



Final Transcript

HUD-US DEPT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT: Eviction Prevention Partnerships: Housing Counseling Agencies and Homeless Service Programs - External

January 21, 2021/1:00 p.m. CST

SPEAKERS

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David Berenbaum
Sarah Greenberg
Marcy Thompson
Jeff Biehl
Rhonda Gaines
Rob Weber

PRESENTATION

Moderator Welcome to the Eviction Prevention Partnerships: Housing Counseling Agencies and Homeless Service Programs. 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'd now like to turn the conversation over to Virginia Holman. Please go ahead.

Virginia

Thank you very much, and welcome to today's webinar in our series of Rental Housing Counseling webinars trying to prepare everyone for the rental situation that's going on. We feel it's really important for you to have as much information as we can provide.

Before we get started with the meat of the presentation, I'd like to go over some logistics. As the operator said, the audio is being recorded. The playback number along with the PowerPoint and a written transcript are going to be posted on HUD Exchange in about a week. I did send out the PowerPoint prior to the webinar. Hopefully, it's in your email at this point. At this point, we had some technical problems, so they're not in the control panel.

We do want you to ask questions in your control panel on the right hand side of your screen. There's a box that's labeled questions, and if you just type in your questions, we have staff that are monitoring those questions. You can also, after the webinar or at any time in the future, send your question to housing.counseling@hud.gov, and just put the webinar topic in the subject line so we can get it to the right person.

If you've logged into the webinar, you will receive a certificate of training from GoToWebinar, and that usually takes them about 48 hours, so you need to just print it out and save it for your records.

The materials are also going to be posted, as I said, on HUD Exchange in the webinar archives, and you can find them by date or by topic. There's also a way to get credit for watching the webinar, after obviously, it's been posted. You would just select the webinar you want and click on Get Credits for this Training. It will lead you through it. You do have to have an account with GoToWebinar to do that, but it's very easy to get.

This is our Training Digest that's on HUD Exchange. We suggest strongly that you bookmark it, and we update it on a weekly basis so you always know what training that HUD is giving and our partners are giving.

Now, I'd like to turn it over to David Berenbaum, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Housing Counseling. David.

David

Thanks so much, and greetings, everyone. Thank you for joining us for today's continuing education webinar. These are interesting times we're in, and I'm sure all of you have taken note of the priorities of our new administration, in particular their announcement that they are going to be

extending eviction and foreclosure moratoriums and related deadlines, at least for two months.

The timing of these continuing education programs couldn't be more important, and as we shared earlier, we hope that they will give you information that will help you to augment your capacity to provide services during these challenging times.

I want to thank you for all that you are currently doing, and I know what you will be doing to support consumers in your communities in the coming months.

We have some very interesting topics that we're going to be covering today: housing instability versus homelessness, how and why counseling agencies can interact and engage with a homeless service system, establish partnerships in important ways, understanding the structure of the Continuum of Care systems, and then related to that partnership opportunities to prevent eviction and reduce homelessness.

We have some tremendous panelists today who are experts in the field, and I'd like to take a moment to introduce each one of them before we start the program. As was stated earlier, they are available to respond to

your Q&As during the program, and of course, we'll follow up after as appropriate as well.

First, Sarah Greenberg is a senior community development specialist at ICF. She's based in Milwaukee but works nationally as a consultant for affordable housing and community development projects. She has more than 18 years of experience working for local, regional, and national organizations.

Marcy Thompson is a principal for homeless services at ICF. Marcy leads the homelessness and supportive housing staff at the organization supporting local communities and federal efforts to prevent and end homelessness. She was formerly senior advisor to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Needs at the US Department of Housing & Urban Development.

Jeff Biehl is an independent consultant that helps advance collaborative projects to improve social determinants of health. Jeff has served as the coordinator of the Housing Stabilization Coalition since its startup in the fall of 2019. He's also served as the coordinator of the Prevent Family

Homelessness Collaborative in the Columbus and Franklin County region of Ohio from 2017 to 2019.

