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HEIDI NOTARIO:

Welcome everyone, please turn your attention to the interpretation team.

SPEAKER:

Thank you so much, I'm here (indiscernible) we will be providing simultaneous input – Mike interpretation between English and Spanish for today's session, to access it, if you are here via a computer there's a globe at the center of your screen that says interpretation, you can click there, and there you can select a channel of preference. If you are bilingual and English and Spanish, you do not need to select a channel, but if you are not bilingual in English and Spanish, please go ahead and select the English Channel so you do not miss anything that might be shared and Spanish.

If you are here via smart phone there's three dots and you can click there and once again select language interpretation and then select the English Channel.

(Language unknown to captioner)

If there are any issues with interpretation please let us know through the chat and we will try and help you out as quickly as we can. (Language unknown to captioner)

Thank you so much.

HEIDI NOTARIO:

Thank you to the interpreters, hi everyone I'm Heidi Natalia, I use she her pronouns, and I'm the Vice President of strategic partnerships and systems change with the national Center for domestic violence, I have curly hair, short on the left side and longer on the right, and I'm wearing glasses that have black rims, I have a long sleeve shirt that is dark blue and am wearing a pink tie. I am also wearing a black blazer. Before we begin I would like to review some brief housekeeping items with you. We are committed to making this an equitable space in which people of all a bit of -- abilities can take part fully and in their own language. It takes commitment and effort to make this a reality. For example, we have limited use of the chat function. It's difficult to translate the chapter -- chat in real-time and can be inaccessible to assistive devices. Please send questions, comments, or resources, directly to the event -- event host her cohost.

We read the questions and comments allowed so they can be interpreted. While we aim to make this a mixed ability and multilingual space, we also know we are still learning how to learn this well. Please

reach out to event staff throughout the session if you are experiencing any accessibility issues. We also ask about accessibility in our post webinar evaluation. Please let us know your experiences in ways we can improve. We know we have much to learn, and we want to improve practice. This event features live captioning, you can access this feature by clicking caption at the bottom of the screen. We are recording the event and we share it through our website and YouTube channel. The key would a feature provides the ability for attendees to ask questions for the risk -- presenters to respond to. Please reach out to staff if you are experiencing ongoing technical difficulties, but please note we may have limited capacity to solve these while the session is running.

Today, policy and research briefing will include lessons learned and research findings from critical work that began about a year or so ago. This work is a part of NRCDV's ongoing commitment to black and brown survivors, their families, and communities. We have the ability to learn about the black immigrant project from trailblazers and organizers that work within those communities.

We will learn about the findings from a small pilot research project on the use of flexible funds to respond to housing and security among Lack and Brown queer and trans people of color in central Pennsylvania.

And then we end with policy highlights of this critical work. And now, I'm gonna turn it over to Sean Dell Dawson, the director of family and violence prevention services, welcome.

**SHAWNDELL DAWSON:**

Thank you for your leadership Heidi, and thank you NRCDV and all of the partners. Good afternoon and welcome, I'm so pleased to join you will, I am Shawndell Dawson, I want to welcome you to the safe house capacity building centers policy briefing, it's really an honor to be able to stand in solidarity with such amazing people leading incredible change on behalf of survivors and their communities every day.

We learn a lot from each other, and we've learned a lot from all of you. I want to thank you for continuing to ensure that everyone in this country and around the world understands that survivor safety is built on a foundation of equity, accessibility, housing, human rights, and economic empowerment.

I appreciate you all making time to join us today.

I know what survivors in each of your facing is incredibly daunting. Safe housing and accessible housing is at the forefront of all of our work for survivors. There are shortages and challenges in every community across the country, research continues to show that domestic violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness for families, (indiscernible) stretched their limited grants very far, and 2021 they provided over 7 million shelter knights, but still had over 181,000 unmet requests for shelter due to operating at full capacity and not having additional resources to shelter additional families.

These programs also responded to 2.5 million crisis calls and served over 1.3 million people. We know that the demands you all are facing are huge, the needs are significant, and there are limitations to

what is available to communities. We are grateful for all of the work you are doing to be able to stretch the existing resources to be innovative, to be creative, and to continue to work very flexible and cooperatively with other partners to try and meet these needs.

This afternoon I am joined by tremendous leaders from across the country that will help us learn more about meeting the needs of black immigrant and refugee survivors and survivors from LGBT Q classes communities. We are grateful for today's presentations and we can't wait to hear more from each of you about your important work. Thank you for joining us today, and thank you for your leadership.

Thanks to the commitment of survivors and advocates and researchers and members of Congress and the president, we are now closer than ever have been before to seeing the actualization of flexible funding for survivors and their children. The President continues to lead around flex will cash assistance, members of Congress have reached out for techno looks -- technical assistance to understand what the proposal means. I think there's real opportunity because there also hearing from each of you about how important having flexible options for survivors, to help them shelter in place, or exit shelter very quickly, and have the flexibilities to be able to stabilize their family for 24 months or more is really really important.

The research continues to affirm that, our colleagues in the Department of Justice and the HHS (indiscernible) recently released a domestic health evaluation that reaffirms what we have known deeply, in terms of how to provide domestic violence housing first services, the center survivors needs meet survivors needs and offers flexible support. That report is publicly available, there have been presentations far and wide across the country, and it helps bolster the important (indiscernible) to expand how we provide support to survivors and more substantive and flexible ways that help survivors have a continuum of options that are available to them in the community.

