Final Transcript

SPEAKERS

Virginia Holman
George Grotheer

PRESENTATION

Moderator	Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for standing by. Welcome to the Updates to HCS conference call. At this time, all lines are in a listen-only mode. [Operator instructions]. As a reminder, today's conference is being recorded.
	I'd now like to turn the conference over to your first speaker, Virginia Holman. Please go ahead.

Virginia   Thank you very much, and welcome, everybody, to today's webinar where we're going to update you on changes and improvements to HCS. Before I turn you over to our main speaker, I would like to go over some logistics.

As the operator said, the audio is being recorded. We will be posting a playback number for the audio, the PowerPoint, and a transcript in the archives on HUD Exchange, and that usually takes about seven to ten days, although AT&T has told us because of the coronavirus situation, they're taking longer to do many of their tasks, so we'll get it up as soon as we can.

The Training Digest on HUD Exchange will be updated when the webinar is posted. I did send out handouts this morning to everyone who had registered. They're also available in the panel on the right hand side under Handouts. You just need to click on it, and it will download.

Because of the number of people that we have, we will not be taking live questions today, but we do have a number of other ways that you can ask your questions because they really are important to us. Again, the panel on the right hand side of your screen has a box labeled Questions. If you

just enter it where it says Enter a Question, we'll be monitoring those questions, and I'll give them to George as they become appropriate.

Also, after the webinar is over, and at any time in the future, you can send an email to housing.counseling@hud.gov, and just put the webinar topic in the topic line so that we can get you to the right person.

If you have logged on to the webinar, you will receive a certificate of training from GoToWebinar usually within about 48 hours. You need to print that and save it for your records. We will have no record of those certificates.

Also, after this webinar is posted in the archives and all our other webinars, you'll be able to go to HUD Exchange into the archives, select the webinar you want to listen to, and you will be able to select a button that says Get Credit, and your HUD Exchange account transcripts will be saved that way.

The Training Digest is something that we would hope you would look at regularly on HUD Exchange. It gives you all the training that we have scheduled in the upcoming future. Just to let you know that at this point

most of the in-person training has been cancelled because of COVID-19.

We're keeping everybody up to date on that, but watch the Digest for

what's coming available.

Again, how to find us, hudexchange.info is our main HUD Exchange

page, so if you have not already bookmarked that, go ahead, and do that,

and then as I said, housing.counseling@hud.gov for any questions or

comments.

At this point, let me turn it over to George Grotheer who is our main

speaker. It's all yours, George.

George   Thank you, Virginia, and welcome, everyone. I work inside the Office of

Housing Counseling, the project manager for the housing counseling

system.

This presentation is intended for both HUD and agency personnel. I will

come across some slides that are intended strictly for the HUD user, but

it's important for the agency personnel to be familiar with how this

information is gathered and how it's presented so that when you're

reviewing your profiles, you have a better understanding of the

information presented.

So, when I go through these particular slides, just be aware of that. You

may not have responsibility to understand the functionality, but it's good

to know how that information is posted.

We're pretty excited about this release because it's now been two weeks

since it was in production on the 10th of March when we released it, and

I'm assuming that all, if not most of you, probably have already seen the

difference. Because there's a different look to it, my concern was some of

you may be a little concerned at what's different, what's new, what's

going on.

I just want to reassure you that the functionality is still the same. You still

have the ability to access HCS and manually input your data. We prefer,

and it's required that you do download your data to the profile using your

client management system, CMS, of your choice, but there are some

changes, and because it looks a little bit different, I thought let's just go

through it and give a presentation so you have a better understanding and

feel of how things are.

Why did we do this? Why did we make this particular change? We've been working to put in new enhancements over the years, so we got to the point where the coding behind the profile page got a little bit messy and complicated. We decided to clean it up, remove it, and bring in a new code, update it. As a benefit, it has a cleaner look, we grouped them a little bit better, we enhanced it, and also, too, you probably have been navigating through it a little easier, and I hope you find that this is beneficial.

The enhancements I will particularly talk about are the eight bullets on top, and I'll go over each one of those. They'll be presented in your profile tabs, all of your profile tabs except for the last one, the Client/Counselor tab.

First, as you go to a new profile, new profiles begin at the beginning when we create a new agency. Now, this is the HUD-only feature, but agencies need to know when you present to us your information to come onboard, this is where we collect it. We still pull it down from the same site that's on there. This is our menu that the HUD user has, and from there we have a new look from the intake [indiscernible] versus the old.

What we tried to do is clean that up a little bit, and we tried to make it a little bit more efficient. You can see from this, if you're an agency user, the information that's required when you come onboard as a new agency.

We're going to go over a few of these changes on this page, and we'll be discussing how to input their parent organization or affiliation, [indiscernible] temporary affiliation, put a checkmark. Validating emails and addresses, and when we put it in the previous fiscal year removing the public display option.

First, when we go into the profile, we put in the parent organization. Then, we click on this search function, the magnifying glass. This allows the system to take that ID, compare it to our database of the appropriate parent type and parent name, as you can see on the slide. When that comes up, it validates it, and we're good.

