that you are working at that agency.

Could we go back to Grace? Do we have any questions queued up?

Moderator                Yes, we do have a question from Marsha Jones. Please go ahead.

Marsha                    Yes, hi. Good afternoon. Thank you for taking my call. My question, actually, is once we're certified, are we restricted to D.C. residents only? Because our church has relationships with folks who are outside of D.C. They're Maryland residents, and I understand you to say, also, that we could also work with rental people. Is that correct?

Jerry                     Well, it'll depend largely on your work plan and the work plan that your agency submits to us. It will tell us the programs that your agency will be

**HUD-US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

**Host: Kristen Villalvazo**

**June 28, 2017/2:00 p.m. EDT**

**Page 26**

providing, and it will also identify the geographic area in which your agency will be operating.

So, we would expect that the agency will serve clients that are identified in their work plan.

Marsha May I be allowed to ask one more question?

Jerry Sure, go ahead.

Marsha In light of the HUD housing counseling grant, once my church has been certified as a housing counseling agency, would that then allow us to apply for housing counseling grants?

Jerry Oh, yes. Once you are a HUD-approved housing counseling agency, you can access housing counseling money two ways. One is directly as a HUD-approved agency or if you had chosen to affiliate with one of our intermediaries, then you'll be able to access money through that intermediary affiliate.

Marsha Okay. Okay. Alright. Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

Jerry You're welcome.

Moderator Thank you. [Operator instructions.] We do have a question from Beverly Luke. Please go ahead.

Beverly Thanks.

Jerry Hi, Beverly.

Beverly Hi. How are you?

Jerry Very good.

Beverly Good. My question is how do I download the housing counseling materials study guide for the test? Do I have to create a password and ID in order to get all of that information?

Jerry Well, the study guide is available at our website, which the link is in our materials here. Go ahead and create that user account. It's not hard to do

**HUD-US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

**Host: Kristen Villalvazo**

**June 28, 2017/2:00 p.m. EDT**

**Page 27**

and it's free to create the account, and then you can access all of this information very easily and download it.

Beverly Okay, alright. Thanks so much.

Jerry Thank you, Beverly.

Beverly You're welcome.

Jerry Do we have another question, Grace?

Moderator Yes. We have a question from Stacey Daniels. Please go ahead.

Stacey Hi. Thank you. My question is if we decide to partner with another agency who is already certified, and we'll be working towards becoming our own certified agency, are we still able to qualify for grant funding during that time period as we are partnering with another agency?

Jerry Stacey, that's a great question. The answer is that you have to be HUD-approved or affiliated with a HUD-approved intermediary formally in order to access HUD housing counseling funds. So, partnering doesn't get you there for applying for grant funds or accessing funds through an affiliate relationship with an intermediary. So, you'd have to go the full route and apply is the real answer there.

Stacey Okay. Thank you.

Moderator Thank you. Our next question come from Jackie Sharp. Please go ahead.

Jackie Hi. Good afternoon. My question is if I do take the exam, become certified, and of course, I live here in Illinois. If I move to Mississippi and start working for a HUD-approved agency, would that certification follow me?

Jerry Sure, Jackie, that certification would follow you. You may need to, in order to become employed in Mississippi, of course, brush up on local laws and rules and things like that in order to be hired by that agency, but your certification as a HUD-certified housing counselor is transferrable across state lines.

Jackie Oh, okay. Thank you.