Yes, there is still work that needs to be done to actualize resources for survivors, and also to continue to expand the important investment in the family violence and prevention services act. I, along with our entire team, stand with you all, and continuing to talk about the limitations, recognizing that the average grant for local domestic violence programs is \$73,000, and \$55,000 for Tribes and tribal organizations. We know the resources are stretched very thin, we know those resources (indiscernible) and I really appreciate how hard you are working, it means so much to be able to be responsive and help survivors have a place -- safe place to turn the unit is. Today the National resource Center has organized a very informative briefing that will help us to continue actualized change, to lift up needs, and make advancements for survivors. I hope each of you come away from this session today with more information, and research that will help you with your work. And I hope to hear from all of you about all the wonderful ways that your continuing to be innovative, responsive, and using existing resources and able to support survivors around housing and housing services.

Thank you so much for joining us today, I look forward to hearing from you all, and I can't wait for the presentations had. I now turn things over to Allison Randall. The principal deputy director of the office of violence against women. Allison?

ALLISON RANDALL:

Thank you so much Sean Dell, and walk -- good afternoon everyone. I'm Allison Randall, she, her, hers. I'm a middle-aged white woman with sort of medium length brown hair, a navy blue blazer, and a pink shirt. I'm so honored to be in the role I have with the Department of Justice, and so honored to be with all of you today. You know, thinking about the impact, the importance of these innovative practices related to survivor safety. How do we make real our commitments to housing, to racial equity, to financial security? And we deeply appreciate the chance to hear the projects today that are taking such an intersectional approach to making a real tangible change. Right? Travel the country, multiple times each month, and every site visit, every. Site visit. We hear about the need for housing. It is such a huge issue. That's why I came to DC, you know, nearly 25 years ago. Because I saw that lack of housing constantly trapping survivors -- trapping survivors. Making it impossible to leave.

When you don't have housing you can't make real choices for your housing or for yourself. Housing is truly crucial for safety, for stability, and also for access to justice.

So, at the office against violence -- at the office on violence against women we have about \$7 million that we distribute in grants, and we change the world by supporting the incredible work that many of you all are doing right now. And through that, we prioritize racial equity, we prioritize doing that in an intersectional way, that addresses the needs of survivors from all historically marginalized populations, we think about how do we improve access to justice for all survivors? However those survivors choose to define justice. To accomplish any of this, we have to expand economic justice. We have to do more financial acted -- advocacy for survivors, and we have to honor tribal sovereignty, which cuts across all of our work.

I raise these priorities because this is how we make tangible change at oh VW, and why I think the safe housing capacity Center are so important. One challenge we see that you are probably running into in the field,... The Spanish survivors and work against every single one of our priorities. It undermines our government wide approaches and community approaches to addressing gender-based violence.

In jurisdictions where these policies are in place, we know also that communities of color experience a desperate impact due to the broad economic what,... And the way these get selectively enforced in some communities, but not in others.

And, while the intention is to reduce crime or make housing safer, these policies can really further isolate survivors. They introduce additional barriers to housing and means that survivors are less likely to ask for help. It reduces safety for everyone.

It can also mean that landlords can refuse tenants if they think someone is a survivor of domestic violence. It may further mar someone's parental history if they have been evicted due to this. Then you can really be trapped by damage to credit, or by a problematic rental history.

Again, that means that everyone is less safe. So when we think about how we expand access to justice, one of those key pieces is that if survivors want to call the criminal justice system, want to call 911, that they can. And so many nuisance calls to 911 are a nuisance! It means that landlords, for

survivors are calling the police. If you have called 911 three times in a certain time period, you are labeled a nuisance. Now you have to evict that survivor because they are required to abate the nuisance by those local ordinances.

We really appreciate the work you all are doing on these issues, because being trapped between safety and remaining housed is impossible for survivors. That can be one of the things that forced survivors to remain in shelters for a long period of time.

The violence against women act of 2013 strengthened federal laws by closing key jurisdiction gaps that left many American Indian and (unknown term) women without protections. And, by stopping some additional discrimination against domestic violence survivors in public housing.

Recently, just last year, the violence (indiscernible) act made some key changes including protecting the right of victims to seek assistance from their own homes, to address criminal activity that is not their fault, without risking eviction or penalties. Helping to keep more folks house.

For those of you who do legal assistance, it also expanded the kind of legal assistance work you can do. Eviction work has always been included, but now there is more on postconviction relief. You know, including (unknown term) and expunction, that is something you can really use to access (indiscernible) housing.

We have a lot at OVW,... We have more funding this year and we urge you to apply. Particularly for those of you who are culturally specific organizations, those of you who are by and for communities of color and communities that are underserved. We want to find you! Reach out to us.

Our traditional housing program is something we fight for and you can use it, not just to provide hard units of housing, you can use it for rental assistance, you can use it really flexibly to respond to the needs of survivors.

We also, for the first time -- we are so excited! -- Got a small sum of money, \$4 million for direct financial assistance. We will not be able to roll it out for a few more months, so keep your eyes peeled, but direct financial assistance was also added as a purpose area in several violence against women act programs.

Getting money directly to survivors to meet their needs, the things they need to stay safe. Survivors know better than we do. This is a huge priority and we are excited to work with Chantel and our colleagues.

We also have a research and facilitation (indiscernible). Take a look at that. We have many priorities of reaching underserved communities. We have a requirement for folks with lived experience to help shape the research. Not just experience, but help shape the research.

That closes at the end of June, please take a look at that. We hope to continue to collaborate with all of you, and with many thanks to my wonderful, brilliant, talented collie Shawndell Dawson. Really look

forward to fighting and standing shoulder to shoulder with all of you as we advance his work.

Thank you so much to everyone. I am honored to pass the microphone to our research director of evaluation.

FUNMI AYENI:

Hello everyone, my name is (Unknown name) and I am the director of the domestic violence there. (?) And Black woman, my hair is black in a straight Bobcat, and I am wearing a black shirt with red and white flour details. To get started today, I will be introducing the black and immigrant housing project.

