

# VAWA Housing Protections: Implementation Considerations for ESG and CoC Programs - Transcript

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**Kevin Solarte:** So this is the 2nd in the series of what are we are doing in the implementation of the VAWA Rule, specifically for ESG and CoC Programs. So today we're going to be joined by 2 community CoC members who have been working through implementation locally. So we'll all introduce ourselves here in a second. So I will introduce myself first. I am a Senior Program manager on the technical assistance team at C.S.H. And I previously worked at HUD in the secretary's office with the group of folks that put the rule together and one of those great people is Lisa Coffman. So I'm going to turn it over to Lisa to introduce herself.

**Lisa Coffman:** We are really excited to present this information to you. But most importantly, very excited to have Laura and Gordon with us so that you can really hear directly from your peers about their experience in implementing VAWA and what they've done. In light of the fact that, as you know, we don't have guidance issued yet for you all. So as Kevin said, I'm Lisa Coffman, I'm a staff person in HUD's office of special needs assistance programs, the SNAPS office and I am the person, the subject matter expert on the intersection of domestic violence and homelessness. So I've talked with many of you as you have worked through, making sure that your CoC response is appropriate for the housing and homeless needs of survivors with domestic violence. I have answered many of your questions about VAWA and heard some of the great things that you're doing on the ground in the connections that you're making with domestic service, domestic violence programs, and victim service providers in your communities. So I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to talk with you all for about an hour and hope that you get some really, really good concrete information from Laura and Gordon as we talk for the next 60 minutes.

**Kevin Solarte:** Great, thank you, Lisa and Laura do you want to go next?

**Laura Evanoff:** Hello my name is Laura Evanoff I am the performance monitoring and technical assistance manager at Ending Community Homelessness Coalition, ECHO, and we are the lead agency for Austin and Travis County. One of my big responsibilities is to help us become compliant with VAWA regulation. And a part of it was the drafting of the 1st version of our policy and creating our task force to help build out our policy, which eventually became a work group in our community. And so we are trying to build our policy and procedures more and more every day. It's a pleasure to be here.

**Kevin Solarte:** Thank you, and Gordon can you go next.

**Gordon Levine:** Thank you. So my name is Gordon, I am the continuum of care manager at the Louisiana balance of state continuum of care. The collaborative applicant for that is the Louisiana Housing Corporation. And for those of you up north, I am formerly of the Wisconsin balance of state continuum of care in the state of Wisconsin. So shout out to my folks from up there. I was responsible for putting together our VAWA and ETP implementation. Like many of you, I put it together in response to last year's CoC program competition. So we're being gently helped along by our friends at HUD to get there. But I think what we put together is both interesting and effective. So I'm excited to share what

we've, come up with so far so that you can take it back to your CoCs., with the recognition that it's very much a work in progress. As is everything we do. Thank you.

**Kevin Solarte:** Great. We're very excited to have Lauren and Gordon with us. I think the theme of today is that you'll hear a lot is that work in progress. Right? We know that all of us across the country are working to really kind of learn from each other and figure out what works to offer the best protection for survivors that we can. But we also recognize that it's a learning process that we're all still going through. So what I think you'll hear a lot today is the strategies both the Balance of State and Austin,

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Texas are experimenting with, that they are trying. And we will hear from you, we encourage you all to type your questions in the chat box if you have questions, but we also will have some time at the end that we have, we're going to hold for some Q and A as well. So really the hope here and ask many questions as you can and really kind of get some concrete strategies from folks in the field that are going through this work.

**Lisa Coffman:** Kevin, can I jump in before you take the poll? So this is Lisa again from the HUDs SNAPS office. And I just want to mention, we really encourage you all to ask your questions. As I said, we know that we issued The HUD VAWA final rule. But we also know that the program offices, SNAPS included, have not issued specific guidance around how implementation should look for CoC or ESG Programs. So before we even start, I just want to say knowing that in just putting that on the table, please ask your questions. Please be candid today, you know, you can ask freely, you know there's amnesty. We're not trying to do any sort of gotcha. So if you have something that you're struggling with, if you don't want to ask it on the call, my e-mail address is listed on the power point. Please feel free to contact me directly because I were happy to answer those questions. But I did just want to point that out there like, you know, please feel free to be forthcoming and candid about what you're dealing with. And we'll try to answer your questions. Thank you.

**Kevin Solarte:** Thanks for that, Lisa. OK. We're going to do a quick poll just to kind of get a sense of who is on the call. So you should see a poll pop up on the right hand side of your screen. There's 2 questions. So the 1st one is asking you to select, kind of describe the type of agency that you are. If you are a CoC or ESG funded provider, victim service provider, key stakeholders, or other. And then the 2nd question is trying to get a gauge on how familiar you are with the VAWA rule and VAWA work. So if you can pick both, click your answer to both questions and press submit. We'll give everyone just a couple minutes to do that, a couple seconds I should say. And as Lisa said, there's no gotcha here. If you're, if you're answering a number 2 really, and this is pretty new for you, it is OK to be honest on that. All right, we're going to go ahead and close the poll. So hopefully you got your answers and you'll have a just be a couple seconds and then we'll see the results. As we're waiting for those poll results to come up, I can run through what our agenda will look like. We have until 2:15 with each other, east coast time, and I know we have folks on from across the country. We are going to, really this is going to be an interview style. Both Lisa and I are going to go back and forth with Laura and Gordon and ask questions, get kind of their key strategies that they're implementing on the different sections. And then like I said, we will have hopefully about the last 15 minutes of our time together to open it up to questions. But in the meantime, again, if you have a question that things are popping up, you don't want to forget to ask, you can always go ahead and put it into the chat box. There's a little bubble on the bottom of your screen. If you click on it, it'll open the chat and we will try our best to keep track of the questions that are coming in and that chat and get through those things as well. The other, the one other thing I'll say. Our poll results are up, so a good portion of us are CoC

funded programs and a little bit ESG, and, we have some victim service providers. That's great and it looks like we're really trending kind of toward the middle of where we are with an implementation which I think sounds about right for where most people are around the country. So hopefully that gives you a sense of who else is on the webinar today. All right, again,