The next thing we did was did remove the temporary affiliate. Many of you who are agency users, you probably noticed this little temporary affiliate checkmark there. In all honesty, it was not used properly, if used at all, and it was a static data element. There was no logic beyond it, so

we decided to remove it. We know by the agency types how that

relationship with the parent is by the agency type: locals or temporary,

branches and affiliates, or subgrantees or permanent assignments to

agencies. So, we don't need to have this image either. I removed it.

Next we put an email. Communication with the agencies is of the utmost

importance. We do that in a variety of things, like we advertised this

presentation to everyone. We send out grant information and grant

confirmations. When we do quarterly reports, now they have two

correspondences. Anything, we rely on the emails, so we have to make

sure it's accurate and we have a validation button. When we press on it,

the system gives us feedback whether it's good or not good.

Now, when we're checking for the emails, we don't really check and ping

to it to see if it actually comes back as a valid email. We'd like to. We're

not that sophisticated. We check in two senses. It is a correct format? Is

it a correct domain?

So, if the email does go out and comes back with an error, and your POC

contacts you somehow maybe by phone saying, "Hey, why is this not

correct, you'll understand that maybe the front end of the address may

have not been typed out correctly.

For HUD users if it comes back as error, also too, you may want to check

if this is still a valid email because personnel do move from agency to

agency.

In posting the addresses, we recognize there are needs for two types of

addresses. One is the physical address, where the building is actually

located, the office. The other may be a mailing address. If it's a PO Box,

that's where that information goes. No PO Box information should be in

physical address, only the actual address. To make it simple if it's the

same, both the physical and mailing addresses are the same, we have a

feature to allow you to click it, and it transposes that information over

cleanly. This avoids retyping errors and saves time.

The next thing we have is that when you're looking at these addresses, and

this is also for the agencies to make sure even when you're in your profile

we like to standardize that address one, the first line is the street address.

Sometimes we have people putting their suites in there, the building name

in there, and as we do our validation on the address, sometimes we get an error because the system looks at that line first.

The second line can be used for that room or suite number, and third can be the building name, and so forth and so on. So, you can see how it's built. That's why we have those available positions to allow you to adequately describe your address.

Next is the prior year. Sometimes, by the time we're notified to post a new agency, let's say it's October when we get notification, the reality is that the agency came into existence in the previous fiscal year, August, September.

In order for us to make sure we can post this correctly, because all our agency profiles are fiscal year-based, just like the 9902; 9902s are formatted to fit the fiscal year, and so are the profiles, so that they would be a one-on-one match. If this agency existed before in a previous fiscal year, we have to tell the system duplicate this and post it in that table, and that's what this feature gives us.

Before we had [indiscernible] buttons we had the same capabilities, but

because of the new programming code, we now have this selection to

make, so yes or no if you want to post it in a previous fiscal year.

Finally, on this feature is that I removed the old public display option that

you see on your normal profiles, the reason being is as we create a new

agency, it's premature to see if we want to have them posted for the public

to see both on our website and our phone system because most of the time,

when we're creating a new agency, we don't have all the information

necessary. We still have some work to do, so why have this feature there

when don't have all the information to validate it going out to those other

systems?

Now, what does the profile look like? Here it is. For most of you who

have been in the system, both agency and HUD personnel, it's the same

information. Cleaned it up a little bit more. Hopefully it's very easy to

navigate and to find things.

What I'm going to do is first in the tabs, nothing has changed. We still

have our six profile tabs, and they're at the top of the page, just like we

had before, so navigating there should be no change. Find the topic that

you're looking for to work with to make your selection.

The changes that were presented in this release are this five areas for this

particular page, and I'll go over each one with you. The first is, as I

mentioned, every profile is based on a fiscal year. When a profile is built

and modified and changed, the change to that fiscal year, if you go to a

previous fiscal year, it may not have that same information, but looking at

what's in that fiscal year. As we close out that fiscal year, we save it, and

we move onto another fiscal year profile.

You have to know which profile you're looking at to keep things relevant.

Given that, we've given a feature to allow you to navigate quickly to a

previous fiscal year if you need to find some previous information or if

you want to do some comparisons to validate some information you're

looking at.

Before you would have to log out, click out of it, build your new search,

bring up that new profile of a previous fiscal year, find what you're

looking for, go back in. You know, very clunky, very time consuming.

This is a new feature, and we're really glad that we're able to present that to the users.

Likewise, on this page, you'll have a sub-agency button. We had it before, but it was a little archaic, and I don't know if anybody was really using it. Early on, we allowed the agencies to construct their organization by removing and adding sub-agencies. That got a little bit out of control. We had a lot of questions how to do it, the functionality, and so forth, so we moved that over to the HUD person that they had to do this. Again, nobody really knew how to use this. It was the old website method of doing it.

Now, instead we decided let's present what everyone is used to looking at. In the advanced agency search, when we're looking for the sub-agency, here it is. You click on this button, and the same thing that we're used to looking at is presented, so it complements what we already have, and hopefully that makes it easier for everybody to see what they're looking at and understand how to use it.

