

LIGHTLY EDITED FILE

National Alliance for Safe Housing (NASH)

DVHTAC COVID-19 Special Topic Series

Racial Equity in Safe Housing

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CART PROVIDED BY: Angie Sundell, RDR, CRR, CBC, CCP, AE
Paradigm Reporting & Captioning Inc.
a Veritext Company
612.339.0545
Captioning-paradigm@veritext.com

>> Hello, everybody.

We're going to go ahead and get started with today's webinar.

I see that some people are quickly joining and introducing themselves in the chat webinar box.

So please join the conversation, say hello in the Zoom webinar chat and tell us who you are and where you're from and where you're working and we really are hoping for this webinar today that you will engage in this conversation and dialogue around racial equity and safe housing.

And we have more time today, typically our COVID series has been an hour, we have set aside 90 minutes for today's conversation in the hopes that we'll have more dialogue and more discussion around where our field's going and how we can center racial equity in our work. Just so you all know, this webinar will be recorded and I'm here with my moderator, co-moderator, Shenna Morris from Collaborative Solutions and also we have some amazing presenters from Oregon and Texas, we have Mona Kafeel from the Texas Muslim Women's Foundation who will be presenting, as well as Alexandra Appleton and Cameron Foster from Self-Enhancement Inc.

So just a quick hello, I just want to thank everybody for joining us today for our DVHTAC housing and

COVID-19 weekly webinar.

Today we're going to focus on safe and equitable housing.

As you know, when we began the series back in March to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, so we've had weekly webinars on that topic and what the focus of also centering racial equity around the COVID response, but now, more than ever, with the uprising and as the world consciousness has shifted to address the pandemic and safety, health and housing, racial inequities for black and African Americans in this country, the way that we're looking at things has totally shifted.

And we're thinking of racial inequity and racism as a pandemic that need to be addressed, in the wake of the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery and most recently Rayshard Brooks and far too many other black, African Americans and transgender women of color that have experienced violence and murders as a result of racism in this country.

So we are in the midst of a national conversation about racial secretary and justice and housing is a big piece of racial equity and justice in our country.

So this discussion we'll be having today is a call for action and a call for discussion for our field to focus on the history of antiblack racism and government-sponsored segregation in housing in this

country and how that history is fundamental to issues of housing and equity today.

So we have a real opportunity today as folks in the housing field working on these issues to address homelessness because there's a lot of new funding with the recent \$4 billion that's been invested with continuum of care emergency solutions grants, resources, along with many federal, state and local resources for homelessness and housing.

We have an opportunity to ask them to prioritize the racial equity and the distribution of these housing resources and to make sure that the communities, organizations that are most impacted, in particular, African American survivors, that they are prioritized for housing resources.

So today we'll be hearing from our culturally specific -- two culturally specific organizations, they both have housing programs that are formed by the communities where they live and serve and then also just to wrap up this overview, I just wanted to do some quick statistics behind race and homelessness and how that's impacted and the need for racial equity responsiveness in our programming and services before I turn it over to the presenters.

So, just quick overview, there's some work that we have

been highlighting over the last couple of years, the research on the Sparks study, you can Google that, but there was a real intersection from the Sparks study that we learned very clearly that while the general population of the U.S. is 74% white, 12% black and 17% Latinx that the rates of homelessness for those communities are much much higher than the general population in the U.S.

So there's a disproportionate representation of communities of color and then we also see a thread of DV, sexual violence and interpersonal violence, the experience of high rates of violence are common among those experience of people of color experiencing homelessness.

Next slide, please.

And also as we're thinking about the intersection of COVID, housing and racial equity, the rate of the health crisis around COVID has become very clear that African Americans, black Americans and Native Americans are disproportionately impacted and are dying at much higher rates, particularly for black Americans, they're dying at 2.6 times the rate of white folks in our country.

So that's about 26 deaths per 100,000 people.

So, you know, there's many overlays of how this plays out and there's definitely research that overlays makes

it clear and suggests that racial residential segregation is a fundamental cause of health disparities and lack of access to health and hospital resources is clear in communities that have had -- that have experienced racial segregation.

So communities of color have disproportionately been neighborhoods that have been disinvested in as a result of redlining and have less access to food and grocery stores, medical facilities and many people of color live in assisted living and HUD-funded programs that are often, by design, are often in segregated neighborhoods with less investments.

And then also there's definite challenge for people of color living in rural communities and less access to facilities and agencies for support as well.

Is there another slide?

So at this point, we still have quite a bit of time, we still have about 80 minutes left.

I'm going to turn it over to our presenters and they can guide us in this conversation and discussion, and I really encourage all of us to participate in the chat box and engage in discussion and I'm going to turn it over to Mona Kafeel, she can talk about her work in Plano, Texas, and how she is able to work with her continuum of care to get HUD funding and HUD resources

to her community.

So I'm going to turn it over to Mona.

And thank you, all, for joining us today.

[silence]

Sorry, we're having a little bit of a technical difficulty.

We're needing to unmute Mona, so just give us one second while we work on the technical pieces and she is unmuted.

So it's all yours, Mona.

Thanks for your patience.

[silence]

[silence]

>> Hey, Mona, can you hear us?

>> Hello.

>> There we go, great, we can hear you.

Mona?

I think we should do a quick pivot and maybe we can start with Alexandra Appleton.

>> Mona: Hello, can you hear me?

>> Oh, there we go, Mona.

Hi.

We can hear you now.

Mona?

Okay.

We'll go ahead and switch to Alexandra, take a quick moment to pivot.

