

LIGHTLY EDITED FILE

National Alliance for Safe Housing (NASH)

Housing Immigrant Survivors and COVID-19

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>> Hi, everyone.
Thanks so much for joining our peer to peer call today

on housing immigrant survivors and COVID-19.

My name is Karlo Ng and I'm the director of legal initiatives at the national alliance for safe housing, or NASH.

With me today is my colleague, Suzanne Marcus, who is director of partnerships and community engagement at NASH.

She's also co-moderating with me.

And then we also have Jenny Herget, who's our operations and communications manager.

She's behind the scenes in making sure that our technology is working.

We are also very fortunate to be joined by Leslye Orloff, who's the director of the National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project in D.C.

Tasnia Ahamed and Robina Niaz, who are respectively the program director and executive director at Turning Point for Women & Families in New York.

Patima Komolamit, shelter director at the Center for Pacific Asian Families in Los Angeles.

And Maja Hasic, who is the anti-human trafficking program director at Tapestri in Georgia.

Today we're going to highlight some national housing and housing-related policy issues impacting immigrant survivors, and then we're going to turn it over to our

amazing local advocates who are going to discuss some of the challenges that they've seen and experienced in helping immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking finding and keeping housing.

And they're going to talk about what strategies they've used locally to keep survivors housed.

Especially during this pandemic, it's been really really difficult to figure out how we can help survivors find the housing that they need.

There will be some time at the end for Q & A, and please feel free to submit any comments and questions that you have in the chat box throughout the call.

We're also going to share many resources with you in the chat box.

The call is being recorded and the recording and the materials will be sent to all the registrants after the call.

There's also going to be a link to a short survey at the end that we would really appreciate if you could complete if you haven't done so already.

And, so, without further ado, let's go ahead and get started.

I'll hand it over to Suzanne.
Please take it away.

>> Suzanne: Thank you, Karlo.

Before we begin, I just want to share a little bit about the webinars.

We're doing them in collaboration with our colleagues through the Domestic Violence and Housing Technical Assistance Consortium.

This is a first-of-its-kind effort funded by the federal partners listed above to a group of national technical assistance providers who have deep expertise at this intersection of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and housing and homelessness.

I just want to say for folks that we collaborate on a lot of different technical assistance and training initiatives and you can find all of the information that we've developed together at safehousingpartnerships.org, as well as recordings of all the webinars that we've been doing that have been part of this COVID special series project.

Jenny, next slide.

Before we begin, we want to just highlight the intersection of race and homelessness and how it plays about in our work.

The Center for Social Innovation SPARC, which stands for supporting partnerships for antiracist communities, studied eight communities across the U.S. to understand

racial inequities in homelessness and found that in total, 78% of people experiencing homelessness were people of color.

And that's by comparison, the general population of the U.S. is 73% White, 12% Black and 17% Hispanic/Latinx.

And rates of American Indian/Alaskan Native homelessness were also disproportionately high, three to eight times higher than their proportion of the general population.

They also found in interviews that they did with folks in these communities that DV/IPV/SV were a common thread across genders and age ranges of people of color experiencing homelessness.

Next slide.

We also know that COVID, housing and racial equity, or racial disparities, are deeply interconnected right now.

As of April 28th, Black Americans are dying at 2.6 times the rate of Whites or 26 deaths per 100,000 people.

And many states are effectively erasing Native Americans from their data sets by classifying them as

"other."

States tracking the demographic have found severely disparate rates of infection or death.

Next slide, please.

And research suggests that racial residential segregation is a fundamental cause of health disparities.

Communities of color disproportionately live in neighborhoods that are further from grocery stores and medical facilities due to historical racial discrimination and redlining in housing policies.

And many people of color live in federally assisted housing, including public housing and Section 8 programs and are often in segregated neighborhoods with less investment.

So, -- sorry.

Did you switch?

Yeah.

Okay.

I'm sorry.

So, anyways, we want to highlight these intersections as we move into all of our discussions around the impact of COVID-19 on survivors, safety, economic and housing stability as it's all so deeply connected.

So with that, I want to pass it over to Leslye Orloff

and Karlo Ng.

>> Leslye: One second.

Great.

Okay.

Is my screen sharing?

Hopefully.

Can you hear me?

Hello?

>> Yes, we can see it.

>> Leslye: Okay, great.

So, welcome.

I'm happy to be here.

My name is Leslye Orloff and I direct the national women's advocacy project in American university Washington college of law.

I work nationally on issues, all kinds of legal issues regarding immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and trafficking, stalking and dating violence.

Sexual assault.

What I wanted to do today in the time I have is to talk briefly about some of the resources we have that can help you when you're working with immigrant survivors. You may encounter them in housing programs, but it's important to note that some of the work we're doing is trying to connect them to a range of safety net services.