One of the features that we had was certified counselors was marked in that little red box. That was on the bottom of the page where all the other

checkmarks were made as far as complete information. Naturally, it was

in a position to be under the counselor/client box segment, and I think

that's a good place for it.

This is very important, especially with the 1 August deadline that's

coming up. Every agency must have a certified counselor. We do not

have the ability to know who that counselor is nor how many counselors

there are. It's strange, yes, even as a government agency.

We don't have all the answers available for us, but we can tell though if an

agency has one or more, and if you do satisfy that requirement, a green

check would be presented there. That helps the POC to understand which

among their portfolios of agencies have satisfied this requirement or who

has not.

So, I ask all of you, if you don't see that green mark there, and you have a

certified counselor, you need to talk to your POC immediately to make

sure we get that straightened out.

The next feature I wanted to show is for HUD users only. This is to input

comments into the profile. What we have here is the ability to make

personal comments about the agency, and this is only for a HUD person only.

Before we would have these comments based upon the fiscal year. This fiscal year, however, if we wanted to see previous comments, it was lost. We would have to go back to the other years to see what those comments were, and then, of course, we wouldn't see it all.

What we did now was archive them all under, so every profile you'll see all the comments in there, and that's for the HUD user so that they can keep track of personal notes that they want of things that they want to talk or discuss with their agencies and so forth.

Likewise, in order to do this, the features, the mechanics of it is similar. You add in new, if you want, and then an intake screen will come in. You post your subject and your comments, and you hit the save button.

After you do that, that's all on the summary page. Virginia, do we have any questions on this first summary page, the new agency?

Virginia   No. I think everybody understands you. Thank you.

George   Okay, great. Let me now take us to the next tab in the agency profile, and

that's the agency information. This tab allows us to look at basic core

information about the agency, but there's two new features on here that

will be relevant to all the other tabs, and that's the validation feature and

the save feature at the bottom.

As you know, all the agency users are required to check their profile to

make sure that the information is current and accurate and, at a minimum,

90 days validate it. Why 90 days? Well, we figured you have to go into

the system quarterly to submit your 9902 report and check on it. So, since

you're doing that, you might as well validate all the other information in

your profile.

So, you click on that, and as soon as you click on it, you immediately get a

tag to say when it was done, and it automatically calculates the next 90

days for you to do it. You can go in there every day and validate it every

day. If you're making changes, that's what we prefer. Whenever you

look, and it's good, give yourself credit for it.

Now, number two, the save feature, each page now is separate. It has its own intake template. Before, when you made a change and you saved it, it took you out of the profile. Then, you had to go back in. You said well, there's more work I have to do. Now, when you save it, it saves that page.

Should you, by accident, make changes and navigate out of it to another tab, the system will then pull up a warning box to say, hey, did you really want to navigate out of here?

The designation feature was up top. I just want to bring it to point, we did bring it down to clean that up, and so if you're looking for that information, it's there, but it's more in the middle of the page.

So, in the validation that I described, you get this button, and again, every time that you're looking at it, you get a check for this information. You get an immediate response for that, but for the save button, again, you hit it and you get a confirmation for that save. You click on it, and then you can continue working in the profile.

Now, if you move, navigate out of this, and you did not hit the save button, this is the pop-up that will come up, and the system will ask you

hey, did you want to save this, or did you intend to move out of it? If you

do move out of it, you lose what you put in there. So, it's a friendly

reminder to make sure you can capture any changes that you want to

make.

As I mentioned, you can see the comparison with the agency designation,

the old and the new. It's the same. We just moved it down a little bit. So,

if you're used to looking for it up top and you have difficulty finding it,

it's there. You just have to look towards the middle.

Any questions on the agency information before I move onto the

personnel page? Okay, I'll go ahead and continue.

Again, one and two is the same. The validation is saved, so I won't go

over that, but we do want to discuss some of the validation and the emails,

which I discussed in the new agency as somewhat similar.

Whenever we write in the agency email, again you have to take these

screens as a placeholder when you put in your information. So, when you

type in your information, it's sitting there in a static mode until you hit the

validation so it takes action to actually download it to a database. When

you do, we then compare it to make sure that the basics, the formatting the

domain is correct. Once you get a confirmation, you say okay, and you

can move on.

So, you can see each one here your confirmation was validated. Now, I'm

going to move right now to the contact page with the address and all

before I ask if there are any questions on that because the personnel one

was very simple about the emails.

On here, one and two is again the same, validation and save. You have to

do that. The validation button you see is on every tab. You don't have to

validate every tab. You have to do it just once for your profile, but we

present it there for your convenience. We don't know where you're going

to be working, and if it's not there where you can see, you'll forget about

it.

So, we have that available on all your tabs so that at your convenience,

you can go ahead and say here it is, I did some work here, and I want to

validate it.