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Our objective here really to give you, really we're going to be focused here on implementation. So I do want to remind folks that we did, Lisa and I, did host webinar one, which was really the heavy content of the overview of the rule and what is in the rule. This webinar is really not going to be focused heavily on content it is more focused on, actually strategies to implement what is in that rule. So if you need kind of a primer on the rule itself, just remember that you can go on the HUD website and the webinar is posted. And so you can go back and you can watch that webinar if you really want the overview of the content heavy pieces of the rule. While we will have some of those slides from webinar 1 on the screen for you. So as Gordon and Laura are talking, you'll see some of that content. So if we are talking about emergency transfers, I will put some slides up on emergency transfers. But again, the focus here is really on the implementation strategies for this particular webinar. So again, the order that we're going to follow today, we are going start with notification of rights and certification, then we're going to talk about lease addendums and rental agreement, then we'll spend a big chunk of time talking about emergency transfer because I know that is the meat of this rule and some of the most important, but also the most difficult part to implement around the rule. And then we'll end with just a little bit on bifurcation. And again, the last 15 minutes for questions and answers. All right, so we're going to go ahead and dive in. We're going to start with the notification of right. So, I am going to pose this question to Laura 1st to start. So right, we know that notifications are critical to ensuring survivors are able to utilize the VAWA protections afforded to them. So can you talk a little bit about strategies your CoC is using to really ensure that all applicants have the best information around what their rights may be?

**Laura Evanoff:** So whenever we're building the policy we included the HUD form, the link, and encourage people use those. We also decided that a lot of the time case managers didn't know how to explain housing protections and their occupancy rights by just using the forms and that it was really important to one, train these case managers, but also we decided to build our own form that used a lot of images and less words, more key words. So that case managers can explain it a little bit easier. And then also that any time it becomes like this familiar document that everyone's using and they know. We've hosted a training and then will continue to host those trainings. We also have developed, I guess so I can't take credit for this, but our coordinated entry system, a lot of communities have decided that they will provide the forms during the coordinated entry system. For us, in our community, has a really long waiting list for housing, we decided that instead we are going to develop a really strong partnership with our victim service providers not necessarily provide the form, but instead we ask a lot of questions in the beginning to make sure that our coordinated entry system is trauma informed and then we provide direct links to victim service providers when needed because they are the experts. So our programs are really responsible for providing that information, so the case managers at programs and program intake and during a reassessment and also making sure that they really understand during the eviction process to provide that information about their housing protection.

**Kevin Solarte:** Great, thank you Laura and I think that theme of really making sure notices are understandable. I think it's great, great strategies for it, because we know we all, whatever type of housing, we're signing a bunch of papers. And those papers can be quite confusing. So I think the work that you are doing to ensure that not only their rights get

in the hands, the notice of rights get into the hands of everyone, but also that folks can actually understand what, what their rights are to make certain they can utilize them.

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**Lisa Coffman:** So it looks like I have the next question and the overall goal of the VAWA in the final rule of the Violence Against Women Act is like we said before is to make sure that survivors of domestic violence have access to housing. And so there's a lot of Survivor focused, survivor driven, language and requirements in the act. One of them is self-certification. Self-certification helps to lower the barriers for survivors to quickly find safe housing alternatives. It can be, this can be a different, a difficult culture shift for some providers. We recognize that moving away from the more expansive 3<sup>rd</sup> party documentation requirements. Gordon, can you talk for a few minutes about the strategies that you've used to help providers implement?

**Gordon Levine:** Sure. I'd be happy to, so one of the lenses that I want to bring to bear on this is the difference between working with providers in rural areas and urban areas, which we see a lot in the balance of state. And so one of the challenges and to some extent, one of the advantages that you have when you're working with that mixed group is that they each have, what I would think of as, exactly the opposite perspective on self-certification and on homelessness through the lens of literal or traditional homelessness and domestic violence people, feeling domestic violence. In other words, in our urban areas, what I've found is that they're much more willing to admit that homelessness is an issue that they need to confront and to undertake that as a community challenge that they're willing to get into. Whereas in our rural areas, there's often some resistance to those areas being willing to say as a community or from the elected officials that there is anyone experiencing literal homelessness there. Whereas the opposite is true when we talk about people, feeling domestic violence, that in our urban areas they are, it's often a challenge to explain to them that when we talk about people experiencing homelessness, it's not just people experiencing literal homelessness, it's people fleeing the domestic violence as well. Whereas in our rural areas, they're much more willing and indeed, often exclusively interested in looking at domestic violence as the real issue and using homelessness the broader tent as a way to address issues of domestic violence in their community. And so it really depends for us whether I'm talking to a provider in one of our urban areas that's focused on more literal homelessness or whether I'm in one of our rural areas where not only are the providers often focused on people, feeling domestic violence, but they're often our only funded providers and those areas are only providers at all. And so from the perspective of how we handle Self certification, the big shift as from my perspective, at least philosophical. And the 2 big points that I try hard to hit on is 1<sup>st</sup>, when we're talking about people fleeing, domestic violence, we're talking about people who have an acute and immediate vulnerability that is not always the case when we're dealing with people experiencing literal homelessness. And this is a discussion that we have in our CoC across a variety of different populations that while it is true that every person experiencing homelessness is in need of help, that they're all necessarily our responsibility, and that we need to be responsive to that, there are different levels of acuity experienced by different people and in different situations. And the person experiencing domestic violence is in a very acute level of need that's coming from multiple directions that aren't necessarily experienced by other people experiencing literal homelessness. And so the time that we might take that we are required to take for certifying, for example, chronic homelessness, that level of due diligence just isn't relevant or applicable to the situation or person who needs services immediately because they're experiencing domestic violence. So recognizing that we're on the other end of the spectrum from a very high burden of 3<sup>rd</sup> party documentation that we need when we're dealing with, for example, our PSH projects that serve people experiencing chronic homelessness rather than we're on the other end of that spectrum, that's important. The other piece of that ultimately is a culture shift where, and I hesitate to say this a little bit, but that for some of our providers it's difficult to get into the

mindset of when people tell us that this is what they're experiencing, we believe them, and this is necessarily true when we deal with anyone experiencing homelessness that ultimately all of our work is around believing people when they say that they