Alexandra, if you're comfortable jumping into the queue and sharing your experience with us over at Self-Enhancement Inc. at Portland, Oregon.

>> Alexandra: Yeah, sure, so much, I appreciate it.

Thank you, everybody.

How's everybody doing?

My name is Alexandra Appleton, I use she/her pronouns and I'm the ADSV program manager for Self-Enhancement. Self-Enhancement is an organization providing culturally specific services for the African American community primarily in the greater Portland, Oregon, region.

The goal of SEI is to provide wrap-around services that ensure that our community and every one of our community members has the opportunity to thrive on our own terms, on their own terms, as well.

SEI provides numerous school-based services, in-school, after-school, and summer services to provide opportunities for African American students to be successful in all areas of their lives.

So students in SEI programming achieve a high school graduate rate at over 90%, and SEI community and family programs provide multiple services designed to uplift

the entire community.

This is where our program and the homeless housing program are housed because we know that the youth and families can only thrive when their community thrives. So SEI strives to bring healing to our community members through love, relationships, and opportunity and exposure in hopes, because we know healed people heal people.

And to say a little bit more about myself, in addition to serving as the ADSV program manager, I also serve as a board member to Call to Safety and Call to Safety is also a local DVSA, meaning domestic violence and sexual violence system here in Portland, and I'm also on the home for everyone joint office of homeless services board.

So I do have a lot of tools in my box, but today I will be speaking specifically to domestic violence and what the impact and the COVID need and the housing need is for survivors and then my peer, Cameron Foster, she will be speaking to more of the history of the CoC and SEI, I have only been in position at SEI going on seven months, it's been a joy and I'm excited to share with you about what's going on with us and, you know, learn with you as well.

So next slide.

So the impact begins with the lack of basic needs, such

as food, access to shelter, housing, employment, transportation, and medical care.

Being able to respond to the core basic needs from communities for communities with culturally specific programming, such as COVID testing, food, utility assistance has been a priority for SEI where we have developed wrap-around services serving the Black community of Portland.

We are having to shift much of our advocacy from initially talking about domestic or sexual violence to if a survivor and family has access to food and housing.

Having access to flexible cash assistance and long-term sustainable housing solution is always at the forefront.

In response to immediate danger, we have been able to access motel vouchers which allows survivors to flee domestic violence.

And with limited capacity in shelters included it's continued a lack of housing, survivors face uncertainty after the motel voucher ends.

Gift cards for immediate danger, some of the flex spends, we believe folks are the experts in their own lives and in most cases flex funding avenues with less restrictions are the most effective culturally

appropriate way to serve our community.

Next slide.

As we know, the Black community is facing the highest rates of COVID prevalence and fatalities with limited access to health and medical care, sustainable employment and housing.

And this all happens during an uprising among the community after a long list of murders, primarily by police of black folks which was ignited after George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, just to name a few.

Continued violence against Black and Brown communities and at times within the community is sustained by the longstanding antiblack racism with our country, furthermore, worldwide.

It's important to call it out.

So we have defined safety in ways which we reflect the reality that Black community has very little safety outside of the context of domestic and sexual violence and/or the community, for Portland, our community is very small, and it becomes challenging, but rewarding when we are able to achieve safety for not only the victim and survivor but also for the abuser and/or perpetrator.

In accessing systems based on interventions are not viable for much of our community, black pain doesn't

get what it deserves.

I consistently hear this from survivors when they attempt to navigate systems in general and now with COVID in the state of emergency against black and brown bodies, it's definitely -- yeah.

We can talk about that later.

So we also recognize the mental and emotional impacts that are occurring within the Black and African American community.

The hypervigilance that we are seeing, which is interconnected to housing.

Between the rage and the hope and the despair and the numbness that is setting in amongst the culturally specific consumers and providers is taking a toll. That survivor experience that black and African American members experience as they navigate even upward mobility, it becomes very -- it's a lift.

And, so, that gets impacted as well.

Let me see.

I think we are ready for the next slide.

Yeah, next slide.

So some of the delivery shifts, our model is now focused on the present and that is like food and shelter, fresh food, safe shelters, shelter, we recognize that shelter is not always the feasible

option or housing black people is not a safer space, for lack of words.

Safety from the streets and incarceration and mental institutions, emotional well-being and trauma, just addressing the daily trauma due to black racism and domestic violence and sexual trauma.

There is also the virtual divide, the digital divide that Black and African American community is facing, and right now we are also pivoting to providing -- our advocacy is mostly providing culturally specific T.A., I mean T.A., technical assistance, ranging from setting up emails, purchasing laptops, Chrome books, onboarding virtual support groups.

Virtual support groups, remind me to come back to that. In ways that folks can follow the social distancing, stay safe, and be able to get information and be able to coordinate services ranging from -- could be a lot of services.

Child visits, e-filing, housing, looking for housing, employment, I mean, all those things are necessary.

We know that COVID -- we want people to be healthy, but still remain connected.

It's challenging when folks are unable -- don't have access to technology, now have access and they're not kind of not forced but kind of nudged to do it immediately.

So to move on, outside of our delivery model, we are advocating for long-term solutions such as access to permanent supportive housing, and I really just can stop here and just to touch base.

Not to take too much time.

Permanent supportive housing, but permanent supportive housing in real neighborhoods with real resources in real houses and it's not permanent supportive -- it can be but permanent supportive housing in apartments versus permanent supportive housing options in real neighborhoods really makes a difference and can solve a lot of solutions within the Black and African American community, especially when you consider intergenerational cycles of trauma.