Now, for the mailing address, just as I explained in the new agency, it's the same thing. If you want to post that physical address and the mailing address, and it's the same information, you just mark that box. It will transpose that over. What we want to do, again, is make sure if it's a PO Box information, then that goes in the mailing address only. Do not put PO Box information in the physical address.

Once again, we ask that the first line of the address is the street address. Below it, the second line should be the suite or room number. Below that, the third and fourth can be anything else to identify the building, building name or whatever.

What we have, too, is on number four, we can then validate the address. Having that format, we then go to HUD's geocoding to make sure that the address is legitimate and accurate. Down in number five, again it's the email check to make sure it's correct. Here it is in more detail. You simply press the mailing address, and it transposes it over.

Then we have to verify address. Again, we make sure that it's validated, and we have a confirmation to come up to say the address is correct, and we say okay, we're satisfied.

Are there any questions on that—?

Virginia   George, we have a couple of questions. One is if they have to save each

                tab separately.

George   No. If they make any changes in a particular page, yes. So, each save

                button is for that page so that the system won't knock them out as you're

                saving it because the profile before was an extension of one intake form.

                We've now broken it down to these tabs. So, yes, you do have to save

                each page if you make a correction on that page.

Virginia   Okay, then there are a couple of questions about the housing counselor

                data. Can they clean it up? Can they remove counsellors? What can they

                do to make that information correct?

George   I'll talk about that now since it was a question, but that's not part of the

                presentation. The counselor/client feature was never really built out, nor

                were we giving any resources to do it justice. What we did was we just

                wanted to see that the data coming across from the client management

                system was indeed being downloaded properly into our system, so that just

gave us a screen of that. It was not a management feature where we could add, delete, or whatever in it.

It's unfortunate. I am working on trying to at least give it a delete button to clean up some of the data, some of the counseling information out of it. So, right now, all you need to make sure is when you download your counselor data, make sure that their identifier is included with it, otherwise your 9902 in your client files cannot be transmitted. We need to have the counselor data first.

As a reminder, if you look at the HCS guidance, the CMS guidance, we state there's four data sets you all have to transmit to us, and they have to be done in sequence. First, we need a profile. Then, we need the counselor data. After those are submitted, then you can submit periodically your 99 and the client data to us, but you must have the profile data first loaded followed by the counselor data.

Next question.

Virginia   That's all.

George   Okay, thank you. So, let me go ahead and move onto now—this page had

the most changes to it, and it has to do the HUD affiliation page where the

HUD users have ownership of this. The information on this is extremely

important for the agency users. This tells them the legitimacy in their

program, the agency services what they're providing, their status in our

program, who their HUD contact is, and so forth.

So, as I go through this, even though I'm going through the mechanics for

the HUD user to navigate, the information in here is very important for the

agencies to understand how it's created and how it's presented. So, let me

go ahead and show you that.

First of all, there's two sections on this. We have the upper and lower.

The upper section is when you put in your data, it's sitting in an intake

format, and you have to hit that save button to capture that information

that you put into it. So, as you check off your services, or you make your

POC section, or you type in the correct agency name, or you put in the

parent organization, anything in that save and above section, whatever you

do, you have to hit that save button for it to take.

In the bottom section it's an action section where it's waiting for further action for you. You can see those gray bars. They're asking what you want to do here. Do you want to edit it? Do you want to see something else? You have to navigate a little bit more before you can save the data.

So, there's a few more steps in the lower section. That's why we rearranged this page so that we can capture all the save information in one spot, all the pop-up actions in the lower spot.

The first one, of course I mentioned before, was that parent organization. You type in the parent ID, you hit the search feature, the magnifying glass, and it will come back if it's good with the appropriate type and parent name. If it comes in wrong because we mistyped the numbers, it will tell you in red, as the bottom sample shows you. So, be careful how you type it in, but if you make an error, no problem. The system will tell you.

Likewise, the main portion that I want to go into is the review section. This was the reason for us to change this whole profile. We wanted to enhance the new review section to bring in new data elements that we are now utilizing for the performance review of agencies.

As we attempted to make these changes, we found that the back end

coding behind the profiles was just too messy, and the programmers, bless

their hearts, decided to take on and tackle regenerating the profile. That's

why we have the new profile look, and I really appreciate their work on

that, but it was all because of this.

So, what are we looking at the in the review? There's a few new data

performance required fields. So, you complete it, review type, results, risk

level, and the estimated cost. That estimated cost is for us, and the view of

that will only be for us to help us budget our reviews.

As an agency user, when you're looking at that, you won't see that

information, but you'll see everything else. You have to know the

condition of your agency from our perspective, so you should understand

this particular view.

When we want to go ahead and schedule review, we have a completed

review already posted there. This was the last review that was performed,

conducted on this agency. We know when it was done, who did it, and

what the results were of it.

Now, some information we may not have because this is new information, and that's represented by NA, so as we transfer the data over to this new model, we're a little bit outdated, so we don't have all the information available, but as we move forward from this day forward, we will start filling out all that information.

When we're ready to go ahead and conduct a review, and this example was February of 2019, we feel like there's a need to go ahead and conduct another review, we press the select button. As you can see, now the new intake field box comes up. We complete the box of [indiscernible], and we look at these things.