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Are experiencing these situations as much as we're required to verify it through 3rd party documentation. Ultimately, a person's personal testimony about their situation is the gold standard of understanding their experiences. And this is nowhere more important, more than when we are engaging people fleeing domestic violence. And so ultimately what I found most effective when working with our providers who are maybe shifting from an earlier mindset that says, oh, we have to demonstrate, we have to prove, we have to certify, we have to get documentation, we have to have it down cold. So that when someone comes in the monitor, when we get a question from our lawmakers, that we can really prove that we've got it cold and we're serving exactly the right people. The answer to it is exactly the right people, when we talk about domestic violence or people, feeling domestic violence is people who say they are fleeing domestic violence. And aha, moment ultimately is both when they recognize. Yeah, this is special acuity. This is a specific acuity that we need to address in a different way, but also to be blunt, that's when they realize that the documentation burden is much lower. And so they can to some extent relax from the normative practice of this is what we do when people are experiencing literal homelessness. And so there's a mindset shift, but there's also this like relief of, we can just believe people that ultimately settles in with what I would think of as our legacy providers are a long term providers. And so making the pitch in exactly that way, talking about differences in need between different populations, the level of acuity, and ultimately the lower the lower due diligence burden, when we're talking about self-certification, all of those come together and are really a big part of how we've made the shift from being so clenched down about 3<sup>rd</sup> party documentation into believing people and self-certification.

**Kevin Solarte:** Thank you. Gordon, that's very helpful. And I think the way you way you framed it in terms of really it is kind of a culture shift and that takes that takes time. And framing it, I think the way that you all framed and matching it to the way we already think about acuity and we already think about the way we serve people experiencing homelessness and kind of connecting those dots, seems like a really great strategy that providers kind of understand because they understand the level of acuity and risk when serving anyone who's experienced homelessness. Love the way that you connect the dots. OK, so we're going to move to lease addendums and rental agreements. So Lisa and I are going to talk for a second about lease addendums then Lisa has a question for Laura is more specifically on the rental agreement piece. So I know that questions have really come out a lot about is there isn't a new VAWA lease addendum, what should we be using here? And so there is the old one that hasn't been updated yet. But what we're actually working on is an updated version of that. So that's kind of in the hands of Lisa and I, hopefully soon you all will have an updated VAWA lease addendum them that will come out that you can use as your guide. But really if you take the old one, what you do is just kind of track it to the rule of the new things that were put in there. So it's really making sure that all of the, you really want to make sure you're really outlining the new parts of VAWA 2013, which really are the emergency transfer piece that should be outlined in your lease addendum. Also really want to make sure that you have kind of the strong language in there around the basic rights, as well, those basic rights of not being denied assistance or denied housing based on being a survivor And all But women limitations, making sure folks really do understand there's also limitations so that our protections, it doesn't stop landlords from being able to evict a person for activity that is unrelated to being a survivor. And I think that's an important piece for the folks that are living in the housing to understand, but also for the landlords that there are protections for them as well that there is, they still have

certain things that they can do as well even with these protections in place. So I don't know, Lisa, if you have anything else you want to add before we move to rental agreements.

**Lisa Coffman:** Yeah, I just want to say one more thing about the lease addendum. The reason why that this is included in the act is because when the act was put forward, it came when we were already in the middle of administering programs. So there needed to be a way for recipients to make these requirements applicable to their

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programs without having to go back and issue brand new leases, rental agreements that you all have for your tenants. And the lease addendum is just to make sure that you know, when you're entering into agreements on behalf of people for rental assistance that the landlords that you're choosing to work with that they are, as a recipient, or as someone who's agreeing to take this CoC or ESG funded assistance that they're going to honor these provisions for the term that the individual is receiving the ESG or CoC funded assistance. So that's really the most important part, you know, many of you already had leases, you had agreements or you updated those to include this language. If you have a document that has the certifications, you know that you talk about that participants can break the lease without penalty if they qualify for emergency transfer, or if you have something in your agreement that talks about people being protected from being evicted solely on the basis, or a direct result, of being a survivor. If you know, if you talk about the limitations of our protections, and the confidentiality requirements, if you have all of that, there's no need to enter into a lease addendum. But we recognize that most programs didn't have that, which is why the act called for the lease addendum. So we're really more concerned that the landlords in your program are honoring, the VAWA protections. That's really the intent. We want to make sure that that's happening. However, you choose to do that. That's fine, right, if you have it in your general rental agreement, you know with your landlord, with your housing provider, that's fine. If you need to add this lease addendum on top of that housing arrangement, that's fine too. What's most important for HUD is that landlords who are accepting the CoC or ESG funding agree to honor these protections for survivors. And I know we're going to take questions later, but someone asked, is the lease addendum required for only survivors, which is a really good question. And the lease addendum, you have to include it for all of your participants because we, you know, as Gordon brought up a really good point, we don't know, you know, who survivors are when they 1st come into our program. So we want to make sure that everyone is aware of these protections. So the language needs to be included in your documents for all of the folks that you provide rental assistance to cover it. So it looks like in keeping with this sort of conversation about lease addendums and rental agreements, I've got a question for Laura, You know, rental agreements between the CoC recipient and the tenant landlord may be new to some programs, so can you talk to us about how you implemented rental agreements and why they are useful, and how you found them to be used.