And restorative justice as a DVSA, domestic and sexual violence response, not driven by law enforcement or system response.

And I have a feeling we might get into that later so I will move on because I would like us to get to Cam.

Can you go to the next slide?

Thank you.

Oh, actually, I apologize, you can go back one.

So I have one more to talk about.

So, we work among a system of 13 domestic and sexual violence providers which involve a larger mainstream

victim service providers, which includes -- sorry -- larger mainstream victim service providers and other culturally specific providers with a developed, coordinated access system which Debbie Fox helped create.

Thank you, Debbie.

We are working together on many levels to address housing needs, statewide advocacy and safety during COVID, including medical and mental health and creating a restorative justice response for survivors which does not include law enforcement but then we also are incorporating equity at intersections of the survivor-led experience.

We have always through the county domestic and sexual violence providers, we have always prioritized culturally specific partners through funding and resource allocation.

And currently with the increase due to the Black community from COVID and systemic racism and white supremacy, especially in Portland, Oregon, our system is envisioning a new defined DVSA response, which is centered and led by survivors, specifically black and black trans survivors who face the highest risk of violence, as well as the black individuals that -- who live with disabilities.

And I just like to say, the voice of trans lives matter

does not dilute Black Lives Matter movement.

It deepens it.

And, so, -- and, actually, amplifies it and I thought that that would be a great way to kind of take us off into Cameron, I'm looking forward to Q & A later.

Thank you for letting me share.

>> Presenters, I didn't know if we wanted to go back to Mona first, but I'm ready to present.

>> I would say we could continue talking with Self-Enhancement and go back to Mona when we've had a chance to share and continue that conversation.

>> For sure.

Thank you.

This is Cameron Foster from SEI, Self-Enhancement, Inc., here in Portland, Oregon.

Alexandra got a chance to give you a well-rounded idea of what Self-Enhancement's message and mission is in our community here locally.

I am the homeless housing supervisor over rents that we oversee here at SEI to work with the Black community experiencing homelessness.

And you can advance the slide to the next one.

Thank you.

So as it stands, we have a federally funded COC grant currently that's called Project Haven.

And what we've seen during COVID-19 is the exposure of the disparities in the African American community as it relates to housing, access to food, access to healthcare systems and, really, that's been highlighted during this time.

So we have been the beneficiary of some of the CARES funding through the CARES act and have been able to households that we work with with some funding that Alexandra mentioned and funding and the access to that funding I'd say is what I see as an issue.

So if there are barriers to obtaining documentation required to disburse those funds, then that becomes a barrier to some of the households who have the higher needs.

And we were able to give out some \$500 gift cards as a result of that and some of those CARES funding also went to support our agency so that we can continue to do this work with our community here locally in Portland.

And the growing reality and the factual need is that this is not new, that I am grateful of the silver lining of COVID-19 to kind of highlight, expose, exploit these disparities that have existed for a long time and, so, for that I'm grateful for conversations like this that are borne out of this.

But the reality is that these disparities and the

structural racism in all of these systems that has been designed -- that have been designed like this directly impacts housing stability, safety, healthcare needs and, so, for that I'm grateful.

But the need is here.

And while we are grateful as an agency to have received CARES funding and been able to help folks out, it's just not enough, and if the federal government and local government are able to understand or see through meetings and opportunities like this that the need is great, then -- and be able to reach out to meet those needs and fund agencies that are culturally specific, like SEI, that are directly supporting the community that they represent and serve in a way that is fitting for our community.

So African Americans experience homelessness different, access shelter less often, and the whole slew of other things.

Can you advance the slide?

Thank you.

So, SEI as an agency has been in relationship with the CoC, the continuum of care, and we are supported by the continuum of care for the HUD-funded Project Haven and have built a relationship with the Joint Office of Homelessness, and the local county here where Portland

is, Multnomah County, and the city of Portland have joined forces together to collaborate and coordinate the Joint Office of Homelessness Services.

So that JOHS, as we refer to it, oversees this funding. And Project Haven has been in existence going on four years now and we have been in relationship with JOHS, joint office of homelessness since its inception, which is about ten years ago.

The Project Haven grant delivers rapid rehousing services, as well as permanent supportive housing services, so when we initially got on board with this, we had a subrecipient, the Urban League of Portland, who mainly oversees the permanent supportive housing aspect of this Project Haven and SEI oversees the rapid rehousing aspect of Project Haven and directly serving the African American community which has proven over time to show and demonstrate the holes in the system and the requirements of the CoC for access to this program for community members is -- it's an assessment and, so, the assessment tool that we use currently in this region is not designed to necessarily capture the vulnerability of the African American community and over time that assessment tool has been tweaked to try to capture that but -- and that's just an idea or an example of how these systems are set up and how even Band-Aids to access tools or assessment tools like I'm

speaking about don't get at the root issue of the systemic racism in this country and the impact it has on African American community.

Can you advance to the next slide?

Thank you.

Got a little ahead of myself.

So I was speaking about the coordinated access system and this assessment tool and the disparities that the African American community face across the board and while this system is working to change that, to allow it to more accurately reflect and capture the vulnerability of African Americans and their experience, our experience with homelessness, let me pause for a second because I do have lived experience.

I'm a survivor of domestic violence and in fleeing ended up homeless with my four girls, four children.

So I know from both angles what it's like to access services and to give services.

So, yeah, that kind of concludes that.

I have a ton of touch points but I want to allow for the time of questions so that I'm touching on what folks are most interested in.