We know that leaving an abusive relationship can be very difficult for survivors of gender-based violence. These difficulties are even great for immigrants and women of ethnic minorities. Institutional racism, immigration regulations, cultural and religious differences, lack of cultural responsiveness, and the lack of diversity in frontline services are brought challenges that are presented for immigrant survivors.

Most of the studies in the US that have documented immigrant women's experience of gender-based violence have not included the perspectives of immigrant women and Caribbean women. Nor has it included the perspectives of direct service providers who work to support these populations.

We also know that most studies have not documented the connection between gender-based violence, housing instability, and immigrants status among black immigrants. Considering these realities, the black immigrant housing project was conceptualized to bring together survivors and experts from the community to work in the field of gender-based violence.

The purpose of bringing this group together was to expand our thinking about what responsive programming, training and technical assistance could look like at the intersection of housing instability and gender-based violence.

So, specifically, this project that we have started will explore the nature and the extent of homelessness and housing insecurity among black immigrant and refugee survivors. We will also document the experience of advocates and direct service providers working directly with this population. Also, that we may better understand the intersections between housing instability and gender-based violence for this population.

So, to introduce this project today, you will hear from some of our wonderful community partners who are culturally specific direct service providers working with Black immigrant survivors. Many of the insights they will share today are the information that is shaping the direction of this project.

This project is ongoing and we will continue to identify opportunities to share emergent by with the field broadly, as we continue to gather the information.

So thank you all very much and I will pass it on to (Unknown name) and (Unknown name), our director of community engagement who will be facilitating this discussion today.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Thank you so much for this. My name is Lavon Morris Grant then the director of (unknown term). I am happy to be here with you all and to be the facilitator of this panel. And, as Funmi noted, we are doing an ongoing project and very much looking forward to continuing the work and learning from the organizations that will be present on this panel today, so thank you all for being here with us.

As we move into the panel, as they begin to be spotlighted, that would be great so we can start the facilitation of this and have a lengthy, open dialogue/discussion with the women that will be coming on to work with us. And for you all to me.

Thank you all once again and I am looking forward to what we are all going to bring, and hopefully what you will be able to take away. So, I will be introducing each person individually, and then we will get into our session of questions.

So I will first start with Hager Shawkat she is (indiscernible) it is a... No income or low income African immigrant women and to include the lives of them and their families, strengthen their communities in the United States starting in New York City. I love New York, that is one of my hometown, coming from that area, so thank you Hager for being here with us.

My next panelist is Lul, she is the (unknown term) out of Washington, DC. They are dedicated to serving African immigrants as well in the refugee community in Washington, DC, to honor the legacy of the late founder Amelia the purpose is to provide support... I think you both for being here and I just want to die then to the questions and thank you all for the wonderful, wonderful listening sessions that we have had as of now. Those sessions will continue in the coming months. So thank you so very much!

Let's see, Lul I will start with you. But before that, I would like to just say hello and happy say a word into what you would like to say.

LUL MOHAMUD:

Of course! Hello everyone, my name is Lul Mohamud and I am the director of the Persons center in Washington, DC. My pronouns are she/her/hers. Redescription of myself: I am youngish, Black woman, light skin, dark rimmed glasses wearing a black hejab... I am very excited to be able to be here and to be able to introduce the Persons Center and also to be able to introduce you to this wonderful panel.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Thank you so much. I have to introduce myself. Thank you for that reminder for me to do that! I am an African-American woman, I would say I am an elder, I'm just going to leave it at that (Laughs). Today, as far as my hair, I have a whole lot here today, it is truly kinky, shoulderlength. I am a brown skinned woman with some deep red lipstick and a gold chain and I have on a multicolored top, that's the best way I can describe it. I love showing up in multicolor, so with that before we moved into the question, Lul, I would like to introduce our other panelist that is here with us.

Doris, so good to see you! Thank you, thank you. So, Doris is the founder and CEO of the Amani women's center located here in Clarkston, Georgia. I stay here because I am located in Atlanta, Georgia and then visited Doris's center several times. Were they provide culturally tailored programs and services that empower, and contribute to the economic security, spiritual and physical well-being of refugee immigrant women. Hopefully I got all of that out!

As I said, as we proceed, you can say little bit about yourself and describe yourself as we get into the questions. I was start with Lul, as I said originally. This is a heavy tender question but I know you can handle it. Do your best (Laughs) and pack into 2 to 3 minutes! (Laughs) So all for you, and hopefully it will be put in the chat as well, so Lul I was wondering, with your program, as you work with the African immigrant population, what financial, political, in door institutional barriers get in the way of your organization providing services to immigrant and refugee survivors of gender-based violence who are experiencing homelessness, indoor housing, instability, I know that was a lot, I can repeat that if you need me to, but if that's OK you can jump right in.

LUL MOHAMUD:

Of course I can jump right into that, thank you Lavon for the question, I think it's important to first provide perspective on what our organization does when it comes to overcoming these obstacles that you mentioned. Whether they are financial, political, whether they are even cultural at times, what are organization experiences her is exactly what her survivors experience. So our organization was founded and led by a group entirely comprised of black and African immigrants and first-generation American women. So our work with survivors is directly influenced by our own experiences as women of this community.

So when our survivors identify challenges with housing, particularly with housing instability, we recognize those challenges as ones we have to experience ourselves, and we have to experience as an organization.

So to offer a little more context, some of those challenges can include, for example, working with undocumented survivors, with a lack of worker opportunity for work authorization, many of those individuals are underemployed. Even those who are documented are also underemployed. With the rising costs of housing and the difficulty of finding housing that could fit, for example, an entire family with children or other additional dependents, it is extremely difficult to find consistent housing, that a, survivors are qualified for, and can have proper credit checks and so on and so forth, but we also have the challenge of being able to maintain the cost of living.