And one of the things that NIWAP has developed to help you do that is a public benefits map.

And the reason we did this is when you're talking about

immigrant survivors, what we found in some of the work we've done nationally is one of the big factors at play in why immigrant victims aren't able to access the things that they're eligible for legally is that advocates or attorneys think they're not, because they're immigrants, they're not eligible.

So I'm going to talk a little bit about nationally and give you some tools so that you can help -- to help you navigate and find out whether the individual survivor you're working with is actually qualified and what they're qualified for.

So, we have a map, we have maps, and it covers a whole range range of publicly funded, state and locally funded services, from TANF, emergency and transitional housing, FEMA assistance, food stamps, tax credits, legal services, Medicaid, public and assisted housing, et cetera, et cetera.

And, so, for each of these, I'm just going to use TANF as an example, you click here, go to map, and it takes you to a map that looks like this.

And you can click on any state you'd like and at the bottom -- it's loading -- I should have just stayed where I was -- let me go back.

That's fine.

So at the bottom what it will do, it will tell you by

immigration status of the victim what they're eligible for.

And you can see here the difference between, like, for TANF, somebody who arrives before August 22nd, 1996, somebody who arrives afterwards, you can see people who are straight up eligible and you can see people who are straight up not eligible.

And then what you do, if you find out that the survivor that you're working with is eligible for one of these -- and, so, for example, if you go to a program where somebody -- everybody's eligible, it will look like this.

But either way, you can go to whatever state you're in at the bottom and it will take you to a benefits chart. These things are about, I don't know, 45 pages long, and what they have is it goes by immigration status by benefit.

And it shows you what's federally available, which is the part that's in regular type.

And what's available at the state level.

And then -- I'm going to spin to the end -- we have all the footnotes and the links to the law so that if you want to go in and advocate for a victim, you can find everything you need in the footnotes.

In addition, we have a guide that walks you through how to use the map and the public benefits map and the

public benefits guides and what they mean.

So they're tools that will help you be able to help victims when they come to you for assistance.

Jenny, you can take the screen back from me now.

I'll stop sharing.

So, the other thing I wanted to, with the little bit of time left, talk about is there's a lot of misinformation out there about immigrant victims -- or about victims in public charge and about public charge generally.

And one of the things I wanted you to know from a national perspective is that immigrant victims, new visas, asylees, refugees, SIJ, children, are exempt from public charge.

And, so, what's important to know is you may be working on a case where an immigrant victim, let's say she's a domestic violence victim and her spouse is a citizen, he's filed papers for her, if the victim gets her papers through the spouse, public charge applies.

If the victim gets her papers through VAWA public charge doesn't apply.

So from a safety perspective, it's important to understand those differences and we have a new publication that we've developed that we'll be coming out next week on this that we'll be happy to share with

you.

The next thing I wanted to talk about is I'm hoping you're aware, Karlo and I did a lot of work on this with HUD, basically we got -- we got the computer systems at HUD to talk to the computer systems at the Department of Homeland Security and to ensure that self-petitioners, people who are abused by their U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident spouses or parents are able to get access to not only emergency shelter and transitional housing that's open to everyone, but public and assisted housing.

And, so, if you run into those cases, you can call either of us for technical assistance, but you should know that VAWA self-petitioners are eligible for public and assisted housing, subsidized housing from the moment they file their VAWA self-petition.

And the last thing I wanted to say is that we've been doing -- NIWAP has been doing a lot of work about the Cares Act, in particular, and we've developed a publication that we can share with you because you may be working with survivors, many of the survivors that have begun the process of filing for immigration relief will have legal work authorization and will have SSN, a Social Security number.

And so those victims are eligible in large part potentially for the unemployment insurance and for the

Cares Act payments, provided they file their taxes.
So we have a tool that's available, so if you have --
if you're working with clients that have work
authorization, don't assume that they're not eligible.
They may very well may be eligible for either the CARES
Act payments or the unemployment insurance.
And we will share with you a tool that helps you sort
that out and we also provide technical assistance on
those issues.

I'm going to turn this over to you now, Karlo.

>> Karlo: Thanks so much, Leslye.

So, let's see.

In our limited time, I did want to talk a little bit
about public charge and some of the housing
implications as well as the HUD rule on mixed status
families and I know eviction moratoria is also on
people's minds right now.

So Leslye mentioned public charge, which I think many
of you on the call are maybe familiar with, maybe
you've heard it on the news and some of its
implications for your clients, so, as you know, the
public housing program, as well as the Section 8
programs are both subsidies, housing subsidies, that
are covered by a public charge rule.

So if an applicant for a green card, for example, is

receiving these subsidies, that would count against them in the public charge test.