>> And I actually covered this previously.

I apologize.

So we can actually move to Mona, if you want to.

>> Mona: Yes, hello.

>> We can hear you now, Mona.

I think you have to speak up a little bit.

Thank you.

>> Mona: Thank you for your patience.

I apologize for my phone hiccups.

This is Mona Kafeel from Texas Muslim Women's
Foundation.

We are situated in Collin County in the suburbs of
Dallas.

We are an agency of 14 employees with 2.7 million
budget so we are fairly medium-sized.

And I took this position in April, right in the middle
of COVID.

So we have external circumstances and then we have
internal transitions.

So a lot of changes happening at MWF.

So Texas Muslim Women's Foundation has been a
culturally specific agency for the past many years, and
just to give you kind of an idea of how and what we
are, we have at least, at least 15 languages spoken
within the agency between 14 employees.

So not only we reflect what is out in the U.S.A. even
within our staff members diversity is a lot and we are
constantly teaching and learning how to manage the
diversity within.

So this was our first year for getting this grant.
So we are fairly new and still learning the ropes.
We have five apartments and nine rapid rehousing
through this grant, so overall we have two shelters and
27 apartments, transition housing apartments, and we,
of course, just like anyone else, we have extensive
process of who goes in there.

So we have one transition housing which has given us 18
months and then we have part which gives us 90 days.

So we are constantly looking at who goes, who's ready
to do the fast track of 90 days and who's not ready and
they move into 18 months transitional housing, and I
think when I speak with the case managers and our
staff, one of the things that keeps coming up, again
and again, is the financial literacy.

That is the single most barrier that after the shelter,
after the crisis -- after the crisis situation, after
that finance becomes a very hard-hitting and a barrier.

So we started working with Wells Fargo, Allstate and
working on financial literacy too with all of them.

And we were lucky to get Wells Fargo Prosperity Now,
it's a pilot program.

They work and they partnered with us.

We have financial literacy classes in other languages
beyond English, and that really has helped us with the

clients and looking at the different cultures and different languages understanding financial literacy in their own language has really helped us, these ladies into a different, I guess, education level and moving into their own sufficiency.

One of the things that we face again and again, especially I would speak to, is language barrier, that comes again and again, that also with financial literacy, language barrier is one of the things that our clients are constantly worrying about.

For example, when COVID happened, initially, the clients were clueless because the amount of literature coming their way was overwhelming for them, understanding was overwhelming for them. And our programs across the board literally stopped, especially with transitional housing, and we were back into teaching them better English, or translating with them, so across the board the progress that was being made through financial literacy classes or any other classes that we are to pause, we are to reassess and work again into two things, language access and translation services as well as the software, learning software.

So now the counselors have to counsel -- go through Zoom or their own software, so how do we teach these people?

And a lot of them, we are also supporting a lot of women who were also with the abuser, how does that look like?

So for the past two months we have been focusing on definitely language and how to break barriers on to software learning.

That's where right now we are.

And I feel that, you know, financial literacy is a big piece into all of this.

I haven't prepared much slides because, again, like I said, I am still new, I haven't even done my 90 days.

Not only that, the grant is fairly new, so we're

learning a lot of things as we go along.

And my staff tells me that MDHA, which is local here,

we get a lot of help from them, we get a lot of help

from their meetings and we are going through a huge

learning curve to begin with.

So I would be more open to questions at this point.

And you take it from here, Debbie and everyone.

>> Debbie: Thanks so much to both Mona and Cameron, as well as Alexandra.

So there are a few questions that I had for you all.

So I know that you've all, both talked about having

access to resources and funding in order to provide

housing.

But could you maybe speak a little bit about how you built and sustain relationships with your CoCs?

How are you able to gain access to those funds?

Did you all just randomly apply or did you have an existing relationship?

Could you speak a bit more about that, please?

>> Mona: So, our relationship with the council on family violence, that's very strong, and they really give us direction on where to go, how to move, how to grow.

So we look at them quite a bit and they were the first ones giving us these cues of, you know, this is the route you need to go and apply.

So we formed an alliance with Texas Council on Family Violence and that really has helped us quite a bit in terms of learning, because we're still new, and in terms of giving us direction, how to go.

So I would definitely say the Texas Council on Family Violence.

>> Cameron, would you like to answer that question?

I mean, I could put my 2 cents in after you.

>> Cameron: Sure.

So, SEI has been, again, in relationship with the Joint Office of Homeless Services here in Portland, who oversees the CoC fund that we have in the community, and when culturally specific funding became available

the joint office actually reached out to us as an agency knowing the work that we've done with women, been in the community for 35 years, and asked us to apply and, so, that just kind of speaks to the relationship that we have with the CoC, also the newly appointed HUD CoC program lead down at JOHS is Bill Boyd, and we've worked together in the past on a different project.

I'm excited to see him in that role and in that position, but it's through those interactions in the past that we've established relationships, continue to build them, and been able to apply for and secure funding.

>> Shenna: Awesome, awesome, like you said, those existing relationships that were built over time is what I gathered from that.

And for both of you, what would have been helpful in the beginning before funds were received or applied for?

>> Mona: For us, we had transitional housing apartment but that was private foundations.

So for the past years, we were working with private foundations helping us with transitional housing and now we've moved that into a match funding.

So I think it's a good leverage at this point for us.

>> Additionally, federally housing programs that are more user friendly for culturally specific agencies to access funding, intentionally seek those out, those agencies out.

>> Shenna: Okay.