**HUD-US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

**Host: Kristen Villalvazo**

**June 28, 2017/2:00 p.m. EDT**

**Page 28**

- Jerry                    You're welcome.
- Moderator            Thank you. And we do have a question from Shirley Neal. Please go ahead.
- Shirley                Hi. Thank you for taking my question. My question is is it mandatory to be located in an office out of a commercial building or can you have a home office and use a commercial building as an entity to take clients on or have classes and seminars?
- Jerry                    Thank you for that question, Shirley. I would refer you to our HUD handbook, which is 7610.1. We have requirements for facilities for housing counseling agencies. We're largely concerned with a lot of issues surrounding handicapped accessibility, confidential areas where clients can be seen, signage being readily available so clients can identify the housing counseling agency, and in most cases, a private residence is not a good setting for housing counseling to be carried out.
- So, we would really be looking for a commercial facility that is accessible to our clients and they could find you just like any other business. Generally, our residential situations, because the residence contains a lot of personal items and may not be handicapped accessible and running a business in a residential area may not even be an allowable activity under local zoning, they don't really do well in terms of our application process so I would recommend that you use a commercial facility.
- Shirley                That makes sense. Thank you.
- Jerry                    Alright. Thank you for that question. That was a good one.
- Moderator            Thank you. And we have no further questions over the phone at this time.
- Jerry                    Thank you, Grace. Ginger, could we go back to GoToMeeting and see if we have more questions?
- Ginger                 Sure. One is a very simple one. How do you find out if your agency is HUD-approved?
- Jerry                    That's very easy. You can email [housing.counseling@HUD.gov](mailto:housing.counseling@HUD.gov) and ask that question or you could go to our website at the [www.HUDEXchange/housingcounseling](http://www.HUDEXchange/housingcounseling), look at our housing counseling agency locator and see if your agency is on one of the state lists for your

area. And if you find that you're on the list, that's great. You probably want to talk to your executive director and find out more information about housing counseling and what your agency is doing.

Or, if you're not on the list, you can certainly get the ball rolling on HUD approval at the very same website and ask to speak to an application advisor and use our eligibility tool and get started that way.

Paula

Jerry, we have a question here. We have a participant who is involved in the housing industry, and they want to provide services like short sales, loan modifications to existing homeowners, home purchase counseling using grants to first-time homebuyers, landlord and tenant counseling workshops and rental guidance workshops for renters. So, the question is from start to finish, how long does the process take and is there any HUD assistance to help creating and completing the 501(c)(3) requirement?

Jerry

Oh, thank you for that question. Generally, the process takes 30 to 60 days and depends on a couple of factors, the most important being the completeness of the application and the quality of the information provided. If the application is incomplete or some of the information is nonresponsive to some of the questions in the application, then our reviewers have to go back and obtain that information. Generally, the application then slows to a speed equal to how quickly the agency responds, the applicant agency responds and provides us with that information. So, it could run out to about 60 days or in some cases even longer.

Now, in regard to 501(c) approval, that is done through the IRS, and we at HUD are prohibited from providing tax advice. Really 501(c) approval is the realm of tax exemption, so it's really difficult for us to provide that kind of advice. But the good news is the IRS at its tax-exempt website provides everything you need in the form of toolkits and training and information to obtain your 501(c) designation.

There are all kinds of 501(c) (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8). There are all kinds of 501(c) designations, and I think religious institutions generally fall under 501(c)(4) if I'm not mistaken. But, if you go to that website, you can obtain everything that you need at the IRS's tax-exempt website in order to achieve your goal of tax exemption.

And, Ginger, could we go back to GoToMeeting now?

**HUD-US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

**Host: Kristen Villalvazo**

**June 28, 2017/2:00 p.m. EDT**

**Page 30**

Ginger Sure. We have a couple of people who are not currently working for a HUD-approved agency and are wondering what resources are available for training so that they can get the necessary training to help with their approval?

Jerry There's a lot of training that is provided through our training partners on a fee basis because you have to be HUD-approved in order to get scholarships. You can get training from the very same organizations if you're willing to pay for it, through NeighborWorks or RCAC, NCRC or La Raza.

There are other organizations out there that are identified on our listserv, and we generally send out a listserv every Monday with a long list of training resources. Some of them are free and some of them have fees, but that is a great way to start and find all of the different training options that are available.