**Laura Evanoff:** Yeah, I think for us, this is something that we've really been working on and developing. And luckily Echo has an amazing community housing team that has built extremely strong relationships with landlord. And their guidance has really helped us on how to phrase things in our rental agreements. And then also how to communicate about housing protections with landlords. And especially when figuring out roles and responsibilities and really making landlords feel like they're, they will be supported. And also that help build trust that that when an emergency transfer is approved and is occurring that we're just not going to pull out of an apartment and leave someone. But we're also really keeping the safety of the clients in mind. And so we focused on using language that shows that will provide as much support during an emergency transfer. And so it's really important to set those expectations early on in a landlord relationship that way. This isn't something that's new that's going to surprise you to provide a lot of explanation. And so

we've created a structure in our community where we want program staff to be the ones who are mediating the transfer process and that agencies are really identifying who's going to be the experts within their agency to do that. And if it's going to be a program manager or if they want all of their case managers to do it. And I think that's something to consider because you want as

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few people to be involved in the process as possible. And so figuring out what makes sense for your community and also for your agencies is really important. So we're still kind of working on that structure a little bit. And so I think that's something that's going to be narrowed down more and more over time. As we build out our procedures and so we've recently developed a rental agreement template that programs can copy and paste the language into their existing form if they're the have something in place or if they want, they can add it as an attachment to their rental agreement. Some programs may not have rental agreements in place, so this is something that you can start to have a conversation with them about like you know, which language do you want to use? And then also getting it added to that. And it's also a great way to get other programs to provide, you know what they're using across, you know, the different agencies and housing providers.

**Kevin Solarte:** Great, thank you Laura. I think several good points there. Right? I mean, I think the leadership that you all are taking as the collaborative applicant to really offer up templates is really helpful. And also the way again, that you're framing that. I know that several questions have come in. As Lisa said, we're going to spend some time for questions at the end, but just several that have come in around what you do when landlords don't want to go into these agreement. And I think the reality is that this is going to happen sometimes, but I think that the way Laura talked about, you know, the framing of it, one how you use the community group to give input on how you frame those agreements and two really making sure that those agreements are heavily focused with the landlord with what you as the program provider actually are going to offer in terms of support. Support in terms of emergency transfers, support in terms of communication and having a point person, I think are all strategy to help mitigate some of that landlord resistance. But we also do have to be honest, sometimes that it is, it is not something the landlord wants to engage in and unfortunately it is a requirement. And so we have to balance those things. And sometimes hopefully, it doesn't mean that we're losing landlords that I think really thinking about how you frame that, as Laura was saying, that is something that is a benefit to the landlord and not a huge barrier. But the quick and easy answer to the questions that keeps coming across is that it's a requirement. Right. We have to, we have to do it and sometimes that mean that we're not going to be able to engage with certain landlords anymore. I know that it's not probably the popular answer, but it is, it is the reality of the work of the work that we do. OK, so we're going to spend the next 20 minutes or so on emergency transfers because we know that is a big piece to this work. And so I'm going to start with Gordon and ask you to talk a little bit about how you operationalize the requirement that some folks find the hardest right within the CoC process, which is making sure that survivors are prioritized to the next available resource across the entire CoC, and especially for you Gordon, in covering a large geographic rural area, such as the balance of state. Can you talk about what strategies you guys are testing to do that?

**Gordon Levine:** Sure, I'd be happy to and your right to say test because we are, as I said earlier, all very much still in the learning phase of all of this. Before I answer that I do want to say that everything, all of the answers that I'm delivering here, were entirely enabled by the quality of the people that I work with that ultimately none of this would have been possible, without both the folks on the ground here in Louisiana our national TA partners and providers. And so I wanted to specifically cite that as part of our preparation for this webinar, as we were all feeling out a little bit of

what, how do we want to answer these questions? How do we want to talk about process and implementation? And I think it's important when we talk, especially when we're talking about coordinated entry, which is a large system, wide piece of our job as collaborative applicants and our operations as a CoC to recognize that that process didn't start with me, won't end with me, and involved a whole lot of other folks. And so really where we've got to would not have been possible without all of the following elements. Some of them were happy accidents and some of them are things that all of you can adopt. The balance of state here in Louisiana is relatively new, we incorporated in funding year 15, fiscal year 15. I am the 1st continuum of care manager on the ground here in the balance of state. And as a happy accident,

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I was, as I said, transplanting down from Wisconsin at the time where I had experience running the statewide ESG program there. So I came with some knowledge about CoC in general, balances of state specific and ESG. It helped also that we have increasingly significant investment from our governance structure at large that our board specifically, some of our board members, were very involved in the development of this plan, as was our coordinated entry committee and are very active coordinated entry committee chair. And so there were several sets of eyes on this at all times. I think that when the full count came in, there were more than 50 people who had been involved in the development of our coordinated entry policy, which includes our ETP implementation. In addition to that, we also had necessary and valuable HUD TA through cloudburst. We had necessary and valuable, absolutely valuable, technical assistance from the National D.V. Coalition, whose name is escaping the right now, and I feel terrible for that, but includes Larissa Kaufman from there. And we had an incredibly good level of support from our Statewide Coalition, the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Finally, all of that being said, the thing that we found most valuable in this is not just in the ETP implementation but our general coordinated entry development, is our general operating policy in the CoC to vest authority in people on the board and our committee structure, at the collaborative applicant level, to vest authority and them according to their level of creativity and their willingness to be flexible with what feel like new requirements that change happen every year, old requirements that change every year, but also their drive to be involved. We realize that while the collaborative applicant is our paid staff and involved working with everything CoC, that it's not possible without an active stakeholder group in the CoC at large. And so identifying the folks who want to be involved and giving them as much authority as you possibly can to take the ball and run with, it has been incredibly valuable and continues to be incredibly valuable in our ETP and our coordinated entry in general. And so the reason I keep hitting on coordinated entry is of course that that's what we're talking about when we talk about the ETP to an extent. But also that we kind of lucked out in backing into a coordinated entry system that was ready to do the kind of prioritization that we're looking for. And so the way our prioritization list and the way our coordinated entry system work in the Louisiana balance of state, is that we have one centralized prioritization list that is managed centrally by the collaborative applicant. So providers submit through HMIS people to the prioritization list to us, we manage the prioritization list. And when housing providers, rapid rehousing or permanent, have beds to fill, they request referrals from us. And so we've got this really well centralized mechanism for taking in people to the list and referring them out. So our prioritization list is really built on this concept that ultimately everyone is prioritized according to their level of need, which includes both their objective score through VI-SPDAT, which is our statewide tool, and through and based on their length of time homeless. But ultimately, that most of the time doesn't really matter what sub population a person belongs to, right, that everyone has equitable access to the housing resources that we make available through our federal partners. And so person who is experiencing homelessness, who is a veteran is equally likely to receive resources if they have the same level of objective need as a youth experiencing homelessness. And so we came in with that basic idea but then we looked at our emergency transfer folks, and really we built the 2nd mechanism on top of the general prioritization list. And we keep using this word, but it's the acute prioritization piece of it that ultimately,