So as a support organization our goal is to help survivors transition into independence. But, the challenge is, when the challenges are so high and so many, the challenge is talking about sustainability, independent sustainability, becomes so much more difficult. For many of our survivors so many of the challenges they experience as keeping a job due to other issues, whether it's discrimination, whether it's incongruence with their lives and lifestyles, the fact they are either overqualified because of credentials back home but aren't able to use it in the United States, lack of access to education, or opportunities that could help them get to jobs and positions that can afford



housing. The obstacles and the challenges are innumerable, there's many of them, so what we are looking to do is to be as creative and innovative as possible.

Looking beyond typical housing options, and being able to consider how can we get survivors and their families independent in a way that meets the other challenges they are experiencing. So housing has to be linked to proper economic solutions, and support, as well as emergent financial solutions, and long-term financial solutions. This is something we also have to do well experiencing life is black and African women. I hope that helps.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Very much, and I'm sure the audience will let us know how much that has helped based on there being any questions, so thank you so much for that elaborate answer in such a short time.

I so appreciate how we have to do that. You did a great job. And moving on to our next panelist, I'd like to bring Hager into the conversation, and same thing to Hajek, and like to allow you to say a little bit about yourself and your description as well before we get into the question.

HAGER SHAWKAT:

Thank you Lavon for the introduction, I am a brown skinned Muslim women in my 30s, I am wearing a cream headscarf with a floral border, and a navy top.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Alright Hager, thank you so much. Again, I am so honored to be in this space with you, and this next question Hager is for you, and again we're gonna try and stay within the 2 to 3 minute timeframe is much as we can do that, right?

So for you Hager, how does the lack of centering the experiences of black immigrant and refugee survivors, and immigrant and refugee, excuse me. I went to a whole other question. How does the lack of housing options impact immigrant and refugee survivors experiencing gender-based violence.

HAGER SHAWKAT:

Thank you, that's a great question. For us, working with African immigrant women and their families, many of whom have children of varying ages, without those suitable housing options, what that has meant is that many times our clients may choose to remain at home. If they've been connected with us or other organizations they may have the benefit of having safety plan in place, having an emergency contact in place, but their life, in terms of leaving or physically distancing themselves from the violence doesn't necessarily change once they are connected to us.

Our hope is that through different services that we provide that we can connect with other organizations here in New York City but also across the country, I think all of us do this work in tandem, with one another, and we wouldn't be able to do it alone, certainly.

But really our support comes in other forms. Warehousing isn't available maybe people need support, it's possible there are other avenues we can support them with. Getting folks insured, access to

healthcare coverage, we know that looks very different across the country, even something as simple as women's health services.

So there are other ways we are integral in supporting our community members when they can't necessarily leave the household. Which is still very unfortunate, and we hope that can always be an option we provide to clients, but as I think everyone has noted so far, the lack of housing options or funding a rental assistance is what makes it so difficult for folks to leave.

And they're not really able to make meaningful change, and for us it's really recognizing that where they currently are there may be further harm or threat of violence in many different forms, and so our support has to look, as Lul said we have to be very quick and innovative on our feet to figure out how to support community members, best case scenario we can take them to another safe space and provide them that housing or assistance they need. But what of those services, the other services, that we can provide as a social support in the interim is really what we worked offer.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Thank you Hager, I love how you weaved in that you provide what we call wraparound services right? That we all have to figure out how to do. Particularly with a culturally specific programming, those services can look so different from mainstream, particularly when it comes to different types of spirituality religions and things like that. And food right?

So thank you for adding those services, and we give that name wraparound services, so thank you for that.

And last, but not least, as we continue with a great discussion, and I really hope you all are taking this in and really making note of the work that these organizations and the women that serve these organizations are doing, because they are doing a tremendous job with lack of services and resources. So, every time I meet with them, I'm always so honored and enthralled of how they are making it work.

So, as I was saying, we have Doris with us here, which I'm always happy to see you Doris, thank you for being with us. As I introduced Doris, as I did about being a founder of the Marley center, I will allow Doris to do the same, have a few words of description, and then get into the questions.

DORIS MUKANGU:

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

You are on mute Doris.

DORIS MUKANGU:

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Still not hearing you... Let's see what's happening.

DORIS MUKANGU:

it should work now know?

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

It's not working still Doris? I don't have the capacity to take you off mute. So I'm not sure... She's unmute it but I'm not sure why her sound... Is the sound on your computer Doris?

SPEAKER:

It's frustrating, but you may need to leave and come back Doris,

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Oh goodness.

SPEAKER:

I'm not sure that the answer but sometimes that helps.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Said Doris, I know we've been having some issues, if we can do that, we will jump right back into you once you get back and I'll just move to the next question, and we will come back to you once you come back.

Technology is good when it is, and when not it is just what it is. So thank you Doris, sorry for that. But you know what? Just because we have tech issues it doesn't mean we have issues right? (Laughs) Because we can still control this space and be OK in this space. And have everybody give us grace, and deal with us, as we continue to move forward with some really really great information that I think will help shape the field's perspective on how we work with the Black immigrant communities. So, Lul I'm gonna come back to you with the next question as we hopefully get Doris back.

And continue to make this a great space, so let's see what I have for you Lul, can you share with us what factors lead to persistent and repetitive homelessness? Or housing instability among immigrant and refugee survivors of gender-based violence? This is really going question and we can definitely be sitting here for a while because the reality is every case is different. The experiences of each survivor is different. It can also be different at different time periods. Some of the challenges, the factors that contribute to this, as mentioned earlier is lack of financial resources. For example, with rent increases, or for example, one appointment or employment instability there can be challenges with just being able to make rent.