And, also, just remember that all of the training provided by HUD is always free and is always archived so you can go back and look at it again. We also have, on our website, toolkits on a wide variety of subjects to help you get ready to operate a housing counseling agency and learn what all of the requirements are and how you can meet those requirements. So, our website has a lot of that information as well, and that is also totally free.

Next question, please.

Ginger Okay. I'm just scrolling through. How many times can you take the exam?

Jerry You can take the exam as many times as you have \$60 to take the exam, but again, use that practice exam so you can save your money. You could take it over and over and over again for free, and there's no need to plunk down \$60 each time you do it. But the exam itself, while you can take it as many times as you want, it's \$60 online and \$100 in a proctored live setting each time you take the test.

Ginger Hold on, I'm looking.

Jerry While you're looking, let me just check back with Grace and see if we have any other questions queued up.

Moderator Yes. We have a question from Marvin Dean. Your line is open.

- Marvin                    Okay, yes. Hi. I joined in late. I'm Marvin Dean with A. Philip Randolph out of Bakersfield.
- Jerry                     Hi, Marvin.
- Marvin                    I have a two-part question. The one part you answered somewhat. We attended some of those NeighborWorks training sessions on counseling and then you go online and take the test after you complete the class and all that. Is there much difference from what it would be if we went through the HUD training or is it necessary if you went through the training that way? That's the first question, and then I'll ask one more after that.
- Jerry                     Well, the NeighborWorks training that you've taken is largely career development training designed to improve your knowledge and your skill so that you're able to do counseling or at whatever community development or other area that you're taking the course in.
- The online HUD-certified housing counselor training is a little bit different in that it is training and a certification test that's designed to provide you with a professional certificate that is going to become a condition of doing housing counseling. So, there's a distinction between the two.
- Now, that having been said, coursework is coursework, and tests are tests. Since you're familiar with the subject matter from taking the NeighborWorks training, the HUD-certified exam will probably look familiar as well.
- Marvin                    So, you would encourage if someone going to do this [audio disruption]?
- Jerry                     Well, sure, but remember to obtain that certificate, you have to be working at a HUD-approved agency. We certainly welcome anyone who wants to do this for their information or in preparation for submitting an application to become HUD-approved. It's great if we see an application come from an agency and there's already a cadre of folks who have taken the exam and have passed it so that when the agency does become HUD-approved, they can then go into the system and activate their counselors.
- Marvin                    The other part of that question is—I don't know whether it's a conflict or not, but we do infield housing for first-time homebuyers, and in what we were doing, we noticed a lot of the buyers, the first-time buyers weren't

familiar with the product. So, we were informally just making them aware of what some of their opportunities were with informal counseling.

So, the thought was if we do formal [audio disruption] as a counselor then we could help them in [audio disruption] if the product is out there through HUD. My question would be if you're doing counseling, can you counsel people that may be buying your product but it would have to be a different product—?

Jerry Well, I would say that that would be covered in your disclosure agreement. You can't make as a condition of receiving counseling they have to use your product. So, they have to have choice, and they have to have the ability to just obtain counseling and not use any of your products if that is their choice. It could be that your product is a great product, but they should have the choice in deciding whether or not to use it.

Marvin Okay. You're available, you have your information out there so if people have additional questions offline, would you be available to—?

Jerry Absolutely. I would love to talk to anyone on this call and follow up on any of their questions.

Marvin I joined in halfway through, so I may want to follow with some additional questions later.

Jerry Sure, absolutely. Send me an email, and we can set up an appointment.

Marvin Will do it. Thank you.

Jerry Alright.

Moderator Thank you. And we do have a question from Karen Crichlow. Your line is open.

Karen Hi. Thank you. Good afternoon. I noticed on the PowerPoint that one of the services was daycare and I have two group family daycares that are struggling because of the parents not being able to afford the services that we're giving them. Now, my question is how does this work for daycares? Can I become certified? Is funding provided or is this some sort of counseling to parents? Or what is the service and program for the daycares?