But what's really important to keep in mind, like Leslye mentioned, is that many survivor categories are exempted from this test.

So Leslye mentioned the categories of survivors, including VAWA self-petitioners and other categories, but it's also important to keep in mind that there's actually a very very small subgroup of people who would be eligible for public housing and Section 8 and would also be subject to the public charge test.

And that's because these programs, the public housing and Section 8 programs, have their own set of immigration requirements that already limit who can access these programs.

And, so, for example, undocumented immigrants are not eligible for public housing and Section 8, but they can live in public housing and Section 8 housing as part of a mixed status family where the household would be receiving prorated housing assistance.

So on the topic of mixed status families, there's been more questions lately about this proposed rule from HUD and there's a lot of confusion on the ground because we're also starting to see some housing authorities telling applicant families that actually as a mixed status family, they cannot apply and that everyone in

the household has to be a citizen or an eligible immigrant.

And that's not true.

So this is what is the truth.

There's a proposed rule by HUD to prohibit mixed status families from living in HUD-assisted housing, so this includes public housing and Section 8.

The rule has not been finalized.

So it is not in effect.

We've heard that it might come out sometime in September, but, quite frankly, that deadline keeps on getting pushed.

So we're not even certain if it is going to come out in September.

There's also a similar rule that the U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing for the agency's housing assistance programs in rural areas, but that rule, that proposed rule, has not even been published yet, so for now, nothing has changed.

And existing federal law allows mixed status families to apply for and live in HUD and other federally subsidized housing programs.

And if you're working with housing authorities or other housing providers that are telling you anything different that, for example, only citizens can apply

for public housing and Section 8 or that only eligible immigrants -- that mixed status families cannot apply, please let us know and we can help you.

Moving on to eviction moratoria.

As many of you know, there are a series of eviction moratoria that are in place right now that are preventing the evictions of thousands of families who cannot pay rent because of the pandemic.

Many of the state and local moratoria will be expiring soon, if they haven't expired already.

The federal eviction moratorium, which only covers federally subsidized or mortgaged properties is expiring on July 24th, and it does not look like Congress is going to be extending the deadline by passing some legislation.

Last week, what we saw from HUD, was the agency published a couple of eviction prevention tool kits, basically preparing housing providers and tenants for the looming mass eviction that is will likely occur because many folks have not been able to pay their rents because of loss of income during the pandemic. So what HUD is doing, and we are also doing this as well, is urging owners and landlords to proactively work with tenants who are behind on their rent, to work out prepayment agreements.

So these are agreements where landlords and tenants

work together, they negotiate to figure out an agreement where essentially the tenants can pay whatever rent that is owed across a period of time and they can stay in their units while they do that. They're also urging that tenants who have experienced a loss of income during the pandemic to do recertifications, income recertifications, so that their household subsidies can be adjusted.

In many cases they could get a higher subsidy because, again, because of the loss of income to the entire household.

We're not going to talk in detail about the moratoria today, but we are providing some resources in the chat box.

And please also stay tuned for an upcoming peer to peer call on July 30th where we're going to discuss what to do post-eviction moratoria. In the meantime, if you're working with survivors and their families who need rental assistance, there are state and local programs that are offering rental assistance during COVID.

Jenny's going to share a link with some more information about this.

Some of these rental assistance programs were created by states that got big buckets of funding from the

CARES Act.

You might be familiar with CRF funds, or corona relief funds.

This is the bucket of money that the states got early on in the pandemic when the Congress gave them big essentially sort of block grants to address needs related to COVID.

Really importantly, the CRF-funded rental assistance programs do not have immigrant restrictions and they should be available to everyone regardless of their immigration status.

There are some state and local governments that think that there are immigration restrictions under the personal responsibility and work opportunity, the Reconciliation Act.

It's essentially a welfare law that applies immigration restrictions to certain federal public benefits and could effectively prohibit the use of these funds to help undocumented immigrants.

But since the rental assistance goes directly to the landlords, it is not considered a federal benefit under PRWORA.

Instead, the relief is considered emergency assistance necessary to protect life or safety and, therefore, it does not have any immigration restrictions.

So if folks have any questions about that, feel free to

contact us directly, type in questions into the chat box.

We also have a Q & A for landlords that we put out, landlords who are working with survivors during the pandemic, it provides important information on what landlords can and should do if they have tenants experiencing domestic violence and sexual assault.

So that's also going to be going in the chat box too.

So now I'll turn it over to Tasnia at Turning Point in New York.

Next slide, please, Jenny.

>> Thank you so much, Karlo, and thank you so much to NASH for organizing this call and for sharing such vital information.

Everything we've talked about so far is just so important for us to know as providers and to share with the survivors that we all work with.