We look at the review schedule. The next one: What date do we plan on conducting this? Who will be doing the review? Nine out of ten times it will be a POC, but sometimes the POC may not have the ability to do it. They may ask for assistance.

What type of a review is it? You know there are two types we perform. Most of them should be onsite, but we also have a desk review. That is we do it telephonically or through emails to make sure everything looks good.

As I mentioned before, we've now put in the estimated cost so we can budget better this requirement.

Once we put in all the information into our slides for the next review, here we plan on doing this on May 18, 2020, and George is going to go ahead onsite, conduct a review, and it's going to cost him a little over $350 to do this. We hit the apply button. That's the save button to capture this information.

Now, you see this information gets posted above the completed review. As we saw before, February 2019 was the old review. Now we have in a placeholder the new upcoming review, and when this is posted, what is below in the slide here? Everybody will get a tickler email message from the system saying to both the agency and for the POC, hey there's a review coming up. Put this on your calendar; make sure you're ready.

So, for agency users, if you get this email coming in, and you don't know anything about it, go into your HCS, look it, and you should see the upcoming review information as well in there. If you have any questions, contact your POC to get further guidance, and see how you can better prepare for this review.

Next, if you wanted to make any kind of changes in here, let's say the date slipped, or you have to accelerate it, or George is not going to go out there, but John is, if you have to make any changes, the system does allow you to make edits. Hit the edit button, make the changes, and then you hit apply. You can do that until the actual upcoming review is completed, and then we sort of lock that down.

To complete a review, let's say today is May 19th. We've finished the onsite review, and I've come back to my office. I now want to go ahead and complete the review. I have a spot for that. I press that, and I get that function up.

There's some requirements for the HUD users and what they have to do, and these checkmarks remind us that these actions must be completed before we can actually close this out. So, as an agency user, if you get correspondence from your POC saying I need your response letter, I need to make sure that your 9910, did you get that also, I'm posting that on my SharePoint, you can see all the actions required from them that they have to give to you.

So, you can see why they're asking you. These are requirements.

Likewise, these checkmarks all have to be done. You cannot just do one

and two and go out of it, and then come back and do three and four. It's

all or nothing because we k now from our experience that if you make one

or two checkmarks, and you go out, out of sight, out of mind, and it will

never get done.

So, we figured, let's make sure if you're ready to complete this action, sit

down, give confirmation that all these actions have been completed, and

then you can actually close out that review.

Likewise, that date will be posted. We know when it was conducted, but

the actual date when you hit this box, the system will default to today's

date. Let's say today's that 25th of May. It will get posted there.

Likewise, it also will download from when you had scheduled indicating

that it was an onsite review. George Smith was going to do it. Again, that

was posted down to show you that it's there as well.

The last two are new data elements, and this has to be manually inputted.

So, what were the results? What happened? Was there findings or no

findings? Also, too, in a risk level, what risk are we going to give this? We have tier ones to tier fours to indicate the level of confidence that we have in the agency.

Tier one doesn't require another review for three years. We all want to get that because I'm sure you don't want to have reviews done every year or so. Tier three and four, there may be some concerns, and the points that you received on your 9910 evaluation may warrant us to come out again within a year to recheck on your agency.

When this is all done, you hit the apply button. That's the save button again to intake this data. Now, it drops down into completed review. You see it where it was done, completed 5/25, conducted on 5/18. So, this now becomes the completed view, and there's no scheduled review up there now because we don't have to schedule one until May of 2023. When we get close to it, again, we'll repeat the process of hitting the schedule button, and going down.

That risk level, remember that risk level I gave you, that risk level is one. That's a three-year approval. So, look on top where it says next review deadline. It then calculates it does not need a review for three years.

So, it was completed on May 25, 2020, so the next deadline is May 25, 2023. That gives us all a period of time in which we know we have to perform the next review prior to that deadline. This is a good, good feature for us to keep track and hopefully keep up with doing the reviews in a timely manner.

Of course, if we're in a completed review, and something needs to be changed because the information was inaccurate, for whatever reason, the HUD user can go in and edit it and make whatever changes to make sure we capture correctly the information because, as you an see, there's some logic built behind some of those points, and we want to make sure it's functioning correctly.

For example, if he decides that the tier was not correctly—the risk level was not appropriately marked, you can go back in and adjust it and save it, and everything else will get adjusted as well.

If you want to see what your history of reviews is, just see the running track. Again, what we've done, we archived them all in a profile so you don't have to go to previous profiles to see what was done beforehand.

You can look in this, and it will show all those reviews that were done. In this example, you can see May 25, 2020. You can see the last one at 2019 and even the one before that 2016. So, you have the ability to look at these to see the history of all the reviews conducted for this agency.

When you go into the advanced agency search, you have the ability now to go ahead and utilize these new data points in creating your customized list when you're researching in the advanced agency search. You have your results, your risk level, and the review types. That wasn't there before.