we have a general list that happens here. And then we have a very small section of the population that are prioritized ahead of the rest of the general list according to their level of acuity. And it includes a very small handful of people who are being transferred from rapid rehousing to permanent supportive housing through what we call a rapid rehousing bridge, our rapid to PSH Bridge, special populations that are designated for a very limited time by our board, such as people living in a specific encampment that is in increased physical danger, and people who trigger our emergency transfer plan. And again, it comes back to the level of acuity being experienced. It's not that their needs are objectively higher over a long period of time, but that people fleeing domestic violence,

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who trigger the emergency transfer plan have a need now, that needs to be addressed now, by the next available resource, end of discussion. And getting folks on board with those twin ideas that in general people experiencing homelessness should be prioritized exclusively according to need and that sometimes we have to throw that out because the level of need is so immediate and acute for some subpopulations that they need to be served first, really gets us to this dual prioritization, this general list and this acute list that we've got. And so ultimately our big, our big push there, was to get our DV folks to the head of the line along with other folks, experiencing really acute levels of need, and making sure that over this large geographic area, we're ensuring that people are connected to resources, especially housing based on where they feel most safe. And so when we talk about balance of state, which is primarily rural, which covers more than half the geography of the state, that has a large urban area and it, and that it is necessarily primarily rural beyond that, we run into situations where it's relatively easy for folks to trigger the emergency transfer plan within a project and transfer in that project to a different unit. And that's handled primarily at the service provider level. So if a project serving our large urban area, someone within that project triggers the emergency transfer plan, they can transfer to a different area in that project service area. That's not as much of a lift. But when for example, someone in our large urban area triggers the emergency transfer plan and says, hey, I'd like to, I would feel safe in one of the rural areas of the state. I have family there, I have a support network there. I don't feel safe in the service area or in this project service area, that complicates the question because now you're talking about OK, are we, what are we doing in terms of serving people outside the project service area? And so ultimately what we came down on is that this the emergency transfer plan, our prioritization list in general, the acute section, especially, our subdivided by region and to large geographic chunks that are contiguous and make sense. And so ultimately the emergency transfer plan let our folks trigger, not just the plan itself, but indicate where they would feel safest living and prioritizes them to the most immediately available housing in those regions. And so really what I would take away from that, and I encourage you all to take away from that, is that there is a lot of value in having a conversation with your CoC about general needs versus acute need and building your coordinated entry system in a way that recognizes that. While everyone's needs are severe and immediate, not everyone's needs are as immediately acute at any given time as anyone else and planning according to that.

**Kevin Solarte:** Thank you, Gordon. I, I mean, I'm hearing from you kind of the amount of work that you all put into, making sure that that piece, which I think is one of the harder pieces, right, is actually figuring out how do we prioritize in the next resource across an entire CoC? That's hard to do with an Austin, Texas that is even harder to do when you think about kind of a large geographic area spread out. I think the way that you all utilize coordinated entry to do that makes a lot of sense. Good food for thought for folks on the phone of how your coordinated entry system and your emergency transfer plans actually can work together in an efficient way to make the emergency transfer plan happens more smoothly when it is moving across the resource. We know that with things like tenant based rental assistance, it's a bit easier to take a resource and help a person move out of that unit but a little bit different when we are talking

about moving across our different types of projects that may not be that kind of tenant based rental assistance. So that's great, Laura, I'm going to ask you to talk a little bit about. I know the other piece to this right is not just an available unit, but also a safe unit. And that safety is really defined, and there's actually been some questions about that come through chat of how you define a safe unit. So can you talk a little bit about the work that you all have done to really kind of do some upfront work around how a survivor can actually articulate what is as safe unit for them.

**Laura Evanoff:** You know, I think the most important thing is that really communicating with the program participant, the survivor to see what is safe for them.

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And so that's a lot of that is training how to have this conversation and really connecting with the victim service providers in the area to provide the training across the continuum in. So the training piece is very, very important. And then also for us there is a really understanding, the difference between confidentiality and privacy. And that is the client's choice on, you know, how much information they want to provide. And then also for us to educate what that means. So you know, if you want to enter any information into HMIS, who has have access to that information. If you want to provide any information to your landlord, how much information do you want to provide? And so we're really learning a lot about this and we are, we definitely rely on our victim service providers and content experts to help us navigate how to provide information people. And then as we kind of been building out our external transfer process, we've been discussing client choice and how that's important. And our plan is to figure out, maybe it's a form or someone's attending a staffing meeting where we are trying to find a program that matches them well if an external, there are 1st options always to stick with an internal transfer, if that's what the client wants, because that means that less people will be have access to that information. And you know, an internal transfer is not an option and then we're trying to figure out exactly what that means. We document in a form to one person who's going to hold that information through coordinated entry, or is it that we do a three way phone call at a staffing meeting? And then also asking questions like what Gordon had mentioned? What neighborhoods do you feel safe then? What neighborhoods do you not feel safe in Are their places that the person you are fleeing from goes too frequently or receive services. If you want to provide that information. And then if they feel safe with certain agencies, And so I think really providing, you know, how much information they want to provide based on what their experiences is. Instead of asking how many people are and your household it, what is the minimum number bed? So knowing that information and then also making sure that you're matching people that 1st time to the best fir the first time possible. If it's not a good fit the 1st round it could continue to be traumatizing and really upsetting to someone and so that's one of our priorities to really figure out the best way to do that with the least amount of people checking information.