So as Karlo mentioned, my name is Tasnia Ahamed, I'm the domestic violence program director at Turning Point for Women & Families in New York City.

Turning Point for Women & Families was founded in 2004 and is the first community-based nonprofit organization to directly address domestic violence in New York City's Muslim community.

We provide a wide range of services to survivors,

including individual counseling, safety planning, support groups, case management, and referrals to needed resources.

In addition to our domestic violence programming, we also have a youth program which provides support groups and leadership-building activities to young Muslim women in the community, as well as our senior support program which provides ESL classes geared towards the U.S. citizenship exam to senior Muslim women.

So one of the questions that we were asked to address today was what housing obstacles are immigrant domestic violence survivors facing.

So the clients that we work with at Turning Point are female survivors of domestic violence.

Majority of whom are immigrants and very often new immigrants to the United States.

Most immigrant women stay trapped in abusive relationships due to worries about housing and financial stability.

That is a trend that we see in the work that we do.

And this uncertainty and fear around where are they going to live if they leave their abusive partner, how are they going to pay rent, how are they going to pay bills, if they have children, how are they going to support their children as they learn to become financially independent, these are the questions that

they're asking themselves and the reasons why they may stay trapped in a relationship.

Oftentimes because they're new immigrants, they often don't have family nearby, their family support networks tend to be far away, back home, and, so, they can only provide limited support from such a long distance.

The women that we work with are also often coming from cultures where the primary provider is the male head of household, so is their husband or the father in the house who is also often the abusive partner.

And, so, the survivors we work with often have never had to work outside of their home, let alone in a new country, in a new culture and society that is completely unfamiliar.

And, so, they usually need to attend job training and acquire skills that can be used for paid jobs.

They're also often coming from a point where they have no credit history or due to financial abuse that they faced have very poor credit history, which makes it hard for them to seek an apartment and get a rent, get a lease independently.

In addition to that, you know, as Karlo and Leslye mentioned earlier, oftentimes government rental assistance, it's very tough for immigrant survivors to acquire these programs and even if they do, the

assistance is often very limited and has strict conditions which makes it harder for survivors to find housing, especially in a place like New York City where housing is so expensive.

And underneath all of this lies the fact that, again, we're working with new immigrants who are often unaware of their rights in this country as survivors of domestic violence, they're unfamiliar with the way that benefits, housing, the legal system works here, and they're coming from situations where their abusive partner is playing on -- playing up on this unfamiliarity.

And, so, preventing them from learning about their rights, preventing them from getting accurate information and keeping them trapped in fear so that they don't reach out and seek support.

So oftentimes we'll hear clients tell us that their abusive partner has told them, you're going to be deported if you seek financial support from the city or from an organization.

Your children will be taken away if anyone finds out you're struggling.

Recent rhetoric around public charge has not helped this, has further boosted these misconceptions.

So this is the environment that survivors are often coming from when they're seeking support.

So at Turning Point, the way that we are addressing some of these obstacles is by now, you know, in the fall we were approved for a transitional housing grant through OVW and, so, we're in the process of launching this program and our transitional housing program is designed to offer rental assistance for a period of six months to up to two years.

And the idea is through this program to relieve a survivor of the burden of paying rent temporarily so that she has housing stability and is able to focus on job training, acquiring the skills that she needs to make her employable, getting a job, going to counseling, and really prioritizing her healing.

And this plan would be customized to each survivor's individual situation and needs taking into consideration the cost of living in New York City and as the survivor's financial situation improves, Turning Point will gradually decrease assistance so that the survivor can gradually take on financial responsibilities and really ease into it instead of being bombarded with this massive financial burden all of a sudden.

And as we reach that level with one survivor, we'll redirect funds to then support another survivor who is in need.

Our partners in the transitional housing program, the center for refugees and they have a lot of experience working with immigrants by providing employment assistance, ESL classes and other support services if clients enrolled in this housing program choose to participate.

Through this program Turning Point will also continue to offer safety planning, counseling, support groups, and case management to survivors who choose to participate in those activities.

And even before this transitional housing program Turning Point has partnered with local agencies like the Access Institute, like Hot Bread Kitchen by financing the trainings that they offer so clients can benefit from them and gain employment skills.

We're going to continue to utilize these partnerships so clients can benefit from those programs and the services offered.

Also volunteers at Turning Point provide financial management consultation to survivors to help them come up with budgeting and savings plans and really manage their finances in a positive and healthy way.

During this pandemic, as everyone here is aware, many people, many survivors have lost employment and have been put into really difficult financial situations and, so, Turning Point has been providing up to \$1,000

per client per month in order to help offset the setbacks that clients are facing as a result of this pandemic.