He'll introduce a pertinent case study in conjunction with Rhonda Gaines who is the director of Financial Empowerment Services at the Columbus Urban League, an affiliate of the National Urban League. She leads the COVID-19 Emergency Housing Assistance Program and will cover also some of the steps they took in the case study.

Finally, question and answer will be facilitated by my colleague, Rob Weber, who is a housing program specialist at the Office of Housing Counseling where he specializes in outreach and capacity building around the CARES Act and COVID-19-related housing issues.

Again, thank you for joining us, and keep up the good work. Let me turn it over to Sarah.

Sarah

Thank you, David. We are very excited to bring you this third webinar in our series on rental housing counseling. You heard a little bit about today's agenda from David. We'll talk about why housing counseling agency and homeless service system partnerships are important, understanding the structure of homeless service systems or the Continuum of Care, how housing counseling agencies and Continuums of Care can

partner to prevent eviction and reduce the experience of homelessness.

We'll hear from our guests from Columbus. We'll have some Q&A and provide you with some additional resources.

I did want to remind you all that this is part of the series of webinars from HUD's Office of Housing Counseling. There are two more webinars coming up in the series, and those dates will be announced shortly on the HUD Training Digest. The next webinar will be on Leveraging Community Partners for Eviction Prevention, and that will be happening in February, and the final webinar will be on the Impact of Rental Housing Counseling on Preventing Eviction in March.

Throughout the presentation today we will ask for your feedback using an interactive polling software called Mentimeter. You can use Mentimeter on your smartphone or other device or through another browser window on your computer. When you see this logo that says Time for Mentimeter, that's your cue to go to Mentimeter and respond.

So, let's try it now. If you go to your smartphone or another browser window, you'll go to www.menti.com and enter the code that you see on the top of the screen. That code is 3107256.

We'll start with today's first question. We'd like to know, "Does your housing counseling agency currently partner with the homeless service system in your community?" You can answer yes, no, or I don't know. We'll give you just a minute to respond. I'm watching to see how many folks are responding in the corner of the screen. It looks like we're getting a lot of yes answers which is really exciting.

We'll give it another minute or so. We're still going strong on the yeses, so I'm really excited to see how many of you are partnering with the homeless service system.

Okay, it looks like we're close to 100 responses, and so far, we're at almost 60% of you that are partnering with the homeless service system, so that is great news, and I appreciate you all doing so wonderful with the Mentimeter software. I hope you enjoy that feature.

Let's get back to our presentation. I'd like to introduce our first presenter, Marcy Thompson. Marcy.

Marcy

Hi, good afternoon. Thank you, Sarah. Thank you to the Office of Housing Counseling for including me for this important discussion today. I also want to echo Sarah's excitement about seeing all of those yes responses for existing partnerships that are already out there.

So, I think just to add some framing, partnerships between housing counseling agencies and homeless service systems are always important but perhaps even more now as a result of the economic impact of COVID-19. In the homelessness sector, our objective is to help those have become homeless to exit back to housing as quickly as possible, and we also attempt to have support at the front door at this system to help prevent those who are on the verge of homelessness avoid it whenever possible.

What we've learned over the years, however, is that it's really difficult to predict who will actually become homeless without an intervention.

Economic inequality, housing affordability, systemic racism, and lack of access to physical and behavioral health resources are all key contributors to poverty and homelessness, but we also know that most people living in poverty and/or who are experiencing housing instability do not, in fact, ever become homeless.

So, homeless assistance resources are not designed nor are they funded to address all of these conditions, so it's really important that communities have a broad safety net which includes housing counseling agencies that can help support households that are facing instability.

Next slide, please. Alright, so when we talk about the homeless service system, what we're usually speaking about broadly is the network of

partners that are working to end homelessness as well as those agencies and organizations who offer additional support and housing and services to person that are in crisis but whose assistance is not always limited to persons who are experiencing homelessness.

HUD's Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs refers to this network as a Continuum of Care. A Continuum of Care, or COC, is a regional, local, or state planning body that coordinates housing and services for homeless families and individuals. The COC typically has a [indiscernible] organization that coordinates and plans activity across the designated geographic area or region.