I want to point out in the results section, we had the old one of being in compliance, conditional compliance, or noncompliance. We used those three categories, but now the review team has decided to go ahead and confine it to just two: findings or no findings.

We left them there though for HUD users as you're building out your list because any reviews done in the past will have the old three choices, so we left that there in the search criteria so if you want to pull anything from the past, you can still pull that data point and bring it over. If you want something going forward, you have to use the lower data selections.

Likewise, what's available is the risk level. You have those four data points in there to do your review, and then the types of reviews is also present, desk and onsite, to customize your list that you're trying to create.

Likewise, when you go and create your spreadsheet from your results, the third fixed spreadsheet, there's a review spreadsheet, all those new data elements for the review is now presented in a spreadsheet so when you pull up your spreadsheet of those agencies, you'll have all these new data elements in there so you can go ahead and customize and analyze your report according to your needs.

Virginia   George, we have one question.

George   This is a good time. I wanted to ask for that. Go ahead. What's the question?

Virginia   It's about what you're going over now. Is it only editable by HUD staff? So, the agency can't make changes. Is that correct?

George   That is correct. When you want to go back, and you have this information in here, you see on the top it says HUD User Only on the slides, you'll

have that reference, and I'll verbally also guide you by saying this is a

HUD feature only.

Everything in the tab, and I'm going to move just quickly to the—

apologize for this. I'm almost there—into the HUD Affiliation tab. This

slide is controlled by the POC, but the agency has to be familiar with the

information. If they're uncomfortable, or if they dispute what is being

presented, this is what they should then talk to their POC about to make

sure they clarification.

Because we need tight control over this because we don't want agencies to

put their own review results down, for obvious reasons, or put down their

counseling services that are not what their work plan has stated, or you

know select their own agency type, we control those things, so that's why

it's HUD controlled only. The information is displayed that the agency

can see as well.

Are there any other questions? Okay. So, we've completed about the

reviews where it's presented. We have this on a spreadsheet.

The next portion we have is the agency status. Now, there are going to be a little bit of changes on the process of the status, but for what the agency needs to be looking at though is still going to be what's presented on these slides, and that is—

I'm getting some feedback. So, again, I'd ask you to be on mute, please. Okay, I apologize for interference. Virginia, can you make sure maybe you should be on mute? Hello, who's on the call please? Please mute your phone.

Moderator   This is Ryan with AT&T. I muted Virginia's phone. She must have accidently had it off mute.

George   Thank you for assisting. I appreciate it.

Okay, on the status, we still have key elements that you have to be aware of if you're an agency user. Again, the HUD user determines this, and they do this based on the results from your review what status you will be in.

You have your status, the reason for the status, the as-of date and end date, and the date when it was published, and who published this status. You can see all this information in there for your use.

If you're entering a new status, you have a key to do that to bring up an action box to input the data. You do so in this screen here. You place your status, the as-of date, the reasons, and the comments. We want to comments to be specific to benefit us to do analysis of the efficiency of the program.

Of course, once that's all in there, one of the reasons we thought we'd clean that up, too, to categorize the reasons into certain groups so that we can do more of a filtering and analysis of what's going on in our program.

Of course, when an agency is being approved, the two choices are initial and recertified. If they're new, it's initial; if they've been in our program, and they're re-approving, that's just recertifying. That's all the reasons we need to give.

Likewise, if an agency is not a 9900-approved agency such as a local intermediary, multiple state organization, or a state housing finance

agency, they're a branch affiliate or a subgrantee, you either have initial or renewed because you're participating in our program. You're in our program because you're affiliated with an approved parent agency, and because of their qualifications, you're in our program as well so long as you maintain your qualifications.

In conditional status, the conditional status is still an active status. It's saying that if there's anything that jeopardized how you are in our program, you can still get grants, you still get published on all our advertisements sites, and so forth. It's just that it's a flag to tell us further action is required.

We group these down into these seven categories that we feel that fits the situation mostly. Primarily, if you have a deficiency in your performance review, and we're waiting for you to comply with that, we put you in conditional status, and this is a reminder for the POC and also, too, hopefully a reminder to you , the agency users, to say hey, there's still some work to be done. Please complete it. When that's completed, you'll get back into you recertified or renewed status of approval or participating.

We have a few others. If there's a client complaint that we're following

up on. An agency internal, if the parent agency has found something

internally that went wrong, they can let us know so we can track that as

well until they resolve it.

Not compliant with the reporting. If you're not submitting your 9902s,

you're delinquent or tardy on that repeatedly, the POC may put you in a

conditional status so that they can have a come to Jesus moment with you

or something to make sure you get in line.

When you're not submitting your quarterly reports or not submitting your

data using the client management system, whatever it is, we can have this

as a flag to make sure these things are done.

If your status expires, but we didn't conduct a review, and we're trying to

play catchup, we may put you on a conditional status to say pending a PR,

or a performance review, so that when it's completed and everything is

done, then we can put you back to your approval or participating status.