Other issues include, where we have survivors, to undocumented status living in homes where they live there but they are not on a proper lease so they do not have any tenants rights or whatnot. As a result, landlords can take advantage of that and at any point they can lose their housing and be threatened with homelessness.

Unfortunately, in some cases, survivors who are survivors of different forms of violence or trauma, they

are often exploited: by their employers, by their landlords. Other factors that can contribute also include discrimination that survivors to experience. Many of our survivors are labeled as difficult. Many of them are not given the grace for the acceptance or the kindness or the patience that may survivors do need in terms of challenges they are experiencing.

And it really is, as a survivor without the proper support, that period after leaving an abusive relationship and moving toward independence and stability, it is a very transient period. A lot can happen in that time. Where, for example, we have survivors with children. Those children, challenges may happen when they are required to move to a different place but will be able to afford that change.

There are also other factors that play a part in this including survivors need for community, a sense of community. So, when there are housing options but they are far from where they work or pray or find community or understanding, that may not be ideal overall. They may have a roof over their head, but it causes additional stress and challenges. At times, survivors will take their chances and moved to a different place or try to stay where they are located.

These are just a few examples of factors that play into it, and it really ranges from case specific but also structural inequities and challenges. So, sometimes when it just comes to be that term "eligibility", it can really come out and bite you out of nowhere. Some survivors may lose access to the balancing acts that they are doing with other forms of assistance. If one form of assistance disappears, it may affect all the others, so we have cases where a survivor has daycare so they can go to their job, so they can pay for the rent in their new home and maintain their family. Let's see that daycare is taken away from them, it could be a family friend or family member. Then they are not able to finish work and they are at risk of losing their job and losing their housing.

It is really a balancing act, you ever seen those acts when they are spinning plates on sticks? It is really like that for survivors. Not only is it facing the challenge of experiencing trauma in the mental health impacts, the physical health impacts, but they are also trying to manage these different factors at the same time.

Too many of these factors are outside of their hands and outside of their control. They are expected to control all and to figure all out. Many times, when they reach out for offers of assistance or support,... They don't understand the factors they are dealing with. Many survivors say they would rather take their chances on their own rather than reaching out to someone who may not understand them and add insult to injury.

**LAVON MORRIS GRANT:**

And we know that all you broaden is even greater with survivors, particularly when we look at the mental stability or instability, right, of the triggering traumas that continue. I definitely remember when I was out there in the balancing act that we talked about when one doesn't work, we try something else and everything falls apart for the walls start crumbling down.

The last thing I remember, prior to my incident, we didn't call this back then but I was going to traffic myself sexually. That wasn't the name back in the 90s, but I needed a vehicle in this particular

predator was interested in me, and would help me if I did XYZ.

LUL MOHAMUD:

Is exploitation.... Survivors to experience exploitation from their bosses and a lot of people. There is exploitation that occurs with the people who are supposed to be helping them. If you say that this actually happened, or if you choose to live somewhere that is disparate from everything you know, just because you said you needed housing, just accept it.

A lot of our survivors are, in essence, lowballed and told to be grateful for resources that don't work or meet their needs. So, when the survivor then chooses to not select something that is beneath their dignity, they are left to suffer.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Wright, and other things can happen. For me, as we move to Doris and we are glad to have you back, in making that decision -- I didn't get to make that decision, because my other perpetrator, my husband try to should be four times and my children witnessed it. Another plethora of issues arose, and deeper and deeper trauma.

I think when we talk about this from our lived experiences, working with survivors and those of us being survivors ourselves, I do not think people fully realize what we have to go through without going through. It is easy for people to talk about it, about our experiences, but when you are actually living the experience and trying to juggle all of that and almost being killed in the process, right? I don't think people fully get when we say we really do need these resources, right? We are not just asking for the sake of asking.

Most times these resources are considered a life or death for us, right? In that moment. I think people need to walk away with that understanding when we are working in community and compilations and trying to decrease as many issues as possible.

With that, that leaves me (Laughs) to the work that Doris is doing here in Clarkston Georgia. Welcome back, Doris, and I hope our technological issues are solved. Let's say hello to Doris!

DORIS MUKANGU:

Hello!

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

There's that beautiful voice! See technology is good when it's good. (Laughs) I will give you the opportunity for your description and, as we move into the question for you. So, thank you for coming back and being patient with us.

DORIS MUKANGU:

Thank you for being patient with me! Good afternoon everyone, I am so excited to be here. To partake in such an important discussion. I am Doris Mukangu, originally from Kenya, East Africa and I am rocking a handmade Ethiopian scarf (Laughs), handwoven! A great show and my favorite amethyst

stone wrapped in copper. Yes, I think that's it.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Thank you Doris, for rocking your Ethiopian scarf! I appreciate it, it is so beautiful. I gotta get back to (indiscernible) so I can get some more handmade items! With that, Doris, as we lead into our next set of questions, can you briefly share about the work your organization and the population communities you are serving? And Doris, please tell us how many in that particular area because that was so mind blowing to me!

DORIS MUKANGU:

Yes, yes, so Amani women's center is located in Clarkston, Georgia, which is known as the most diverse area of the United States. Over 60 languages are spoken in Clarkston. We are adopting it to be the Ellis Island of the South. In this little space, there is so much that was the end with diversity comes unique challenges.

So with unique challenges, comes unique solutions. So, our center sees women from all over, mostly from Africa, I can name Concha, Sudan, Ethiopia, Burundi,... It looks like the United nations in there, we have so many folks and so much diversity.

Yes, so that is what the location we work in looks like: very diverse. Our community looks like, like I mentioned it is very diverse. Our services and programs are focused on helping mostly women, and with women you are helping families, children and husbands. You know?