Alexandra, I believe you talked a little bit about the digital divide, especially now during COVID.

Could you talk about some of the ways that perhaps you've observed the digital divide further exacerbate racial inequities in health, safety and housing during COVID?

>> Alexandra: Yeah.

I mean, more specifically with survivors, safe to say, for people of color and for the global majority when DPS is involved and when you are seeking safety because you can't provide a safe space for your children then that means that, you know, potentially you're not -- you don't get your children, so for our survivors, then it becomes very difficult.

And I'm sorry, I'm very passionate, as you can see, about what my community is experiencing right now, and not only from that, it's communicating with family members, it's making sure that their EBT is on, it's making sure that they can apply for COVID relief, which is a major thing, and being able to even -- there are folks that can't -- have not accessed Gmail at all.

There are people that have vision disabilities, that is one of the reasons we're seeing that something is interconnected to something else, like a survivor will come to us and the reason they have not accessed the Internet is because they can't see or they have something like they have a physical mobility with their hands and they can't type and now that is getting unpacked, which is great, but when we already know there's disparities with accessing, in trauma, accessing the medical system, medical apartheid is real within the Black community, it's still -- even telecommunications via medicine, that's even difficult. So I say that all to say, it's really taking it step by step with the folks that we're with because it could be very frustrating even when you have to log in to Google or Zoom or, you know, Instagram, Facebook, all these different platforms coming at people actually exacerbates the stress level and it becomes tough. I hope that that kind of answers your question, but we're providing the best virtual care that we can. What we do is we do have a lot of virtual programming right now, so we're offering a lot of virtual support groups for our survivors, some open, some closed, some confidential, and where we are able to do some resource sharing, provide some emotional support, and that has

really provided a lot of grounding and anchored our community for a lot of ways, for a lot of people, for lack of better words.

>> Shenna: Thank you, Alexandra.

And just to follow up a little bit on that question, for either you or for Cameron, knowing the already -- the challenges that already exist for survivors in accessing housing and the challenging times around COVID and that intersecting and overlapping with the current times that we are in around, you know, uprisings around what has been happening to black people in communities, how can folks who are working with black survivors be the best advocates possible during these times?

>> Cameron: I think one of the greatest needs -- Cameron Foster speaking from SEI, Self-Enhancement. I think one of the greatest needs expressed and exposed is for agencies and funders, locally, government and federal government, to recognize these disparities in communities of color, specifically African American communities.

And I got to take it a step farther -- a step further, just to say that recognizing, I think we've been able to recognize this in the past and that it's been ignored and that it's been pushed aside and hasn't been invested in.

So my -- I guess as I think about that, I am passionate about this as well.

And, you know, we can't just recognize the disparities, we have to act and do something on a daily basis to change this.

So whatever agency you're at across America and interacting and serving communities of color and African Americans to understand that there are across the board folks who have this sense of understanding of the civil unrest as it's been called with this movement and momentum that is gaining in this country to address these disparities that have been long ignored and to know that our community is carrying that and those feelings and how that may impact how they seek and gain services, how they access services, how they're coming to you and not only in need of housing, let's say, I'm thinking of a family who's experiencing homelessness, so on a daily basis worrying about where to sleep at night on top of dealing with the civil unrest in the community here locally and across the globe at this point.

So that compassion piece and understanding, it's not business as usual anymore.

>> Shenna: Thank you.

Go ahead.

>> Alexandra: Yeah.

And I would like to add to Cameron, just like survivor expertise, just letting individuals define what is it they need.

There are no safe spaces, for lack of a better word, it is only safer spaces instead of safe spaces because for a lot of the survivors that we are serving, there is no safe space.

And to -- I guess there's always a moment, there's a moment where when you're in a trap, there's a stick, there's a moment where both hands are on the stick and just remember that, that's my advice, is just lean into that moment when both hands are on the stick is what I would provide for advice for culturally responsive individuals and patients.

>> Shenna: Thank you.

From either of you all, any of you all, what would be helpful from systems or coalitions or other technical assistance providers in being able to access housing funds?

>> Alexandra: I actually went to a culturally specific grant awareness training where it was only for culturally specific providers and it was only those grantees, it was led by it, it was a breakdown of everything to expect from beginning to end of that grant, who I needed to talk to.

I was able to shake hands with my T.A., I was around the people that had the same struggles like me, so that really worked for me.

>> Shenna: Cameron or Mona, do you have any thoughts to share to that question?

>> Mona: Yes.

So in Texas we do have kind of a informal group of agencies that are culturally specific.

So we have kind of a coalition all over Texas where we have I think five or six agencies across the board.

And we share resources, we share any best practices for culturally specific agencies.

So if you have anything similar in your state, that would be great, or maybe if you are at the point where you need to create one, then definitely, yes, because that really is a good system and we have each other's back in terms of serving the clients and even the service area coverage.

So a coalition on that really is helpful for us.

>> Shenna: Wonderful.

I heard somebody about to speak.

Go ahead.

>> Cameron: You caught me.

This is Cameron Foster once again.

Just to echo what Alexandra and Mona have spoke on.

Just quickly.

One of the original questions was about the relationships with CoC and as culturally specific organizations, reaching out for funding in a competitive funding world, it's almost unspokenly implied that it's our duty to establish those relationships, propose to the local and federal governments intentionally reach out and partner with culturally specific agencies that are doing the work and on the ground and that is happening in cities across the country.

So I'm glad to hear that.

But bridging that gap and connecting with you.

>> Shenna: Awesome.

>> Mona: I would like to add something.