**Kevin Solarte:** Thank you Laura. I think the work that you all are doing to really put the survivor in the driver's seat is great. Great. How do we get that information up front? And there is a transfer process and empower them to help make the best decision around their own safety. I think we all can learn a lot from that. So I think it's great. And those kind of basic questions up front of helping someone actually articulate with a safe unit is opposed to like just leaving that wide open. I think is really helpful. And I think would be really helpful for survivors that are trying to work through the emergency transfer process. OK, I'm going to keep us moving along. So the next question I have is actually for, going to back to emergency transfer stuff, is actually for Gordon to talk a little bit about the complexity of emergency transfers, when it may mean, right, that a person is transferring out family situation, out of the unit into another housing option, and our obligation, right, to the survivor to ensure that we help with that emergency transfer. But what about the obligation to the remaining family member who may have been the perpetrator of domestic violence, but also without

the CoC resources and the potential to be experiencing homelessness. Can you talk a little bit about how that dynamic is played out from the state?

**Gordon Levin:** Sure I'd be happy to. This is a, I think this is a really good question. It's also

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a really challenging question for me personally. As I think you've noticed, I feel pretty strongly about the believe survivor's angle that we're taking philosophically here, but also operationally. And so it's difficult when you feel deeply compelled to serve people who are being hurt in a serious way to also recognize that you have an obligation, in some cases when you're dealing with people experiencing homelessness to serve the people who are perpetrating that harm. And so there was a great question in the chat. I was scrolling through the chat log a minute ago. There's a great question in the chat about what do you do when your CES. Manager or a director says, oh, we have to do it this way and somebody comes back and says, well show me the regulations. Well, this is one of those situations in which you can show them the regulations. And so ultimately, when you're talking about, there are a bunch of buzzwords, but this bifurcations one of them. Ultimately, when you're talking about, what do you do when you've got a household that splitting up and part of the household is feeling domestic violence, and at least part of the household that's remaining is the perpetrator of that domestic violence? The answer is the same as it would be in any other situation. If you are serving a person who is experiencing homelessness, you continue to serve that person experiencing homelessness according to the HUD regs. And you do your level best not to return them to homelessness under any circumstance. And that's the end of the road. And the follow up to that is of course, always well, but like we're, we're housing this person who's fleeing domestic violence, right so should that have some consequences for the perpetrator? Well, you know, they're still a person who is experiencing homelessness, there in your rapid Project or your PSH. Project. And they're there for a reason. And so in the same way that our coordinated entry system in general, but also, I think philosophically what we and the HUD funded homeless services universe think of, as you know, everyone is entitled to services, everyone who's experiencing homelessness deserves services applies here. We don't pick favorites participants, we don't serve people in order of the extent to which we like serving them. Part of the idea, or at least with our coordinated entry system, is that everyone's prioritized according to need and not how easy it is to serve them or how much we happen to like this participant. And the inverse is also true. We are required to serve people regardless of what we feel about their life choices. We might really not like what their life choices are, and that's fine, that's who we are as people and there's an extent to which we have to acknowledge those internal biases. But they can't guide our decision making and terms of housing provision or in terms of implementing HUD regulations. And so this is a thing that I prefer strongly not to do when dealing with our providers or when dealing with our stakeholders. But at the end of the day, the letter of the law is you serve people according to their homeless status and not according to your preference for serving them, end of sentence. And that's the letter of the law and you got to follow it. And we can have a discussion about how uncomfortable that makes you and we can have a discussion about how unhappy that might make you. And that's reasonable. And I'm here for that discussion. You know, recognizing that your providers have their emotional investment and those are often very reasonable. But at the same time, if they're experiencing homelessness, right there all of our participants regardless of what their life choices are.

**Lisa Coffman:** And can I just jump in Kevin before we move on from this question? That's a great point by Gordon. And it's one of the things that we at SNAPS always lift up right. Like CoCs have program guidelines. Each individual project should have program guidelines that determines how, how you serve people, like how people come into your programs. What happens when you have to terminate someone because of noncompliance? What does that look like? What is their due process? So now more than ever, it's really important for CoCs and programs to be thinking about

that and putting things down on paper because Gordon brought up, you know, really good points like this is not about emotion. Right? This is about, you know, you're serving homeless people and if you have a situation where there is a perpetrator, you know what sort of triggers, what's there for your program that states, you know people are evicted from our program for these reasons. Right? So that's, it's really important to make sure that you have that so that if you are choosing to terminate the assistance of a perpetrator,

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it's because you have clearly defined program guidelines that demonstrate that this person, you know is not in compliance with your program guidelines and this is what they will have to do to appeal the process to, to do all the due diligence that we ask you all to do CoC and ESG funded providers. So that was just really want to throw that out there because it is important as Gordon says, as we get into these tricky situations. I think there was a question in the chat that came through, you know, how are we to discern who the victim is? You know, we've had multiple people in the household, you know, asking for the VAWA protection, you know, how do we determine who's a victim who's the perpetrator? Gordon brought up a really good point like it's about serving, you know, the homeless people, the survivors, you know, in that case, you know, we are not really asking you to determine. You know you can under, you know, under this legislation, under this act, you can continue to serve both. I just wanted to throw that out there to plug, plug your program guidelines, plug, creating them, and plug making sure that you have a clearly defined process. You know, when you are enacting terminating someone for a cause from your program.