We are mostly known for our economic apartment program. I like that Lul touched on that and she links housing to economic environment. When you talk about sustainability, you need to link those two together, sustainable solutions. I think, again I cannot stress enough the idea of our holistic approach. I liked that Hager mentioned... Catering to a survivor who walks through your doors because their challenges are layered and we have to get creative in figuring out how to address all those layers of challenges.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Wow, Doris, thank you so much. I just have a quick question and we will get into our last question because I know our panel is coming to an end. I hate that! I feel like we are just getting started, getting into the meat. But Doris, when you talk about your economic empowerment program, can you tell us a bit more about what that entails and how that works? And how the women respond to it?

DORIS MUKANGU:

Yes, so we recognized in working with women in our community, we were offering Band-Aid solutions when we were just responding to their immediate needs. We wanted to figure out how to address the root causes of, you know, all sorts of issues that we are facing. And, we came up - as a result of listening and having those community conversations with women - we heard them saying that they need, first of all, I say space to come to to learn skills that would empower them to be self sustainable.

There existed no safe space, where they felt comfortable showing up just as themselves and feeling

accepted. If you are covered, if you have an accent, if you cannot articulate yourself, just finding a space you can come to and feel welcome. In that space, which is what Amani is, you come there to learn a sewing skill. This sewing skill, after graduating, it empowers you to get into the workforce. This workforce development. When you get into the workforce, you get in earning livable wages. So they can start off with as much as \$18 an hour with the skill. So the skills are so important for these women. And, it is a skill that they will have for the rest of their lives. This is a skill that even empowers them to work from their homes. For those who have children and cannot make it to work, they start home businesses.

So we are excited about this because, not only are we offering this opportunity to learn the skill, we are offering you financial literacy classes, we are offering ESL classes, we help you tap into social services that are available to you. Rental and utility assistance. We help you address those barriers. How to put in an application if you are technically challenged, you know, if you are technically challenged you have no idea how to do that. Our team is here to do that and figure out those barriers and how to address those barriers.

So a woman may walk into our space and say they want to join the sewing program, but we quickly find out that maybe she is in a domestic violence situation. How do we help address that? What resources are available? It is all about relationships and building those relationships and trust. Again, holding your hand until you are on your own to feet. That is what the Amani center is doing for these women.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

I knew there was more to that justice empowerment work that you are doing. I wanted people to know about the different ways that you are doing to help women find and sustain economic justice work. Particularly financially. Thank you so much for that.

As we move into our panel coming to an end, I'm going to ask this last question. It is for everyone. I'm going to first start with Hager. I will repeat the question if you need me to. Don't worry, I will remind you. We are in this together. And we can believe that! (Laughs) So Hatcher and my other community partners, the question is how does the lack of centering the experiences of black, immigrant, and black refugee survivors in immigrant and refugee focused discussions, efforts (indiscernible) and the lack of understanding of the needs of this population?

HAGER SHAWKAT:

So, I think her at this conversation we may have touched on this a little bit, but I will highlight some of the unique challenges that I think persist when working with, particularly with black immigrants. I will have to admit we do are service to our community members when services and resources and support is not provided and doesn't recognize that black immigrants are not a monolith. So they come from many different parts of the world, they come at many different stages in life, and languages and cultural and faith and all of these systems that make up who they are makes it so that in a way our work needs to be unique and meet folks where they are.

As Lul so eloquently mentioned before, and try to interact with all of the misconceptions, they are

already battling that elsewhere. They cannot come to our spaces and also continue that battle. And when that does happen, unfortunately, is when those same folks who need help, and as many of you touched on his life or death for some folks, they will not reach out for services again. They will not go back and try and seek help.

It already took so much for our survivors to take that first step to ask for help, we know, I'm sure, as Black women we can handle it all and take it all. To work through that pride, and that sense of responsibility, and all of these roles that we play to finally ask for help, and then be met with services, and systems, that do not assist, and maybe cause further harm, really puts our community members, are survivors, at more risk.

There's also a sense of you know, pride, being from a particular country, or culture, I'm a proud Muslim woman and I want to make sure I'm practicing that, and I want to make sure the services I'm getting are congruent to that and help me hold those values, and uphold those values in my life as I continue seeking services.

We touched on the challenges that are already there, I think explanation is a big one. And I will add this, there are also unique challenges, gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, and issues that come up for black communities that may not be as prevalent in other communities, and without that knowledge, and without the understanding that forced marriage is a possibility, or child marriage, or female genital cutting, these unique challenges our community members are going to face along with all the other legal issues, language barriers, everything else that's going on.

So, you know, the challenges are stacked up high. So we have to understand that, we have to know our community members, and we have to take that time for each individual who comes in to really understand what they live there, what they're hoping to get past, and build, and all of that is for them to build their independence, and it can't look the same from one person to the next, so we want to make sure that we highlight that there is a diversity in the community and that our services also have to be there to meet those needs, as well as our family makeup. It might be one mom, I think the average in our communities right now is five children. So how do we meet that need? We cannot provide them a shelter space for one parent and two children, it doesn't meet their needs.

**LAVON MORRIS GRANT:**

Write the needs continue to be so complex while we figure out to meet those specific types of needs. And so, as we move along in our closeout, just so we're all on the same page of where we are at, I'm going to repeat the question Doris. How does the lack of centering the experiences of black immigrant and refugee survivors, and immigrant and refugee focused discussion efforts contribute to service barriers and a lack of understanding about the needs of this population?

**DORIS MUKANGU:**

Thank you for that question Lavon, I'm glad that Heger touched a lot on service delivery and what that looks like if we look at Black and immigrant communities as homogenous system.

I would like to take it a step farther or look at it from a different angle and talk about funding and what,



how limiting funding... Well, how using a lens that is looking at our population from a homogenous perspective leads to limited funding, because now we are not taking into consideration that we need to tailor programming and services to fit the various ethnicities, different racial ethnicities. So when there's no information out there about the different needs that exist in the different communities, then the funding, again, is bundled up. So it becomes very limited, so access to funding becomes a challenge for us...