Sometimes you may have insufficient certified counselors. It may be right

now between now and 1 August, if you don't have everybody, your POC

may put you in this conditional status so he can track with you getting that

counselor certified.

Of course, when you're a new agency, you don't have all the information,

we put you as a default into conditional. A new agency default means we

have to clean up some more information. So, hopefully, that's all obvious

those particular conditions, the reasons.

For inactive status, we have this—what we do is for inactive status, your

office has closed. It's a temporary status until we can either open you

back up, or we can go ahead and move to termination.

If you're going to be terminated, and I'll be honest with you, this

information on the board is unfortunately backwards, and we're cleaning

this up in the next release. We'll have this—this says waiting termination,

lack of funding. All that is waiting reactivation, and all those hyphens are

for that.

Waiting termination is just you're waiting for termination, but we don't

want to close you out now. The reason is if you posted a 9902, we don't

want to lose that by terminating you because once you're terminated, the

parent connection is gone, and also you're gone, too, with your 9902.

Likewise, if you have some grant funding, and you used that funding, we

don't want to terminate you too prematurely because then the sub-

allocation balance sheet would have a loss of money that they can't

account for. We want to keep you on the roll so they can say oh yes, that

amount of dollars went to this agency who will be terminated, but they did

use some of the money in the first, second quarter, and we have to account

for it.

By putting you in inactive status, it just puts you in a placeholder until we

get to generally 1 October, the new fiscal year where we can cut you

loose. So, if you're in inactive status, you may still get some

correspondence from us, this will help us to close you out. That's the

reason for it.

The other status is sometimes you have to temporarily close your office.

You don't have the certified counselors, maybe you have lack of funding,

or no counselors, they left and you're trying to hire somebody. Natural

disaster, of course, damage to your building, and so forth. We can put

your in a temporary status without terminating you because one you're

terminated, you come back, and it goes through a new approval process.

We don't want to do that.

We put you in a temporary status of being inactive. You're stagnant in

our database. It doesn't go out to the public, and when you resolve these

setbacks, we can then put you back into approval or participating status.

Once you are terminated, we put these categories down because we try to

group them into appropriate categories to help us to analyze the reasons

for agencies leaving our program. These are the ones that we feel are the

most appropriate.

Therefore, when you are terminated, we want to get that information. The

POCs have been really driven hard to put an appropriate reason down, but

also inside the comment section give us a little bit more detail so that we

have an understanding of why you left. If it was something that was a

delinquency on our part, and we can improve upon, perhaps we can learn

this lesson and make some changes.

Once the information is there, of course, you hit the apply button because, again, once these intake boxes are up, they're static and just placeholders for data until you hit the save or apply button that locks it in the database and throws it out. You can see that information that was in the intake form is now presented in the status box.

Agency users, you can't change your status, but you can see your status, and this is what you'll see. In this example, you're seeing yourself in a conditional status, and what's the reason? Failure to comply with reporting. Now you know why you're in a conditional status.

You can talk with your POC and get that resolved. You can see how long this status is going to be for, who did it, and when it was posted.

If you want to see the history of the statuses, again, we now put all the statuses together so that you can see it in one glance. Before, it was fiscal year-based on the profile. Now we did away with that, and we just lumped them all together.

In this example, we see four 2020 statuses that were created, and we also have the 2019 statuses there, too. We want you to see all statuses. In this

example, there's ten entries, but we're only showing you five. If you move to number 2, you'll see the other five. So, you can see the entire history of this agency how they were in the program.

If you have to make any changes to it, you're able to go back in, make whatever changes you have to have in case there was an error, you have to make adjustments, you can do that. Hit apply, and you can save it.

Are there any questions on the status? For the HUD users, we went through this as far as their training on how to navigate through that process, but if there's any agency users that have questions from your perspective, you just have to make sure you're comfortable in seeing your status and what each point means, what the status means. You know what the reasons are, the effective dates of that status.

Okay, I'm about done. The last two features I'm going to go over—I'm sorry.

Virginia   I have a couple of questions, George, on your last one. "If the status was placed in conditional when the new version was made, and we inquired if

it was changed back to approve with no explanation, or were there some

hiccups in the transfer of the data?"

George   Okay, that status was the old type. If you notice now—let me go back to a

status page. You see the status we have in here, conditional. You see

those red asterisks? Those are required fields. You see by reasons?

That's now required. So, the POC, when they make this status, they have

to make a reason. They have to place it into a category of the reason for

that status.

So, if they don't have that now, it's the old one, and we had no data points

behind it, so that's the reason for that missing.

Virginia   Okay. If it's still not fixed, just send an email to

housing.counseling@hud.gov.

George   If it's not fixed, they can send it to their POC. Again, they should look at

their profile page, be comfortable with the information on it because

they're validating that profile, and in the HUD Affiliation tab in the status,

if they're looking at saying what the reason is. I don't see the reason

posted. The POC simply forgot to post it, they should email the POC or

call them, and say hey, I'm looking over my status. Can you give me more explanation for it by posting it there. Then, it's an easy fix. As I said, they can go in this, do an edit, make the changes, and then it will be posted in there.