And also sharing updated policies that have been coming out throughout the shutdown, throughout this pandemic that are in place to protect them from things like eviction and informing them of the eviction moratorium so that they're aware of their rights even through this pandemic.

So I know that we have limited time, so I don't want to take up too much time right now.

I'm happy to take questions during the Q & A.

If you'd like to reach us, even after today's webinar, you can call our helpline at 718-550-3586 or email us at info@TPNY.org.

Thank you very much.

>> Thanks so much, Tasnia.

And Robina is with us and she's going to be joining us during the Q & A session to help us answer some questions.

Okay.

Let's see.

It looks like, Jenny, Patima is going to be speaking next.

Patima, who's in Los Angeles with the Center for the

Pacific Asian Family, is going to be speaking now.

Go ahead, Patima.

>> Patima: All right.

Thank you so much, Karlo and Jenny, for having all of us be able to be on this panel and this discussion.

I think it's really important to highlight local community organizations that are working with, you know, the population.

So good morning or good afternoon or good evening, depending on where you are right now.

My name is Patima Komolamit and I'm the shelter program director for Center for the Pacific Asian Family, which

is located in Los Angeles and we have three shelters, one emergency shelter and two transitional shelters,

and we've been around for -- this is our 42nd year.

So still going strong and, unfortunately, still very much needed within L.A. County and just really within California.

I was asked to speak today about some of the difficulties that sexual assault survivors have in terms of accessing housing or staying safely housed.

And in L.A. County, really, we've got a population of over ten million people.

Within that population we have 1.-- I believe 1.7 million Asian Pacific Islander folks who are here, and within this last Los Angeles services homeless count,

we have experienced an increase of 13% of homelessness. So right now we're about a little over 66,000 homeless people who are suffering within L.A. County.

So we got a lot of stuff going on in L.A., as you can all tell.

But, really, looking at the plight of sexual assault survivors and what they have to experience, you know, there is so much that goes into this type of work.

When you are a survivor of trauma, a survivor of violence, which so many people are, about 34% of the homeless population have experienced some form of intimate partner violence, both physically and sexually.

And with the women who are actually homeless on the street, they experience almost up to 50% of sexual assault as they are on the street.

So it is really imperative that as we have a discussion about domestic violence survivors that we also make sure to remember and include the sexual assault survivors that are also out there vulnerable, trying to figure out where do they go from here.

And with L.A. County, I would say that, you know, our dedication and our commitment is to trying to access as many services as possible, which I think is universal amongst all service providers who work with this type

of community because it cannot be just one agency that is going to make a significant impact, not in a county of ten million people.

We have to mobilize, we have to be -- we have to be on our game.

We have to be able to really look and see what are pockets of ethnic communities doing for themselves and how can we partner with them.

And CP AF we have a multilingual hotline that we speak in different dialects, our staff are hired specifically to provide culturally sensitive services with language access in a variety of different API languages.

And, yet, you know, we would love it if we didn't need to have our services anymore, if there were, you know, violence against women were to stop and if housing were available, but obviously the reality is that we are still very much needed and we realize, especially now with the pandemic, that it takes all of us.

And with sexual assault survivors, you know, the entire landscape of how to provide services for them, even from the very first foremost intervention with them calling law enforcement or wanting to get a SART exam and having to go under that intensely intimate process and then understanding that their home is no longer safe and what does that mean for them and who are they going to call.

Who is that SART nurse going to call?

Who is that investigating officer going to call?

They're going to call rape crisis centers, trying to figure out where can we bring them.

And with CPAF we've been able to really try to vocalize and advocate for a multitude of services for sexual assault survivors in the form of immediate hotel, motel stays, in the form of collaborations with other rape crisis centers that may also have their own, like, motel/hotel vouchers, also with domestic violence organizations that may have available beds.

You know, we all know the landscapes of shelters for emergency shelters, for transitional shelters for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault is few and far between.

We need more of those shelters to be able to provide all of the assistance that is required.

We need longer-term shelters that are going to be able to address all of the -- or not all but at least try to address some of the more systemic issues that our sexual assault survivors are experiencing in terms of trying to find safe housing, being able to address their trauma, being able to access mental health services, and, in particular, for undocumented sexual assault survivors, I mean, this is what we're

experiencing right now, you know, we have survivors who are coming to us who have immigrated from their country to this country under the hope and dreams that they will find -- that they will be able to be in this beautiful relationship and that doesn't turn out well and the sexual assault that they experienced from day one landing in this country is horrendous.

And what I've seen in the last year is that our sexual assault survivors have also, unfortunately, been incarcerated because police were called and there was a domestic violence altercation initially where they were just trying to defend themselves and because they didn't have language access, the person who perpetrated the crimes against them were, you know, weaving all of these tales and, unfortunately, our survivors were not able to advocate for themselves and they find themselves in jail for a day, a couple of days, a week, two weeks.