The other thing I want to mention his research, as well, so again. If research is conducted in a such a manner that we are just looking at a community is a monolith, as Hager

We are missing the opportunity to address all his issues, the various issues that exist in the different communities.

So an example I can think of is when we are looking for maybe housing solutions for victims and survivors, and she mentioned she wants to be in an area where she has access to a (unknown term), but no one is thinking let's make sure we have housing available close to houses of worship for folks who want to have access to that. So yeah, this is certainly an important question and it needs to be teased out and addressed from various angles to meet the unique needs, again, any unique population. Thank you.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Wow, Doris, yeah. And I'm sure as we get to Lul, we could keep adding more layers right? And hopefully as we continue we will be able to decrease some of these layers, as we get the resources and financial funding that is so needed, right? So Lul I'm not sure if you need me to repeat the question, but based on knowing you pretty much have your answer already set, so we are going to move right into you and then come to our closeout, or if there are any Q&A at the end of this.

LUL MOHAMUD:

Thank you so much Lavon, and thank you Doris and Hager, incredible community advocates. First what I think we really need in service provision as well as research is a mindset change. And it really begins with recognizing our internalized discrimination as well as the stigma that we have surrounding African immigrants, but Lack immigrants as a total. -- Black immigrants. If we look at our data we are constantly being told that this community doesn't use the resources, they don't use the resources. They tell us they have a problem but they don't use the resources.

That narrative is putting the blame on the community that you allegedly are trying to serve. This is a very common phenomenon when it comes to advocating for our community. They are treated as though they are the problem, and that, for them, not fitting into the resources that we are creating without them in mind is a problem that they, that this community has.

And that is absolutely convoluted. It's a convoluted idea around the community, but it makes sense because it aligns with colonial and discriminatory perspectives of this community. So I want to start there. The next thing I really want to highlight is that when we are working with the community that has historical experiences with violence and oppression and harm, and then when they come to the United

States, living in the United States, if they are supposed to turn to, for example, law enforcement, which is the typical, it still remains one of the major resources that are provided, you are asking a community to navigate a criminal legal system that deems them as criminal before victim.

And then we have survivors who need immigration support and services, but when they turned immigration, the immigration system, or look to get support within the system, quote unquote following the good way, or the way that everyone should, they are being treated as alien before they are treated as individuals. Those are just two examples. We don't even need to discuss economic, we don't need to discuss medical... Every single one of these systems people from the Black immigrant community are given the short stick, and the short stick, in this analogy, is usually violence, discrimination, and additional harm.

So as a result the community has naturally become insular, trusting only those they know and have build credibility with them. So as service providers, it is our responsibility to provide credibility within this community and build trust, and to measure success using trust as the primary indicator. Instead of measuring the community, and blaming them for not utilizing resources that never had them, or the community, in mind.

So if your shelter limits mothers with two or three children, doesn't include other dependents, doesn't include other individuals in this family. For example we have survivors who are caretakers of their families children for example, they may have a sibling that passed on but they are taking care of that siblings child, if that child doesn't count as the child, they are not going to your shelter. They're not gonna turn to you.

If you are asking invasive screening questions that reminds a survivor, for example, of what it was like getting into the country. Living in a refugee camp, they don't want to go through that again is a natural instinct. So when they don't use your resources, it is not a condemnation of the community, it is a wake-up call for you to reassess your resources, and the different criteria you are setting which was developed on a community that is nothing like them. So it's really important, as we talk life or death, our survivors need to be given the respect and understanding before they are being condemned for not using resources that were never meant for them to use.

So it's really important for service providers, for funders, for everyone and anyone who says they were opening resources to all people, to do the work, and to do the work internally and externally. Internally meeting reviewing your staff, your hiring practices, your training practices. Externally means working with the community and building trust, first and foremost, and not believing, because they have a hard enough, that they should come running to us. You should be where they are, and prove they can trust you and your resources, because they are showing their most vulnerable selves by saying they need help, and too often they've done that before and had a door slammed in their face or cups put on the wrist. -- Cuffs put on the wrist. So it's really important that we reorient the perspective of the lives of those in the black immigrant community.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Alright! I knew as we went up the ladder more would get added. You all did such a fantastic job. And

again, like a said, I'm so sorry we have to end at this part of the agenda. But it was so open, and so wide, and I'm hoping our audience will be able to take a whole lot from this. And as your last words Lul, to change their perspectives and be willing to, if not change, at least willing to open, to be open to different perspectives right? As you begin the process of change. Thank you all for your participation and what you have shared with our audience. I am so happy to be part of this and able to facilitate this discussion.

As we move along I will pass it back to my colleague Funmi.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you so much Lavon. I am the director of research and evaluation research center on domestic violence. I am a Black woman, I have a short Bob cut and I and a lecture with red and white floral details.

Today I'm excited to share with you some of our findings from our flexible funding pilot project that we conducted in partnership with the LGBTQ+ center of Central Pennsylvania.

So, to give you an overview of what we will discuss today, I will start by providing just an overview of the purpose of the study. Then, I will talk about the guiding principles of flexible funding. We will get to take into what did we do with this process evaluation and then I will conclude with what we have found, our emergent findings.

Before I get into this, it's important for me to provide knowledge on while flexible funding assistance is a new conversation today, it is not (indiscernible). We know that Black, Brown, and indigenous communities have been incrementing the practices associated with flexible financial assistance for many years. So culturally specific organizations have been working in the communities with historically marginalized groups, and they have a history of using flexible funds to support the needs of survivors.