Jerry Well, let me sort of clear something up, and that is that HUD does not provide funding or support for daycare specifically. But many of our housing counseling agencies that are approved as HUD-approved housing counseling agencies provide other services out there in the community, and that could include daycare. It could include services like food banks and things like that, but those are not core housing counseling program services. There are no questions relating to daycare on the HUD certification exam, and daycare is not one of our approved modes of counseling that are provided by our housing counseling agencies and funded by HUD and things like that.

But that doesn't say that a HUD-approved housing counseling agency can't also offer a range of programs to their communities that may or may not include daycare.

Karen Thank you very much.

Jerry You're welcome, Karen. That was a very good question. Thanks for asking.

Paula Jerry, we have a question. A participant asked should they wait for their church to be certified before taking the counselor test? And if the church is approved, will they have to pay the \$60 or \$100 fee?

Jerry That's an excellent question because there are two ways to look at it. Until August 1, 2020, the agency can or the church can seek HUD approval and become approved and identify the counselors working at that agency and then they could take the test.

Another way to look at it is take the test now so that you have already included in your application the list of HUD-certified counselors so that the day you receive your approval letter you can go into the system, activate those counselors and everyone has their certificate and you're ready to go.

After August 1, 2020, becoming HUD-approved will require HUD-certified housing counselors be already onboard. So, after August 1, 2020, we would recommend that counselors go in, take the certification exam so that evidence could be provided in the application that the counselors are ready to go and that the agency can access the system to verify those counselors have taken the exam, click the box, activate them and print out their certificates right there.

So, you're sort of in like a grey area until August 1, 2020. I certainly recommend that you get this out of the way sooner rather than later and send folks to take the exam if you're contemplating becoming HUD-approved.

Now, the \$60 cannot be waived, \$60 or \$100. It has to be paid in order to cover the cost of operating the certification program. All of the funds are used to defer the costs, so that \$60 will have to be paid in any case, by either HUD-approved agencies or not. I hope that answered your question, Karen.

Ginger Okay. Jerry, I would suggest we take just one more question.

Jerry Alright.

Ginger I don't know whether Grace has one on the line.

Moderator There are no further questions over the phone.

Jerry Ginger, why don't you take one more out of GoToMeeting, and then we'll end the call.

Ginger A couple of them were asking if we had resources or guidance on how they partner with other agencies?

Jerry That is a really interesting question, and you could find information in our toolkits on how to establish partnerships with other agencies. We can also give you some guidance directly on that, so if you were to email [housing.counseling@HUD.gov](mailto:housing.counseling@HUD.gov) and identify your situation and where you are, and what you're looking to do, we could help you navigate that as well. We want to make sure that you're able to continue providing good service to your community and help you find some resources that will enable you to do that.

With that, I think that will be our last question. I want to thank the good folks at our faith-based office at HUD, Paula Lincoln, especially for giving us the opportunity to present this information to you today. If you have follow-up questions that come to mind, you can always email me, and my information is there on the slide or you could send that to [housing.counseling@HUD.gov](mailto:housing.counseling@HUD.gov) and you will get a response within 24 to 48 hours.

Please go on to our website and look around and look at all of the information that's available to you should you want to become HUD-approved.

With that, I just want to thank everyone, and Paula, do you have any closing remarks?

Paula                   Actually, I'd like to thank Jerry and Virginia for all of your assistance today. It's always a pleasure to collaborate with your office to provide outreach and resource information to our faith and community-based stakeholders, so thank you again for joining the webinar.

Jerry                    Alright. Thank you very much, and with that, we will close out today's session. It will be available in an archive version on HUD's website within seven to ten days so you can go back and review the material there. Thank you, everybody, for coming today.

Ginger, you can close out the webinar.

Ginger                 Alright, and you as well, Grace.

Moderator            Ladies and gentlemen, that does conclude your conference for today. Thank you for your participation and for using AT&T Executive TeleConference Service. You may now disconnect.