**Kevin Solarte:** I think the next question you were posing and just for a time check for our panelists, we are going until 2:15. So another about 15 minutes East Coast time. So what we'll do just because of time is Lisa is going to ask this last question to both Laura and I think Gordon around partnerships and how those partnerships look. So we will give about 5-6 minutes to answer that question between the 2 of you. And then we're actually just going to shift over straight doing some Q&A from folks, because there's lots of good stuff that's coming into the chat. We want to make sure we take the last 10 minutes to actually talk about those. So I'll turn it back over to you, Lisa.

**Lisa Coffman:** All right, so a key strategy to implementing emergency transfers is the partnership with state domestic violence coalitions to improve your emergency transfer plans. So I'm interested and Laura you will go 1<sup>st</sup>, to hear you all talk about your work with connecting with either your state DV Coalition or the victim service providers, DV Programs, advocates in your community. So we'll start, we'll hear 1st from Laura and then Gordon if you can jump in too that would be great.

**Laura Evanoff:** So here in Austin, we are very lucky to have an excellent relationship with our victim service providers. So they have helped us and creating the policy they've reviewed it. They made edits. They are very much involved in every step as we are creating policies and procedures. And so we specifically stated in our policy that program should always offer referrals in connection to victims service providers because they are the experts. And so that offering those services where it's needed and not saying that it's a requirement, but you know, continuing to offer connection. And so we want to case managers to learn basic competency skills, but to also learn how to recommend and offer direct referrals to service providers who are more skilled with working with those experiencing domestic violence. And so a lot of that, a continuing to remind program participants that they can continue to engage in services and that we will support them throughout. But also if they need to connect with domestic violence to stay in there transitional housing that they can do that, that they can enter into an emergency shelter, that they can seek Case Management Services or

any other kind of therapeutic services while staying in the program and throughout the emergency transfer process because their safety is the most important thing.

**Lisa Coffman:** Thank you. Thank you, Gordon. How about you? What's your experience been?

**Gordon Levine:** I feel like I touched on this earlier and in the interests of time I'm not going to try and retread that territory. I just wanted to make a couple of additional points. So 1st, I want to reemphasize that we absolutely would not have gotten where we did without the National Alliance for Safe Housing being extremely willing to share their expertise with us. 2<sup>nd</sup> it has been invaluable to us that roughly 20 percent of our board is drawn from either D.V. Service providers or by organizations that run projects targeted that people are experiencing violence. And so having them at the table at that level has been absolutely invaluable. Finally,

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one of the very 1st things that happened when I got on the ground here in Louisiana is that the DV Providers indicated that they felt strongly about creating domestic violence service provider working group as part of the CoCs formal structure with some level of authority or equivalent level of authority to propose changes to all of our policies around DV To the board. And that was an incredibly valuable implementation to the extent that one of the very 1st things they were able to do, which is now helping us tremendously in our coordinated entry implementation was deciding on one HMIS comparable database for the entire state. And so that has tremendously simplified everything that we're doing down here and absolutely would not have been possible without our strong statewide network providers without them being involved in the CoC. And without them banding together into a formal entity in the CoC.

**Kevin Solarte:** Great. I think both of you have just great examples, and what we've talked through in the prep-work and here today is really, I heard very strongly from both of you the power of having victim services provider at the table and, kind of, coalitions and the influence that that can have. And so I think encouragement, right, everyone on the phone is to be reaching out, if you haven't involved your local or state coalitions or victim service providers in this process, start right there at the 1st thing to do. With their expertise and their ability to really see themselves in the plan and see them being a part of this work. Together, I think the hope here is that we'll continue to kind of build those bridges between the CoC and victim service providers with continual work like this. And the emergency transfer plans, can be a big piece about.

So in the sake of time, I want to quickly just. Sorry for those watching on the screen I'm sliding through these very quickly, but Laura did already talk around confidentiality, which is great. So we're going to move toward the last one which is lease bifurcation. And for that both, Lisa and I are going to give a few pointers as opposed to Laura and Gordon speak. But really the big things here right is least bifurcation is an option, it's not a requirement of the rule and that's the lease bifurcation. One thing I want to emphasize is that there is there is a difference between the assistance side of it as the ESG or CoC provider, and what you need to do to split the assistance versus what I actually believe bifurcation is particularly actually speaking to which is separating the actual lease. And that really sits with the landlord, that ability to say yes or no to the splitting of the lease. So I think as CoC and ESG providers, the work really more about ensuring that a landlord understands that it is an option and what you will offer as a provider to help assistance if it needs to happen. So I think right, you have to think about this especially in TBRA in multiple steps. Part of this and you all as CoC and ESG provide are to decide how you're going to split that assistance. What type of actual rental assistance or other assistance is going to go to each leaving family member, the remaining family member, but in terms

of that specific unit, it may not be an option if your landlords choose not to take that option. So really kind of remember those double steps that have to happen both from the assistance side and the legal lease side. Anything you would add to that Lisa?

**Lisa Coffman:** Yeah. And I really lease bifurcation is something that we've done informally in the CoC in programs. Like we have done things where we have been creative, you know to help families deal with whatever situations we've done that program providers have done that long before it was sort of codified in VAWA. So I don't want people to sort of get hung up on the fact that you know it's now in the act so I now have a specific requirement because we know that our CoC and ESG providers have been pretty nimble in terms of meeting the needs of homeless families even before this. That the main protection under the bifurcation is to allow the folks who are asking for sort of the remedy, the tenants who have been impacted by violence, they're asking for the ability to continue to receive assistance under the original term of assistance. So that is kind of like the difference, right. We have, you know, you have a person that comes in and you as a provider, you give them X amount of months of assistance. You know it's a finite period and what the lease bifurcation is doing,