The COC is designed and expected to promote community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness, make or inform funding decisions for nonprofits and other entities that really has the goal of making sure that folks are able to basically rehouse, collaborate and coordinate all homelessness efforts, and to use data to identify gaps and opportunities as well as to track progress.

Next slide, please. Ultimately the goals of the COC are to prevent homelessness whenever possible, reduce the time people are homeless if it cannot be initially prevented, create adequate pathways out of the

homelessness, and prevent households from returning to homelessness again.

The primary components of the homeless service system and the COC include homelessness prevention through outreach, emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing. COCs are encouraged to further adopt housing problem-solving approaches that engage persons either at that initial point when they first present to the system or shortly after they become homeless to identify alternative cost-effective solutions outside of the homelessness response system.

Really, an effective system is designed to both reduce the inflow by helping persons to avoid an occurrence of homelessness altogether through prevention and diversion efforts while also increasing the rate of outflow by supporting persons who are experiencing homelessness to exit fast to stable housing as quickly as possible.

To help ensure consistency and fairness, HUD instituted a requirement a number of years ago that COCs must utilize a process known as coordinated entry, which I'll talk about in a minute, to ensure fair and equal access, a standardized process for assessment, and a referral process that is based on agreed upon community-wide priorities and not on who knows who.

Housing counseling agencies can be a really valuable partner to the COC in relation to any of these components as housing counseling services are complimentary and can support efforts to both reduce inflow to keep individuals and families that are facing instability, help keep them housed as well as financially resolve issues that could arise after persons are housed with one of these resources to help increase their housing stability.

Next slide. There is a clear overlap in the populations that COCs and housing counseling agencies are serving already. Partnerships could strengthen the effectiveness of those entities.

Coordinated entry, which also can be referred to as coordinated assessment, is intended to level the playing field for all persons who are facing housing instability and homelessness. It creates an opportunity to leverage partnerships across sectors.

Here are a couple ways this might work. Diane is a single mom who's been living paycheck to paycheck barely making ends meet for quite some time. She wasn't sure of her options and hasn't yet experienced homelessness, but she has ended up at a coordinated entry access point.

Meanwhile, Kevin, a veteran with a disability who has been homeless for years, is finally seeking assistance from another access point.

The premise of coordinated entry is that regardless of where Diane or Kevin show up, they would be greeted with the same, consistent approach. This requires radical collaboration at these critical points of engagement in order to meet the very different but immediate needs of persons like Diane and Kevin.

The more partners that are involved at that initial point of access, the greater number of options that we would be able to offer everyone. Partnerships can help also ensure a trauma-informed response to reduce the number of steps that people need to go through, the number of calls they need to make to help the get back to stable housing as quickly as possible.

Next slide, please. Then, there are a number of creative ways that housing counseling agencies can partner with COCs, but the most obvious and impactful way is to prevent homelessness for households that are unstably housed and are faced with eviction. Where housing counseling agencies are able to take a broad and wide-reaching approach to target persons that are facing eviction, COCs are then able to prioritize their homelessness prevention funds and efforts to those who are closest to the system's front door.

Sharing aggregate data can help those partners get a sense of where to target efforts most effectively by looking at who is experiencing a housing crisis, severity of circumstances, and who is most likely to fall through the cracks without an intervention.

At a minimum, housing counseling agencies can support with mediation and dispute resolution efforts, landlord negotiations to either resolve a bubbling crisis or to navigate a potential new lease, landlord recruitment, financial literacy and budgeting to help support persons from experiencing housing instability again in the future as well as tenant education.

Thank you, and I'm going to hand it back over to Sarah.

Sarah

Thank you, Marcy, for setting the stage for us and talking about the ways that housing counseling agencies and homeless service systems can partner to prevent eviction. It's time for Mentimeter again, so if you can go to your smartphone or other device and go to www.menti.com again, in just a moment you will see the number at the top of the screen. It looks like a few of you are already ahead of me, but that number is 3107256.

Our next question is, "What barriers exist to working with the homeless service system in your community?" I'll read these responses out for you.