And getting out of that and not having anywhere to go except for the homes that had violated you to begin with, I mean, it's atrocious, and it really upsets me that all of these systems kind of play a role in it. But on the flip side of that, if we still continue to advocate and we still are able to collaborate and educate these different institutions, we can make great strides and we can forge a more cohesive, efficient

system that is going to be able to address the needs of all survivors of violence.

Of course, that's my idyllic hope and I think that we all kind of strive for what keeps us going and that keeps me going.

I would say some of the innovative practices that we have in Los Angeles County is really forging relationships with homeless services providers because as we are a rape crisis center and a domestic violence shelter, we also realize that with just this huge level of homelessness in L.A. County, we have to work with the homeless services providers.

We also have to destigmatize whatever kind of preconceived notions we have about each other's work. You know, the downtown women's center in Los Angeles County and Rainbow Services also located in L.A. County have a collaboration of a domestic violence homeless coalition where we get together and we talk about how can we collaborate, how can we mobilize, how can we make sure that policy that is are put in place in terms of homelessness or addressing homelessness include women and include survivors of domestic violence. So these partnerships are pivotal for us to be able to leverage our experiences, our experiences and our expertise and our knowledge in the fact that we -- we

are working with the survivors on the streets, making sure that we give them whatever they need in order for them to just get through the day.

Some of the other partnerships that we have are where you see collaborating with the family solutions centers, the coordinated entry systems for HMIS, which we're constantly trying to figure out how can we make that a safer system for survivors of sexual assault since they also don't want to be in this huge database and be found by their perpetrator and trying to figure out how we can effectively work and advocate with those family solution centers so that they understand what it is and how we can really be effective because, honestly, you know, I have been working with CPAF for 14 years and I started out, like, five years before that and still I feel that there is so much that is happening to our women, to our children, and violence is so pervasive and it really takes all of us to be able to work together.

And we have to have honest dialogue.

Shelters are not perfect.

Rape crisis centers are severely underfunded.

There's not enough emphasis on being able to house and understanding the nuances of when a survivor is assaulted sexually.

What kind of complete dismantling of themselves is in

process because of that.

And they need time and they need services and they need to be able to grieve what happened to them.

And we need to be able to support that grief through all of these comprehensive wrap-around services.

So, of course, I end with the fact that we don't have enough housing, which I think is central to the homelessness issue in many states, but in L.A. County it is so severe and I think that even as we are looking at how many low-income units we can build, how many neighborhoods we can get to kind of really relax -- and understand that it takes a community, it takes a village to be able to really help this population, you know, we still will need services.

Those survivors who are going to be in their own housing are also going to need their counselors, they're also going to need their case managers, they're also going to need their advocates to walk beside them, hear them out, be there for them, heal them, and try to figure out how we move forward together so we can prevent this kind of violence from happening.

So, you know, there's so much.

I feel like I could go on and on, but I'm not going to because there are so many other wonderful presenters that have so much experience and want to share that

with you all today and just thank you so much for your time and I'll be here for the Q & A as well.

And, yeah, it takes all of us.

And I'm so humbled to be part of this.

Thank you.

>> Thank you so much, Patima.

I think we all really hear you and hear your words.

And I know there's comments in the chat box echoing

that, especially in this sort of point, in this moment of time in our history where a lot of things are being

discussed, you know, the systems that we're working

within are also being rethought about and people are

rethinking what actually works for survivors and

survivors of color and immigrant survivors, it's a very

very interesting moment.

And we really appreciate what you and others on this

call are doing for survivors and other immigrants.

Okay.

And now Maja from Tapestri in Georgia is going to talk

about her work with human trafficking survivors and

helping them meet their housing needs.

>> Maja: Hi, everybody.

Thank you so much for having me on this call.

My name is Maja Hasic and I'm the anti-human

trafficking program director at Tapestri.

Tapestri is a nonprofit social service agency located

in Tucker, Georgia, so we are in the metro Atlanta area, through our anti-human trafficking program we actually cover most of the state of Georgia.

So for our anti-human trafficking program, we provide comprehensive case management, and that includes assistance with housing, with food, clothing, medical counseling, English classes, anything and everything that a person may need when they are in this country with little support system, or even undocumented.

I should say that most of the individuals that we serve through the agency are refugees and immigrants.

Specifically through our anti-human trafficking program, most individuals are actually undocumented at the time that they are referred to us, either because they were smuggled across the border without inspection or because they entered the country on a temporary visa which has expired due to their trafficking situation.

We do also have a domestic violence program, and through that program we also serve refugees and immigrants.