Virginia   Okay. Then, you mentioned a client complaint as an issue, and somebody wants you to elaborate on what that means.

George   Well, we may get correspondence from a client to say that they were not satisfied, or maybe they have compliments for the agencies. As you know, all the agencies, when they do—they counsel their clients, they should give them a postcard or some kind of correspondence means for them to mail back to HUD about their feedback.

It's a feedback mechanism that we get, and if there's something that we feel needs addressing for the agency to improve upon the performance of their services, well then that gives us a chance to give them some real examples.

Virginia   Okay. Here's one I can answer. It says, "How many certified counselors is sufficient?" Well, as of August 1, 2020, every agency has to have at

least one certified counselor to be able to continue to provide housing

counseling, but there needs to be a sufficient number of certified

counselors to carry out your housing counseling work plan. So, that's the

bottom line. It's sort of up to what you want to do as to how many you

actually have to have.

George, I think this one is for you. It says, "The HUD Affiliation tab at

the bottom with the zip and the state affiliations have red Xs. What does

that mean?"

Georg   Yes, that's my next feature into this. I didn't get into yet. I stopped to see

if there were any questions.

Virginia   Oh, okay. I think it's back to you now.

George   Great. Thank you for those questions. The last two slides I have are to do

with zip codes and state affiliations. What we wanted to do was allow

agencies to go ahead, and according to their work plan, describe to us your

area of operations. You can do this by zip code and state.

We use the zip code mostly to help us pinpoint congressional areas where we get congressional queries to see what agencies are operating in their areas but also, too, we also feed this into the phone system, too, so we want to have this. If you want to add, you simply hit the add button. You add it, and it will be presented.

The X there allows you to remove it. Let's say I made a mistake, or I'm downsizing my operations, you can then remove that. It's a feature, I guess, we would like to have for the counselor feature in our profile, wouldn't we, but right now if you want to remove it, that's what the X is for.

Likewise, if we're going to the state, we can go ahead—remember, it always defaults to the address, zip code, and state is always defaulted, so we have some information on there.

Let's say if you're an agency on a border, and you have jurisdiction that goes over that border, you may want to illustrate that you do operate in two states or more. So, then, you go ahead and click the other state that you're associated with, and you add it, and it will be presented down here.

Likewise, there's an X next to it, so should you want to adjust your work plan, and it no longer incorporates that other state, you can remove it from there.

I think that should hopefully answer that question. We are thinking about the agency users of moving the zip code information over into the Agency Information tab so that the agencies can then fill that in at their leisure, and we're looking at a way to download a group of zip codes into it without having to click each individual zip code one by one.

We're looking at that; it may be months from now, but we are looking at doing that. So, hopefully, that will be a little bit quicker, but the only concern was the reason we put it in the HUD Affiliation tab because initially when we allowed the agency to have it, a lot of you were very—I guess what's the word—energetic about what areas you could serve, and you started putting in as many zip codes as you could.

It wasn't like playing the game of Risk where you're trying to conquer the world. We wanted you to truly put down the zip codes that were practical for your area so that when a client was researching to see what agency was in that zip code, they knew that you were there in close proximity.

So, we had it in the HUD Affiliation so that the POC can look at the work plan to make sure they match. We realize that there's a lot of adjustments that need to be made, and we want to release that back to the agencies to give you control and ownership of that so you can expand it.

The POC will still look at the work plan and match it to make sure you guys didn't get too zealous with it and expanded your area inappropriately, but that's coming down the road. It's one of the new releases that we'll have and are thinking about adding.

So, with that, where can you find this? There's multiple places you'll have this information. One was the one that Virginia had given you about the training; the duplication of what I just presented today is available to you. The other is on the housing counseling website. You should all have this bookmarked, I hope, because that's how you get logged into the housing counseling system.

In here, we have under Find a Topic, we have Improvement Releases. If you click on that, you see the bottom screenshot there that comes up, and you see all the improved releases. You can look at all of those. They're

all there available. The top one is always the most recent, and it happens

to be labeled 14.23. You'll see the same slides that I presented would be

there.

So, if you're questioning about a procedure, and you want to go back to it,

you can either go to the training site that Virginia has mentioned, or

directly to the slides that I talked from, and you can get that information,

and review it to make sure you're comfortable with these new features.

With that, Virginia, I am done. Would you like to see if there's any

closing questions? I'm going to change the presentation back to you, too.

Virginia   Okay. I think—if anybody else has some questions, you can still type

them in. Again, if you have them tomorrow morning or something, send

them to housing.counseling@hud.gov, and we'll make sure they're taken

care of. You can also, of course, as George said, always contact your POC

to work through any issues with them.

Just as a reminder, we will be posting all of this probably next week some

time, so you'll have the transcript which will also help you navigate

through that.

Again, thank you for attending, and have a safe weekend. Thank you very much. Operator, if you'd finish the call.

Moderator   Ladies and gentlemen, that does conclude today's conference. Thank you for your participation. You may now disconnect.

Virginia   Thank you.