Lack of staff capacity, lack of knowledge regarding homeless service

system priorities, lack of knowledge regarding available homeless resources, don't know who to contact, or other.

You can rank these in order of importance, and I see that folks are already doing that, so we'll give you just a minute, and it looks like lack of staff capacity is coming out as a very strong reason preventing folks from working with the homeless service system.

We'll give folks just a few more minutes to rank order those responses. I see some competition there between the lack of knowledge regarding the available resources and the lack of knowledge regarding homeless service system priorities.

We're getting just over 100 responses there, and lack of staff capacity is still in the strong lead for the biggest barrier to working with the homeless service system.

Okay, well it looks like we have a clear winner in lack of staff capacity, so if you answered other, and I see a number of folks did answer other, our next question, which we'll move onto now is, "If you answered other, please describe the barriers that exist to working with the homeless service system in your community."

You can type in your response here, and you can answer more than once, so we'll give folks a few minutes to type in their responses. I see funding popped up immediately which is really no surprise. All of the above, community leader collaboration, loss of funding, lack of funding, funding availability. I'm seeing a trend here.

I see more available, affordable housing. That's a very good one. I'm hearing a little noise on the line. If all of our speakers could please make sure they're muted. If our operator might be able to step in and help us with that line that we're getting some noise from.

Moderator Yes, and I'm trying to find it. Sorry.

Sarah Thank you. We'll give folks a few more minutes here. We already have 75 responses. I see some very interesting responses here about the COVID-19 pandemic, the shelter system taking people that need placement, lack of funding and staff.

We are working on muting that line. I'm sorry about that extra noise that you folks are hearing on the line.

Okay, well we definitely have lots of answers around funding as a barrier that exists to working with homeless service systems. We're working on

those issues with the folks that we're hearing on the line. I'll just remind my speakers to make sure you're muted.

I'm going to take us back to our presentation. Thank you for all those great responses, and next we are going to dive into our case study on partnering to prevent eviction in Columbus, Ohio.

I'd like to introduce our next presenter, Jeff Biehl. Jeff.

Jeff Hi, Sarah. Can you hear me okay?

Sarah I sure can. Thanks.

Jeff Great. Hello to all of you participating today. I am coordinating what we call our Housing Stabilization Coalition here in Columbus, Ohio, and I just want to start off by sharing that we, like you, are on a journey. We may be ahead of where some of you are at, but we also know that we can continue to learn from other communities.

I just want to thank those of you from different regions that have contributed to this body of work about how we can better organize more preventative services to shut off people from ending up in our homeless service system. If I could start off with kind of a brief story about how we

got started as a coalition because it's broader than just the coalition and thank you for that.

In 2016, our homeless service system, crisis response system you see at the very bottom, which is a high-performing system, the Community Shelter Board, convened a series of stakeholders and realized that to use a healthcare analogy, we had built a really strong emergency room, but we really didn't have any kind of urgent care or other kind of preventative services.

So, we spent a good chunk of two, two and a half years doing all types of piloting, engaging stakeholders, building relationships, and what came out of that work in addition to some programmatic work was this risk topology that you see on the right hand side. This is not to imply that households go in a linear line from zero to four. Folks that have instability in their housing move all around this type of topology, what it really has provided is a shared framework that our community has really taken ownership of.

Then kind of on the left hand side is the different layers of intervention that we have started to organize. So, in 2019 towards the end of '19, we really started to move this from a conceptual framework to one of starting to take action.

So, the risk level 2 that are households that are starting to enter into that eviction space, not yet on the cusp of what we call level 3 and imminent risk of going into literal homelessness, but a bit more upstream, that's what spawned the coalition that I'm fortunate enough to be coordinating.

We invited to the table the power of the invitation, we have over 20 organizational leaders that really have co-ownership of this. So, it's not owned by anyone. It's really owned by the participants.

We have an HCA. We have our homeless crisis response system. We have local government, an array of nonprofits that provide support services including emergency rental assistance and utility assistance. We have leadership from our municipal court and some of the services they provide for tenants. We have advocates and partners that work in the affordable housing space and an array of other stakeholders.