So we are heavily federally funded, so some of the challenges that I've heard today through other agencies, we have the same challenges as well.

The challenges with time limitation, and even some access to services that are restricted through federal

funds.

So we do not operate a shelter for our anti-human trafficking program.

We actually utilize domestic violence shelters for emergency stay.

So in this COVID time, or time of COVID, we have seen some challenges with even, you know, being able to access that emergency stay for a client for one to three months until we're able to locate something more long term.

Of course, we've always had those challenges just due to the sheer number of individuals that identify as victims of domestic violence, as well as human trafficking.

There's just not enough housing out there for emergency, let alone for transitional housing needs of all of our clients combined.

But more specific to COVID, we have noticed that shelters are putting in certain social distancing restrictions, which has decreased the number of beds that are available to both victims of domestic violence as well as human trafficking.

And in regards to that, we have utilized hotels for short-term stay until we can locate something more long term.

And I will say when we talk about human trafficking,

our agency works with both, you know, adults and minors.

We work with victims of labor trafficking and sex trafficking.

So we're working with more than just females.

Our housing challenges, you know, span across time, and

I will say that one of the biggest challenges that we have had with housing has been housing of male victims.

There's just not enough shelters out there.

So there have been some recommendations to utilize homeless shelters for our male clients who are victims of labor trafficking, but even those systems are very short-term and on a first-come-first-serve basis.

And they're not really the best fit for the communities that we are serving.

So we have as a backup plan, we have utilized hotels for that emergency stay whenever those other emergency shelters have not been available to our clients.

As far as transitional housing, like I mentioned, many of our clients are undocumented, but, yet, we have still managed to implement the scatter site housing model, which means that we are approaching different apartments across the state of Georgia and getting leases for our clients so they can live independently. And, of course, utilizing our funding to pay for rent.

So some of the ways that we have gone around the documentation side has been to put Tapestri's name on the lease instead of the client's.

So that has worked with some landlords and with others it has not.

So it really has taken a lot of partnership building on our behalf in order to get, you know, clients settled in to those transitional apartments.

So, like I said, we'll pay for the apartment.

Most of the time we will pay for the entire rent, just simply because our clients do not have appropriate documentation to even gain employment in the United States.

And what we've also noticed as far as during COVID is for individuals that do -- that have received the approvals, which is special immigration relief available specifically to victims of human trafficking, is that at this time they are unable to get Social Security numbers because Social Security offices have been closed.

There have been some suggestions from the Social Security Administration for the clients to fill out the application online and to mail in their original documents.

As you can imagine, with the wait list, which has recently moved up, but it was at a certain point 27

months processing time.

Nobody is willing to send in any type of original documentation to any office in order to gain that benefit or the Social Security card.

So even for individuals during this time that are undocumented and that could be working and that could be, you know, getting a lease in their name or getting utilities in their name, they're unable to do so because they don't have that Social Security number.

So there have been, you know, many challenges at this time that we have had to work through.

I will briefly mention that some individuals without documentation have chosen to rent a room, you know, within their community, maybe from a community member that they know and trust.

In those cases we were able to pay the community member for housing of that individual.

And the way that we have met our federal requirements has been by having an informal rental agreement between us and the landlord.

We clearly document that payment for the service is actually for housing.

And we have certain protocols and policies in place which dictate that housing is to be paid directly to the landlord instead of the client.

So many many different things to think about as we provide housing to our clients.

And I'm just focusing on housing right now, but, of course, we provide comprehensive services that will go very much beyond the housing need.

But like my co-presenters mentioned, housing has been one of the major issues that we have identified with these communities.

Similar to domestic violence, in cases of human trafficking, the abuser or the trafficker may be somebody that they have a romantic partnership with, it might be, you know, a spouse or it might even be a parent.

So, you know, it is a tough decision for individuals who decide to leave that abusive relationship, not only to end that relationship but also in accessing services after they have decided to leave.

So I will leave it at that because we are running short on time, but I'm more than happy to answer any questions as we come to the end of the presentation.

Thank you so much.

>> Thank you so much, Maja.

Thank you to all the other presenters as well.

We do have a resource document that you can access here, all of the resources that were provided in the chat box are in this live document.

On the next slide is the link to some additional resources that you can look at.

And then I believe the slide after this is the link to the survey, which if you haven't concluded yet, please do so.

We have about six minutes left on the call, and I would love to do a Q & A with our wonderful presenters.

There's so much rich information that was provided today.

There's a question that came in to the chat box, and let's see, so it says I know that CPAF has tremendous community support, including but not limited to business leaders from the immigrant community.

I'm wondering if you could speak to ways that you may have leveraged some of those relationships to perhaps foster new or stronger relationships with property owners?