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it's allowing you to continue. You know if you've given a household 12 months of assistance, it's allowing you to continue if you choose to fund, you know, a perpetrator or someone who, you know there's been some issues with their claim against, you can continue to fund that person and also funds you know, the tenants that are requesting remedy to for that period of time. Now the issue with bifurcation, and Kevin talked about it, you know, the deal is to give, you know, the people who are asking sort of to split the assistance to give them the opportunity to qualify for assistance on their own, right. There are times that people can do, that, but there are situations where if it's a PSH program right and the head of the household, the person with the disability was the perpetrator. So you know the folks who are leaving may not be able to qualify under PSH. You know, they still have that term of assistance, but they have to have the ability to be able to qualify for assistance on their own So we recognize that, you know, while the sounds like sort of a new concept and there's tons of questions coming in about specifics about it, it's really sort of a value that we've had in the CoC and ESG programs all along. And you know, I'm just going to be candid, we, there's not a lot written down about how to do that. And that's kind of good. Right? Because it gives us a framework to do what we need to do to be creative, to make sure that we're housing people. So we've answered questions, you know, directly we've worked with programs about what that looks like. We'll continue to do that, you know, CSH our TA providers have worked with people. So you know, I just want to make a plug for that. I don't want people to sort of, you know, look at, this is some huge burden, but really to what both Gordon and Laura have talked about like this is an opportunity for us to really be responsive to the needs of, you know folks who have been impacted by domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. And we're really in a unique position that we now have this act that kind of allows us, you know, gives us a framework to do this stuff and be kind of creative. So yeah, I think that's all I want to say about that.

Kevin Solarte: Great, thank you. OK. So we're going to take the last 10 minutes. If you haven't put your question in the chat, go ahead and do that. But there's a lot to question here. So we're going to try to weed through them and get through many as we can in the next 5 or so minutes. But before we do that, I know because Gordon's chatting me and I'm sure Laura would say the same, that they are available, their emails are on the slides and they are available to answer questions as well. If there were specific strategies that they were talking through that you want to, we didn't get to dig deep as we wanted to for the sake of time, I know both of them would be happy to do so. And I got to spend a good amount of time on the phone with both of them and preparing for this and I can I can vouch for the fact that they really have some great strategies that they thought through both their communities. Use them as a resource as well,

and they also were getting several questions in the chat around can you share things like sample rental agreements and can Gordon share things like the policy around coordinate entry that governs the priority for emergency transfers. So we warned Gordon and Laura that they will probably get lots of requests to share documentation. So again, utilize their e-mail on the slides. And I'm actually going to put that slide back up while we're answering questions just so you have it. But utilize that e-mail and reach out as resources. Also, you can reach out to Lisa and me and there's also, you know, the formal way to ask the question through the HUD email as well. Well, so we aren't by no means going to get all these questions the next 5 minutes. So, but that doesn't mean you can't get an answer to it. Just make sure you're submitting those, if they don't get answered today.

**Lisa Coffman:** I just and I just wanted to say one thing out there, a couple questions that came in around safe havens in emergency shelters. So the VAWA requirements apply to for the CoC Program. It's primarily the rental assistance projects. That's really a clean way to kind of think about it so any rapid rehousing rental assistance, any transitional housing, any permanent supportive housing rental assistance project. The VAWA requirements for the lease bifurcation, for the ability to transfer the eviction protections, those requirements are sit on the rental assistance programs and same thing for ESG funded rental

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assistance is required to comply with. Now I will say this about emergency shelters, so they don't have the same requirements for emergency transfer. We are encouraging emergency shelters to have VAWA notices up so that when people are, you know, when people move on to rental assistance programs and more permanent housing programs, they understand what the VAWA protections are and if they ever need to enact them. But you know, we received a question about what is and what is the emergency transfer looks like from emergency shelter to emergency shelter, and there's not a requirement for that because it's not rental assistance. So I hope this kind of clears up, you know what you have to sort of be mindful of in your projects and when the VAWA rules kick in.

**Kevin Solarte:** And just one more quick reminder on the right is the basic protection of not being able to deny access, it definitely does apply in shelters and safe havens as well. So likely such that the kind of all those other pieces really are more applicable to when you actually put in housing as the sellers behind it but just as for that that are providing crisis housing and shelter, just a reminder that if you know ensuing you are not denying access based solely on the fact that there are survivor's protection to put in place.

So in the last couple minutes I'm just going to, I've been trying to read through these as fast as I can, and I kind of cluster them together in terms of; there is a decent amount of question around the emergency transfers and coordinate entry. So the quick and easy thing is it doesn't necessarily have to go through coordinated entry by any means. Gordon's example it goes through coordinate entry and I think it works well, but that's up to your community. I think the encouragement there really is, even if it doesn't formally go through coordinated entry, ensuring that at the core, those 2 systems work together. Right? Because it is going to affect kind of how your coordinated entry system works, even if formally, kind of if they're not processed through coordinated entry.

The other ones are, I just want to touch on a few like basic kind of requirements here in terms of what you supply to. There are some questions around the notice of rights has to be given all the points on that slide. It does, right. So you do really give it out if there's any kind of termination, if the person had naturally gone off of that assistance because they exit to permanency, you don't need to give out, but you do need to give it any time that you are ending their

assistance for any reason whether that's an eviction or that some type of ending based on your program rule you will have to be given that notice of rights.

There's also some basic questions on which CoC and ESG grants this applies to. It applies to all of them no matter what year you were funded in. And so if you're coming in under renewal none of that matters, as soon as this rule went into effect it covers any CoC and ESG grant you may have out there. And so that was part of the work of making sure you kind of got the notice of rights out and started putting these things in place because that has to be across all of your funded projects.

As I predicted, we don't have time to get through the majority of the questions, but again, please, please reach out to Gordon and Laura with specific questions you might have about the strategies that they talked about today. Also feel free to reach out to Lisa and myself if the questions are a bit more on kind of the mechanics of compliance of the VAWA rule, and we're happy to help you think through all of those mechanics, make sure you're compliant with that rule. So you've got both a compliance standpoint of Lisa and I and the real life experience of Laura and Gordon to really bounce off of. Thank you so much Laura and Gordon for taking the time today and sharing the amazing work that you both are doing and helping lead in your community And thank you to my co-presenter Lisa and again, have a great day and feel free to reach out with any questions you might have.