If you wouldn't mind going back to that previous slide, thank you. So, we set out on this journey of taking a more systemic approach to how we could better align services. Then, this thing came along called COVID-19, and so that somewhat has taken over our work over this last now almost a year of really better organizing the supports around emergency rental assistance, utility assistance, and other programs.

Let me tell you a little bit about—I won't read these bullets but let me tell you a little bit about what we've accomplished as a coalition. So, we quickly stood up a shared fund. We call it the Hope Fund, and one of our partners took the lead. IMPACT Community Action took the lead on really standing this up, and we were able to bring together CARES Act dollars and also bring in other public and private funding into a shared portal.

Then, we also worked with our Job and Family Services around some of the TANF funding and got an amendment that increased the range of households that we could service through that.

We then brought together an array of nonprofits that work on rental assistance and we did things like move toward a shared application. We consolidated a lot of the support forms for the application process so that we could start having consistency across organizations.

We also started to hold weekly learning exchanges, and those continue every Tuesday afternoon. All the partners get together for an hour. I facilitate those, and it's a great platform for keeping each other up to date on who's doing what and what's breaking around news at the federal, state, and local level.

We've also improved the amount of tenant services that are embedded at our municipal court. While our court shut down, our eviction court also moved to our convention center, and so we were able to pivot and move services to a new location to try to meet tenants and landlords at the actual point of the eviction court.

Then, we also have been hosting monthly what we call roundtables with property managers, with landlords, property owners, and a lot of our rental nonprofits. It's really a forum where we learn from one another. They give us lots of feedback on what's working and helping tenants, and we're starting to create much stronger relationships with the property owners and managers in our region.

So, those are some of the activities that we put in place. When you look at some of the results, and I'll go through these quickly. We've really established a lot of trust in the organization. We have data sharing. I'm really impressed with the amount of data that everybody's willing to share.

We've created dashboards. We've done heat mapping. We have zip code analysis which enables us to see where we're reaching people and where there are still more people at risk.

We've also established working relationships with our eviction court, and we're also getting information and data from them on a high frequency so we're all working a lot smarter.

Then, we've also continued to work on these different layers of the risk topology because we don't want to work in isolation from some of the other work going on. So, it's really about not only building trust, building relationships, sharing data, but we've really worked together as a group to put new interventions in place to help people that are at risk of eviction.

I think that was the end of my slides, if I'm not correct, so next up, Rhonda Gaines with the Columbus—oh yes, let me just speak about this. Sorry.

We have a dashboard that we put together, and this is where we collect every week all the emergency rental assistance coming from partners, and we use this at a high level, but then we also have a lot more access to each individual partner's data to do zip code mapping and other types of mapping.

Once again, we share this in a very transparent way with all kinds of funders and leaders from our communities so that we're also sharing with them how we're putting their resources to work as a coalition.

With that, I'm going to pass it over to Rhonda Gaines with the Columbus Urban League, who is one of the leaders in the coalition, who has really brought her agency's talents to this broader array of work here in Columbus and Franklin County.

Rhonda

Hi, good afternoon, everyone. My name is Rhonda Gaines. I am the director of Financial Empowerment Services for the Columbus Urban League which is a HUD housing counseling agency. I am also HUD certified as well. We are an affiliate of the National Urban League, and we, as Jeff said, participate in the Housing Stabilization Coalition.

Before all that started, we were providing rental housing counseling services which included landlord/tenant mediation, helping clients read their lease, help them find housing. Our goal was to prevent homelessness.

Since we've been doing this, if a tenant takes the initiative to resolve the issues in a timely manner through mediation, we can likely keep that tenant housed 70% of the time.

So, the main purpose, as Jeff said, for the coalition is for the organizations and nonprofits to actually get together. Before the COVID-19 happened or before the actual first eviction moratorium went into place in March, we had a total of in the year prior 18,000 evictions, and with the Columbus

Shelter being an overflow, it was important for us to start some type of housing coalition to get together to see how we could kind of stop what was going on or help individuals with what was going on.