I think with CoC and any other grant, the education piece on culturally specific has to be in it because most of the time the agencies who are culturally specific, they face unique problems, and it's not -- so part of any time when we write a grant, when we speak to people, we add some percentage of education.

So our clients will not face the same problems.

Our clients will have a different, unique problems and that will require unique solutions.

So education with any granter is extremely important.

>> Shenna: So I think to that point, what would be

helpful for an organization before even receiving or applying funds but just kind of cueing up to get ready for that process, what would be helpful from the beginning from, say, a provider or knowledge that organizations should know around framing the work that they do, what would have been helpful in the beginning before applying for funds?

>> Mona: For TMWF, we have had many focus groups, and when I say focus groups, we had one with just with South Asian, just with Middle Eastern groups, we've had many groups and focus groups, and the solution and the problem came from clients.

So focus groups really helped us to formulate how our services are going to be given.

Cameron or Alexandra, did y'all have anything to share regarding that question, what organizations do you think would be helpful for them to know from the beginning to have in place from the beginning, so on and so forth?

>> Alexandra: I would start with asking the people. I mean, that would be the very first thing that I would ask, I would ask the people what their needs are and then I would try to establish as many allies within the community that I could possibly have to start with, to add to what Mona has already said.

This is Alexandra Appleton, I keep forgetting to announce myself.

Culturally specific programming.

>> Shenna: Thank you, Alexandra.

What about from just an internal organizational infrastructure standpoint, like as far as it would relate to the management of funds once received, were there any lessons learned kind of on the front end or once you received funds that you wish you would have known prior to?

>> Alexandra: Thank you.

I can definitely speak to that.

So, like I said earlier, I was very fortunate, when I came into position, and I very shortly within a month and I was able to go to conference and that was amazing because I was just dropped in the seat of, like, having this major grant with all of these expectations and all of these, like, rules and regulations, I mean, no joke, this was intense, and it just, like, really just dropped me in there, and I was able to learn so much.

So I say that all to say, make sure that you definitely create a relationship with whoever your T.A. is within whatever grant is awarded, make sure you're paying attention to your requirements and your allocations and how you can spend your money.

Right now, as of right now, I am managing nine grants,

nine different grants with nine different source of funding and that's very complex and that still does not meet the need of what we need right now in Portland.

And that's just now, we haven't even got to -- I might be pivoting, but we haven't even got to, once COVID -- if COVID does relief, the next thing is eviction

prevention.

Right now what we're seeing is that, yes, Kate Brown has allowed, you know, folks, you know, did the mandate that folks can't get kicked out right now during COVID. But once this relief is up, then, you know, people are going to be most likely not be able to pay back, you know, even if they're on a payment plan what they owe, especially if they haven't worked.

And for victims that were either the main source of income or not, that's going to be very difficult.

So, of course, we're going to have to do a lot of eviction prevention.

And then even if it isn't, even if it doesn't have anything to do with financially what we're also seeing is for our communities of color, they are getting tallied up for other things, like noise, all of a sudden there's some other disturbance that's going on that never occurred before COVID, before this disruption that has happened or this uprising, this

uprising that's occurring right now has just got people in this kind of element.

And those are things to be considered as you apply for grants and you forecast in the future of what type of grants that you're looking for.

I would also say that the more that we advocate and demand for flexible funding, we need more flexible funding, we need to be able to spend the money on how we want to spend it, the way we want to spend it, and we need the continuum of care and all others to just trust that we're doing what we need for the people because everything else has not worked.

And I'll just leave it there.

>> Cameron: Beautifully said, Alexandra.

Thank you.

Thank you for that.

And I feel that.

This is Cameron Foster speaking from SEI once again.

And just to go back to the original question, the joint office here locally provided some additional match funding so the grant that we received was substantially large for our agency, we're a pretty large agency, so that additional match funding that they provide allowed us to offset some of the admin and program costs that we couldn't fit under client assistance.

But speaking in line with what Alexandra is

referencing, the eligible expenses of these federally funded programs is just that.

It's laughable.

When trying to reach communities of color and African American communities who are being impacted from so many different angles and support them in the best way to self-sufficiency, self-reliance and success, like, thriving, let's be real here, it just doesn't cut it.

And the holes that are in the eligible expenses, we try to dip into other funding sources to be able to address, but if we were to -- if we didn't have those additional funding streams to dip into, we would not be able to serve the amount of households that we have and do and definitely not in the same impactful and depth that we have been able to do.

And this is the work that we do.

And we are our community.

And we feel and breathe our community.

And when we support our community, we do it in an authentic way that is a shared experience.

So as agencies that are providing these culturally responsive services to the flexible funding, the restrictions that are on the funding creates a barrier to address the systemic racism in this country that plagues our communities.

And it's frustrating, to say the least, it's hard for people of color in Zoom meetings across the country to keep it together, to be able to be professional and have these conversations when it's just so longstanding that, you know, and these questions are technical and they're needed and these conversations are mandatory and I'm thankful, again, I'm appreciative, but something's got to give.

>> Shenna: Well, I just want to say that we appreciate you all so much for the work that you're doing and the impact that you are making in your communities and how you are amplifying the voices and experiences of those communities.

And thank you for all of the information that you all have shared today.

It's vitally important for people to hear this information, as we know and anticipate there to be funds that are going to -- you know, additional funding to address housing and the needs of survivors in the coming days ahead and really just want to encourage those who are listening on today's call to continue to visit this platform for further information on how to best serve culturally specific communities, as well as survivors just in general.