And I would just tag onto that sort of a broader question about, you know, we talked about the challenges, the additional challenges that survivors are facing during the pandemic to access housing and homelessness services, but in this sort of challenging period there have also been some new opportunities that some of the presenters talked about.

And, so, if folks could also talk about sort of the new

opportunities and new relationships and partnerships that folks had and what they look like and how they've helped survivors, that would be wonderful too.

>> Hi, this is Patima.

So I just wanted to -- thank you, Karlo, for opening up the Q & A.

I'll just be brief.

Thanks, Kathy, for asking the question.

For CPAF, yes, because we have been around for some time, we've been able to build partnerships with other API organizations, some of them like Little Tokoyo Service Center, they also have actually a transitional shelter but they specialize in a host of services for the Japanese community, and they also are building low-income housing units.

And it's been really instrumental for us to have those types of partnerships to kind of be at the table.

But what I find the most meaningful is being able to be part of like the Los Angeles homeless services center, their policy coordinated council, the domestic violence homeless coalition because that is how we're able to just kind of have a broader landscape of the needs and addressing the needs of survivors.

Property managers, it's still such a hardship to be able to get them to the table.

So that's kind of what we're trying to do is trying to

kind of have them come to these coalition meetings, come to these summits that we have on homelessness and housing and try to see where they're coming from and how we can both work together.

Right now for immigrant communities, for API survivors, I would say that it really is -- right now it kind of feels like it's almost the same as it was like 20 years ago in terms of, okay, let's go to Chinatown, let's go to, you know, Little Tokyo, let's go to Little Saigon and have, you know, the clients that speak that particular language look at that community to see if they can have alternative forms of housing because that's all they can afford, right?

Like a room for rent or, you know, if there's an in-law unit.

So I think, like, for immigrant communities, it's been much more difficult, but, of course, CPAF is still trying to leverage other relationships that we have with even local government officials who are API, who are able to kind of work within their community and being able to kind of see, like, what is out there. But it has been very challenging and we're still trying to figure out, you know, in different appealing ways to get property managers to understand the need and it does take a lot of incentive in terms of being able to

end homelessness and wanting, you know, less encampments and trying to figure out like how we can make our community safer and, so, I wish I had, like, -- I wish I had better news to kind of say how we can -- or what we have been able to leverage so far. But it is still something that's a process.

That's why these kind of coalitions and these types of webinars are so incredibly impactful because it builds awareness and it lets people know that, yeah, I can play a role in this too.

I could go to my 40 supervisors and talk to them about what's going on in my community and how I need to know what are they doing to address this homelessness issue.

So, yeah, so I just really encourage people, if you don't know your local family solution center, if you are unaware of what type of entity is working on homelessness in your county, like to be able to look into that, supporting rape crisis centers, supporting domestic violence shelters by continuously looking at your own propositions to make sure that we're being supported as well is a huge thing too because our services are still so incredibly integral to a survivor's capacity to heal and move on.

>> Karlo: Thanks, Patima.

Tasnia and Maja, I think you both also talked about serving undocumented survivors.

You focused on male survivors, how hard it is to get housing for male survivors.

Would you be able to sort of talk more about that, about, you know, how you've been able to build relationships with housing providers that they can access, survivors can access housing and homelessness services?

You talked about several different strategies that you have, including vouching -- having Tapestri vouch for survivors, but particularly serving undocumented survivors, what have you seen that's really worked?

>> Maja: Hi.

This is Maja again.

Well, we started off with actually approaching refugee resettlement organizations because our agency serves refugees as well, and just kind of working with them to identify, you know, maybe we could perhaps house clients together because we do work with individuals from all over the world with different ethnic and national backgrounds.

So we were able to put clients together and have kind of piggyback off of some of the partnerships the refugee resettlement organizations have had for years. You know, we've also approach apartments on our own and have built relationships in that way by pretty much

guaranteeing that we would pay for rent for certain number of hours and having those written agreements to say that, you know, well, let's try with a lease for six months and we guarantee that payments, you know, the rental payment will be made in a timely manner and, you know, will cover the whole cost.

So it's not always that apartments can get that guarantee the rent will be paid on time, so I feel like some of those leasing companies they actually enjoy the partnerships that we have with them.

>> Karlo: Great.

Thank you so much.

So it looks like we are actually at time or a little bit over.

So, we're going to go ahead and end the call.

I want to thank again all of our wonderful speakers today.

There was so much really rich information that was shared and if folks have any questions, feel free to contact us directly.

The resources and the recording again will be circulated after this call.

And that's it for now.

Thank you so much.

Have a great day and please stay safe.

>> Thank you, Karlo.

Great call.

Appreciate it.

>> Thanks.

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