If you look at the chart that was provided from 2019 to 2020, in 2019 at the end of the year, there was a total of 18,000 evictions filed in Franklin County alone. When you started the year off in 2020, it was going at the same initial numbers that it was going to the year prior, so again, we had to do something to get a process started. That was basically, in the beginning we were dealing with a low to moderate income, but when you're dealing with COVID, a lot of people were effected by that, and more people were in threat of being homeless.

What we've done through working with the coalition is we've leveraged our different funding sources whether it's unrestricted funding or restricted funding, the money that's coming in, so when individuals are applying if they are over a certain income bracket, by us being all collaborative we were able to send them over to IMPACT through PRC.

The one issue that we were having is people were basically having a lot of questions on that was on the questionnaire earlier is a lot of people have never applied for rental assistance. They'd never needed rental assistance,

and they didn't know how to go about getting assistance or what was available, what was not available.

Based on [indiscernible] prior to COVID-19, there were income requirements, there were requirements on the number of kids you had, but because of what COVID-19 was going on there were a lot of other resources that were out there able to help individuals that did not have children, that may have been over the low to moderate income poverty level to where if they were affected by COVID-19 we were able to keep them housed.

If you look at the chart that Jeff showed you guys earlier, it shows the number of people that we were able to keep housed through the coalition and the dollar amount that we spent.

Now, the Columbus Urban League, we are a smaller entity than IMPACT, and we started rental assistance, and we did a little bit over \$481,000 last year, but we also helped out different organizations and different nonprofits. For example, once our funding ran out, we were able to house individuals or do applications with IMPACT.

So, IMPACT, if they had funding we were able to send our individuals over, get everything done so that we could make sure that we got the applications sent over and the funding was paid out on time for that.

Also, in the State of Ohio and in Franklin County, with us having the highest eviction rate for the low to moderate income and the shelter board being in overfill status, it's been a wonderful thing that we've been able to keep so many people housed because at this point, housing is not available as it was this time last year.

Now, I'm just going to turn it back over to Sarah.

Sarah Yes, thank you, Rhonda.

Jeff Sarah, this is Jeff. If we just have a few more minutes, I wouldn't mind telling a bit of a journey around this eviction snapshot.

Sarah Got right ahead, yes.

Jeff I think this has value because when we started this work, everybody was talking about evictions, but we realized with no judgment intended we didn't really know a whole lot about evictions, and this is kind of a high-level summary of the snapshot that we create and maintain with our court system.

We realized that we didn't have a common definition, we didn't have a common way of tracking trends, and so I think this is a really good place to start in a community that maybe hasn't started to collaborate because by digging into evictions, and we built a mechanism with our courts to get data every quarter that we populate and share with all of our partners, we've now started to blend other types of data elements into this snapshot, and it's really become kind of our shared way of knowing whether we're making progress or not.

We look at different trends, but it all started with a recognition that we didn't even know what these categories meant. So, we worked very openly and collaboratively to try to make sense out of this legal process that nobody had really looked at in a collaborative way. There were little pockets of knowledge all around the community.

I remember some of the meetings I hosted a few years ago. We would start talking about evictions, and people didn't really even understand the process. So, I think this is just something worth pointing out to maybe the communities that are looking at doing more collaboration as a good place to get started.

Sarah

Thank you, Jeff, and thank you, Rhonda. We're so excited about the work that you're doing in Columbus, and I really love how you use data and

dashboards to track and target your work, so I'm so happy that we were able to feature that today.

We do have some time for Q&A, and I know you've all been entering questions, so let me just take us to our Q&A slide, and I'll turn it over to Rob Weber from HUD's Office of Housing Counseling to take us through your questions. Rob.

Rob

Hi, everyone, this is Rob. I've been monitoring the Q&A. There's been a few questions that we've answered, but I'm not seeing any new questions that we haven't already answered, so if you do have any questions, we do have a few more minutes. Feel free to put those in the Q&A, and we can ask them allowed and have our guest speakers potentially be able to answer those for you.

Alternatively, you can also email us at the Office of Housing Counseling if you think of something later on that you didn't think to ask during the webinar, and we'd be happy to answer those questions by email as well.