So thank you, all, again to our presenters.

Right now I'm going to kick it back over to my

colleague, Debbie.

>> Debbie: Thank you so much, Shenna.

I think we've gotten to the questions, all the questions in the chat box.

And I just want to echo what Shenna said. I can't thank you enough, Cameron and Alexandra from Self-Enhancement, for your time here today.

It's tiring work, I can hear it, and I think as you said, Cameron, this is not business as usual.

And this is a time for us to act and to work in solidarity and work together.

I appreciate the metaphor, too, however we can all work together to address systemic racism and this is the time, the time to act and we all have power and agency in our different roles and we can use our voices in different ways to try to make shifts and I think there were some really great suggestions around just being creative, flexible funding, you know, when we're working to create access and doors for prioritization, I think it was really helpful to hear, Alexandra, you talked about changes and shifts that have happened in the domestic, sexual violence world, and then Cameron was mentioning different in the prioritization.

When we work with our continuum of care, with our state coalitions to ask for changes, say these changes are

needed and we need to listen, like Mona said, to the focus groups that are happening in her community, like there's specific information and we have the information from survivors, we have the information from the communities that are telling us very clearly what is needed.

So it is our responsibility in the field and as leaders and people that are gatekeepers to ensure that survivors and survivors of color, in particular, have access to these much-needed resources to undo the historical inequities, racial inequities that have occurred in housing in our country.

So now's the time, and I encourage everybody to do the work and continue the work, and then I just want to open it up for, Cameron, Alexandra, Mona, to see if you have any final thoughts that you want to share with the callers on this call today?

>> Mona: This is Mona.

One thing that I really want to emphasize being whichever position you're working in, you guys are the leaders and keep in mind that, yes, our focus is always the clients, but in that process what is our staff going through?

How can we support our staff and empower them so that they can help our clients?

And I saw that firsthand because of the COVID, the

shelter stuff, and most of our staff, they've gone through their own trauma.

So how do we make sure that they are strong and they are ready to handle whatever comes to them during COVID and how do we support them.

So I actually had to change and I had to break some of the funders to change the funding stream and ask our counselors to come up with peer support or one on one where we can help the staff.

Some of the staff members lost family because of COVID. Many of them.

Some of them, you know, firsthand experience COVID.

So how do we do that?

We are always trying to focus, but then in that staff is burned out.

To me, that is so big.

For me, I have to focus on my staff so they can empower the people.

So definitely please think of ways, how you can do it, especially culturally specific staff members, they're going through their own trauma.

How do we help them?

How do we uplift them and support them?

I'm very passionate about that.

Thank you.

>> Alexandra: Yes, Mona, yes, Mona.

Alexandra here.

Thank you so much, Mona, that's a great way to kind of, like, end this. The staff are really feeling it.

Most of the majority of individuals, because our community is so small, we have lived experience and we are also providers.

So we are feeling it right now and it is hard, especially difficult being a manager of a team of advocates, all black females, and just like that numbness and seeing and feeling that pain.

So that would ultimately be one of the things -- that would be one of the things that I would suggest that folks do is make sure that you have a solid wellness safety net, culturally specific for your staff to actually be able to navigate institutions and be able to navigate this.

Our staff advocates don't get paid a lot.

Rents are high.

We are struggling as well.

And, so, then that's also flexible funds, when are we going to be able to pay our advocates a living wage, above a living wage so, we don't also have to be serving people and then standing in food boxes alongside of them as well.

Thank you, again, for having me and us.

Please reach out.

>> Cameron: Cameron Foster here from SEI. Couple things, first major point that I just want to make is that there is more unmet need in our community than we as an agency have been able to wrap our arms around.

And that's how we serve our community.

So that's kind of number one.

And the prioritization, I'm glad that was brought up, the prioritization, if these things are on the table to be talked about, finding a way to be able to prioritize people who have historically been disproportionately impacted by systems that were designed and executed to keep down or put away, lock up people of color, black folks and African American community, in particular, that has a rippling effect.

So those prioritizations have to be equally as intentional and designed to address those inequities. So seeking out every opportunity to address that, I would say, is a lasting word that I want to make sure is heard because -- and then just thinking about moving forward and Alexandra spoke on it before about the side effects or the aftermath of COVID-19 when there's the fear or threat of illness due to COVID-19 kind of goes

away and our economy and communities are able to open back up and folks are out and about again, but what about the households who haven't been able to make their rent during this time?

I've got -- we talk about discrimination in the housing market.

I have a household right now who's being pressured to sign a contract, basically, a repayment agreement that's beyond their financial means that is contradictory to the eviction moratorium that our county and state has in place right now.

And it's those types of things that if we weren't working with that household, that head of household may have gone ahead and signed that.

They forward that to us.

We say, whoa, whoa, this doesn't look good.

We're able to jump in there and speak to a homeowner/landlord and say, no, and how it plays out in real life, oh, no, no, I wasn't trying to get them to sign anything.

I thought it was -- but the reality is that they were setting that household up for failure.

Think wouldn't be able to fulfill that repayment agreement and then that would be justified for eviction.

And it's those things that in the midst of everything

else, we're still mitigating and triaging on a daily basis.

So the support of the CoC in these things that can last a long time, that can last longer than COVID, you know, that address the access to the funding and the flexibility of the funding to prioritize households who have historically been discriminated against, to be frank.

>> Debbie: Thank you, all.

There was one other question that definitely ties into the interconnection -- the housing and just some of your points around the mass incarceration and, so, thinking about just the conversations around police involvement, there was a question around, what are some other safer practices that are happening?