Sarah

We'll wait just a minute to see if anyone else has questions that they want to enter in the question box, and then we'll continue with our slides. Rob, let me know if we should move on.

Rob We do have a question. Carissa asked, “I wonder how the Columbus folks were able to get landlords, property managers to show up for their roundtables. We are struggling with engagement, especially with the eviction moratorium overwhelming them.”

Jeff We don't have, obviously, every property owner or landlord participating, but I know our session last week I think we had 73 folks on the Zoom session. I think we did it in two ways.

One is all the organizations that were providing emergency rental assistance, utility assistance, and mediation services, legal services, we sat down and built this two-page resource guide, and we continue to keep that updated. That was something we heard from the property managers and landlords that they were just swimming in information, so we sat down and took it upon ourselves to better organize how people could access programs. We put together simple eligibility, contact information, website information.

Then, we also worked for—there's a local apartment association, the Columbus Apartment Association, and so we worked through them along with partners that had mail lists, email lists that they were already working with them.

The first couple sessions it was really about giving them good information, and what we started to get feedback on was keep organizing information, and that's led us to having now more dialog with them. So, we started with organizing information, and now we're continuing to move into more dialog so we can learn from them.

We've also set aside judgment. We have some landlords that are doing a good job working with us; we have other landlords that maybe aren't following everything the way we would like them to, but we kind of set the stage of no judgment. If folks are willing to come to the virtual table, we're happy that they're willing to engage in discussion.

Rhonda

This is Rhonda from the Columbus Urban League. Just to piggyback off of what Jeff just said, not only are we educating not only the landlords and the tenants, we're having them go along with us in every process of their client filling out the documents. Once they fill out the information, we try to keep in contact with the landlord to let them know we have all the information.

We're going to be issuing the payment. Before the payment comes out, we send out a letter to let them know that the payment has been approved, just to let them know that we are working on their case and let them know that it has not been pushed down on the sidelines, but we're cognitive of the

fact that we know they still have a mortgage to pay on their rental property, so we want to help them as much as we can.

Just like Jeff said, being extremely transparent with landlords has helped out a lot.

Rob Okay, excellent. So, we have another question. “Do you have suggestions in how we help larger homeless administration bodies learn about housing counseling programming such as more than just homebuyer education or foreclosure prevention counseling?”

Jeff Rhonda, do you want to take the lead on that?

Rhonda Yes, so the nonprofits in Franklin County, I know for a fact that Columbus Urban League, IMPACT, and other different organizations we actually put the information out there for them to make sure that they have and they feel comfortable with it.

We do landlord trainings where we educate the landlord on their rights. We include the landlord on a lot of things that are going on within—when it deals with the rental property, when it deals with know your rights, the landlord/tenant guide. We educate the client on all of that, and we give them help on each point of what they need help with, again being extremely transparent and honest with them about the process without

giving legal advice because we're not able to do that but trying to guide them in the right way.

So, again, being extremely transparent and, Jeff, do you want to add something to that? Then, we do monthly webinars with the landlords as well.

Jeff No, I don't have anything else to add.

Rob There's been a few questions about the resource guide and if you'd be willing to share that with everyone so they can get an idea as a template for that.

Jeff For sure. I can send that to Sarah after the call today.

Rob Okay. Sarah, do you think we have time for more questions? I do want to stress that if we don't have time to answer everyone's questions, we will follow up with you in the next week with an answer via email.

Sarah If we have a quick one, I think we can do one more. Otherwise, we can move on.

Rob Okay. Just a question about the roundtable. "Are you able to send any other info or tips to assist with better communication with landlords or

property managers?” It sounds like they’re asking about if there are some best practices for reaching out to them.

Jeff

You know, off the top of my head, I think putting together a good resource guide. I’ve seen a couple other questions in here around all the different categories, immigrants. One of the things Rhonda mentioned earlier that we’ve done really well is because we’re working as a coalition, we now have different agencies helping each other out with application processes.

I think that’s also been helpful to the landlords because in the past, they would call around and shop. Nobody knew what each other was doing, so we’ve tried to standardize a lot of that to where, like Rhonda said, when she started to run scarce on funding, her team started to help applications for the sources that had more resources.

We’ve done that also where we’ve run into categorical eligibility where one agency starts to take on more of the load who have unrestricted funds, so I think starting with a good guide of what’s available in your community and how to better organize that, and then just start inviting them into a discussion.

The power of the invitation, don’t worry about those who don’t show up; just keep inviting them to the table, and over time, they bring in other

colleagues. That's how we've kind of grown this is by them inviting others to join them.

Rob

Great tips. Thanks, Jeff. I think that's probably it for the questions now. There are other questions, a lot of them are more specific to counselors' local areas, so myself and the Office of Outreach Capacity will follow up with everyone on their questions that didn't get answered today. Thanks, everyone, for your excellent questions.

Sarah

Thank you, Rob, and thank you again to all of today's presenters. I heard from that Q&A how important it is to partner with landlords and how housing counseling agencies might be struggling with that, so that is terrific feedback for our folks from HUD to think about for future opportunities for education.

We have just a few more resources that we wanted to share with you all. We wanted to share an exciting opportunity that will be coming soon. HUD's Office of Housing Counseling will be hosting a community of practice for organizations that are performing extensive rental housing counseling. This would be an opportunity to learn and share best practices with each other and with the field.

For those of you who are not familiar with the community of practice, it's a group of practitioners with shared expertise that engage in a process of collective learning around a common set of problems. So, we're starting to gauge interest in this, so if you are interested there will be some contact information at the end of this presentation where you can reach out.

Another resource that we wanted to share with you is a new resource that's available on the HUD Exchange. This is a CARES Act and other COVID-19 response funding chart for housing counselors. The chart describes COVID-19-related funding from federal agencies and how they can be used to fund housing counseling services and rental assistance.

I'm going to take just a second to show this to you. When you are able to see the presentation posted online there will be a link to this resource, but I just wanted to show folks what it looks like on the HUD Exchange. This is on the section of the HUD Exchange on COVID-19 emergency information for housing counselors.

I'll try to scroll slowly here, but you can see that we've listed the federal agency, the program and allocation, description of the funding, and how it can be used for housing counseling information and then some contact information if you're looking for additional resources.

So, we just did want to make you aware of this. On our next webinar which will be in February, we'll do a deeper dive into these resources and really make sure that folks understand the various types of fundings that are available.

A few more resources here, and these will be available when you're able to download the presentation, but there is a rental housing counseling resource page on the HUD Exchange. We've also included a look-up tool to find contact information for your local Continuum of Care. We've listed some resources on strategies for eviction prevention and homeless system response during the COVID-19 crisis. There will also be a link to the Office of Housing Counseling website.

Here you'll see contact information for the Office of Housing Counseling, and it's also time for our last Mentimeter question. You all have been such terrific Mentimeter users, so I just want to commend you on that. I hope you will help us out here with our last question. Let me just get us into that question.

Our final question today, "Will this webinar assist you in reaching out to homeless service providers in your area to establish mutually beneficial relationships, developing a more comprehensive approach to clients' housing needs, helping clients avoid eviction and homelessness, or

assisting clients who have already experienced eviction?" You can check all that apply.

This helps us as we design future webinar series and think about what type of information is needed in the field, so we'll give everybody just a minute to put in their responses there. Thank you, all, for being such great Mentimeter participants. We really love this software for getting on-the-spot feedback and find that it's really helpful to guide future training opportunities.

I'm seeing a pretty even split here. It looks like our biggest chunk of responses are under that helping clients avoid eviction and homelessness, and that is really great to hear because it's obviously the goal of all the work that we're doing.

I'll give it just another minute. I'm really happy to see all the ways that this webinar is going to assist you in your work. Okay, I'm going to take us back to our main presentation. Thank you, all, for participating in the Mentimeter questions.

On behalf of HUD's Office of Housing Counseling, I'd like to thank you all for joining us today and for your active participation. As Rob mentioned, when the materials are posted, we will also make an effort to

answer those questions that were not answered in today's presentation.

That concludes our presentation today, so enjoy your afternoon. Thank you.

Moderator

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