I know Alexandra mentioned restorative justice work that's happening.

But, yeah, what are things that you all are doing, if people don't want to be involved or access the police system out of real fears for them and their families?

>> Alexandra: Hi, this is Alexandra.

So, well, I do -- safe to say, we do have a relationship with the police indirectly.

And for our survivors that historically, honestly, the police, we only need the police there for 20 minutes to

clear the house.

They don't do -- for domestic violence and sexual assault.

Like we just need them there and then it's pretty much on us to really get that advocate -- I mean, that survivor or victim and carry that weight, whether it's medical or whether it's -- you know, whatever they need.

And we're really carrying that weight.

And that includes the trauma that they've experienced in their interacting with that police officer.

And that is where a lot of our work has historically been, like how can we make this relationship less harmful.

We can already assume that it will be -- there will be some harm there.

But now that everything is kind of occurring, which is something that I didn't speak to earlier, is with the uprising, initially we are looking at what is the training that police officers are having, and we just more recently found out that our officers here locally are having I think eight hours or less -- I want to say max 13 hours of equity, inclusion and DV hours, training on domestic violence.

That is in your whole thing of your training you've only experienced up to ten hours of training on equity,

diversity, and domestic violence max and you're an officer.

So that seems kind of simple but that is something that we're doing, like now we've identified what it is, we have access to it, now what are we going to do about it, it's great that we have a new chief and we're trying to cultivate that relationship, we meet regularly to identify ways that we can actually at least meet halfway and find out the similarities versus the differences.

There are some other ways that we're trying to identify creating relationships within the DV continuum, but as far as survivors go, if they do not want to interact with the police, we totally respect that.

We do a lot of safety planning.

Mona mentioned it earlier, but -- and I didn't speak to it.

But there's a lot of safety planning that's occurring inside the house.

I mean, as simple as, might as well take that pain medicine now, you know.

And so that is a consistent thing.

And we also know that the root to ending -- the goal is to end violence, and the only way that we're going to be able to end violence is by preventing it and that

starts with the abuse ir.

So we have to do -- the continuum of care also has to recognize it.

We also have to take care of the abuser, we have to house them, we don't need to institutionalize them, we need to house them.

So what does housing look like for the folks that have been abused?

We learned this violence, it was taught, it was socialized, it was taught by the people in power and it was also taught by the folks who are the federals.

So with that being said, I would say that we want to create a safer relationship with the police and at this point in time it's case by case.

>> Mona: This is Mona.

So, I do want to say, maybe eight or nine years ago we had a case where it was a language barrier and police came to us that they needed help to translate.

And we found out that when they were called to somebody's house, they took the victim as the abuser.

So the conflict was between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law and they took mother-in-law as a victim, where it was just the other way around.

And ten or eight, whenever that happened, we realized that we have to constantly show or teach the police or law enforcement at many levels.

So that is very very important for our work and we go into law enforcement training almost three to four times a year, if not more.

And city of Plano, where we are and our offices are, we work very closely with them and teaching them when going into what does it look like, going into a home, that is completely different.

You cannot apply your regular DV to a family and how do you recognize the family, you can look Asian, you can look black, you can look anything.

So the training part is so vigorous within TMWF.

Not only that, we have twice a year training with fire department, any new crew that comes in, we train them.

Now when a crisis happens, how will they respond, that's up to them.

But education and training, we really have pushed that hard.

And so far in our city, I think we have had a good partnership with law enforcement.

>> Cameron: Cameron Foster from SEI, Self-Enhancement.

I think this is the question that the country is grappling with right now, the world.

And, so, my 2 cents is, and as I've thought about it and thought over my own experiences, shifting some of those dollars from the police to the domestic violence sexual assault agencies and responders and providers,

the mental health providers, the alcohol and drug providers, the homeless service providers to be able to address those calls.

And that, to me, makes logical sense.

If these providers are underfunded and not able to do that and the police are not the most appropriate initial response to those calls, then shifting that funding will allow the appropriate responders to go to those calls and assist folks where and how they need at the time.

And, yeah, so that's one aspect of it.

I mean, I can talk on this for hours because it doesn't stop with that initial call.

The rippling effect of those police encounters with the Black community that see increase in degree of charges, in conviction rates, in sentencing terms that impact their ability to gain housing after that, now they've got a criminal record that's a barrier to housing, and we're working after the fact to address those, to alleviate some of those barriers so that our folks in our community can access safe and sustainable housing that are in communities with access to healthy foods and -- so we can't exclusively talk, necessarily, about the police exclusively, at least. So that's just my 2 cents.

>> Debbie: Thank you, Cameron.

And I don't have anything else to add.

I think that's a perfect closing statement.

And thank you for your leadership and just thinking about this work really more broadly and much more holistic in terms of ending violence broadly and how it's all -- all the different things are interconnected.

I am going to go ahead and close out.

I just want to thank you, all of you, Cameron, Alexandra, Mona, and then my co-moderator, Shenna, for being with us today and for everyone, all the participants on the call, this is a discussion that DV and housing consortium is committed to continuing to having and to ensuring that we're doing the work to ensure that we're undoing the legacy of historical racism in housing and other sectors as it relates to domestic and sexual violence and I think everyone's contact information is on the slide so you all can reach out to the presenters and you can reach out to the DV and housing consortium.

Thank you, everybody.

There's a short survey as well.

It just takes about five minutes if you want to take a few seconds since we're ending early today.

But thank you, everybody.

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