So, while this is not innovative in practice, it is an initiative that is starting to gain national popularity, particularly amongst mainstream processes. So I am excited to talk more about it as we continue to (indiscernible) the work on this flexible funding assistance model.

To move the process forward of conducting research and evaluation on flexible financial assistance, we decided to conduct this process of evaluation. We did so to document what it takes for a community-based organization to implement this model. We were also seeking to contribute to the evidence on the effectiveness of this model for multiply marginalized communities, which in this particular instance refers to Black, Brown, indigenous communities as well as youth.

Just to start by giving a brief overview of what the flexible funding model is, when we talk about flexible funding assistance, we are talking about financial support that is provided to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault the intention of addressing anything that stand in their way of securing safe, permanent, accessible, and affordable housing.

When we think about flexible funding, it is really important to recognize that there is a bidirectional

relationship... The forms of different violence, including economic violence... And we have discovered recently that flexible funding is (indiscernible) for survivors. We concluded that domestic housing first, and evaluation model which really looked into how flexible financial assistance, which is one of the components of the (unknown term) model secures survivors in stable housing.

Through that study, it was found that flexible funding can actually increase the housing, survivors. Taking in all this together, there continues to be (indiscernible) the way flexible funding supports community, and how important it is for typically historically marginalized communities.

When we think about the implementation of flexible funding, it is important to think about what are the guiding principles that guide the process? So we have been identified four: the survivor driven advocacy, where survivors listen to advocates. They affirm survivors. They work closely to adequately respond to their needs. Part of this means that lexical lending should not be perfect in isolation. It is truly a resource that should complement the existing core services. So ongoing advocacy for survivors is essential when implement inflexible funding. This will differ, depending on what the survivor's needs are and what their wants are however it is strongly recommended that advocates engaged in safety planning before, during and after (indiscernible) to safety survivors.

The next principle I will talk about is that flexible funding should be low barrier access. What we mean by that is that it really should be made available survivors with little or no (unknown term), requirements for documentation, or even asking that they be engaged in any services before they can receive those funds.

Then, flexible funding should also support multiple needs and there shouldn't be any limitations on the funding amount that survivors can receive, the frequency of the funding and how it is given to them. We do this because we recognize that survivors are going to have varying needs at different points in time. While one survivor they only need financial assistance at one time, and may only need a set amount, another survivor may need multiple supports over a time, whether that is short or long period of time. They may also need a larger amount.

Finally, flexible funds should in fact be promptly dispersed. What we mean by that is we want to see these thoughts go out as quickly as possible to survivors, I did within 24 to 48 hours. It should be an emergency response. It is really important when providing flexible plan, that the funding is released to survivors as soon as they ask for it.

So, before I talk about the evaluation process, I will mention that while flexible funding is, and we had talked about set by funders... We can further uncover and discuss what those challenges look like. But while those challenges exist and they are real, it is important that these principles that I mentioned are foundational to our philosophy. And that we use them in our practice, even as we continue to advocate for the removal of administrative barriers that might impact the use of grant funds very flexibly.

For our pilot project, conducted between August and December 2022,... At the LGBTQ+, for the initial product... And provided ongoing support and continue to have (indiscernible) as the project was limited.

The reason for this ongoing support is because we have to make sure that the principles of the flex funding model were present in the implementation process. We also have to make sure that we continue to be a resource center for whatever challenges or issues came up that they needed to discuss with us.

So together information on how this project was being implemented and how it was working to support the participants of the project, the collected data. What the data looks like what's taking a flexible funding tracker that included questions such as demographic information, how much money people were requesting, what they were indicating they wanted to use those funds for, when it was dispersed and also some information on what the immediate impact of those funds would be for participants.

Then, we also had in-depth interviews with the two advocates who were primarily responsible for managing this program, so that we can better learn from their perspective how it was to implement this and what they were starting to hear, in terms of how the work was supported for survivors.

And, so, our evaluation documented some of the challenges that participants experienced broccoli. Such that, many of the youth search for this program had experienced various abuse and hardship, including abuse at home.... They discussed the problems of the abuse,... Disapproval of the youth's gender and/or sexuality. Bennett also discussed the relationship between homelessness and exposure to violence, such that a lot of the youth who left home and were on the streets had an increased risk of experiencing violence. They had increased risk of experiencing sexual violence, domestic violence, and also, in that instance, they were engaging in (indiscernible) sex work so they work exposed to HIV.

The center is located in Harrisburg (?) so this brought up an issue of transportation.... The applicant is willing talk about difficult was for the youth to navigate transportation issues, especially when they were working cases that are outside the city limits and really have good mass transit support in the area.

Then they also talked about how it was difficult for them to maintain reliable transportation, because of the lack of safety in many of the neighborhoods in which they live.

Next slide, please. So next, I will share briefly at the agency implemented the flex funding process. So first, participants were informed of the financial support that was available, mainly through word-of-mouth. What that looked like was, advocates would share about the assistance available in their informal interactions and conversations with participants. Now, the organization also had a youth advisory board and that board served to disseminate information about this resource to participants. They also notice there were instances where participants who would tell other participants and then they would approach us for more support.

So when we think about the ways in which we implement the funding process, it is important to note that at first the agency was in fact providing housing and financial support to clients through other funding sources before we started the flex of funding pilot project.

So while they were dispersing those funds they had a process in place where participants who were requiring anything over \$200 were asked to complete an application and provide supplemental documentation. So when we came in to implement this flexible funding model, which is really a core principle is removing any barriers, there had to be some changes to the process.

So initially the process went something like this: the candidate would (indiscernible) and if the funds were more than 200 being requested the participant would be asked to complete a supplemental material, provide supplemental material to complete an application, and the payment would be disbursed either to or on behalf of the participant. If it wasn't more than \$200 that they were requesting it would just be directly dispersed. So to align with flex funding principles several adjustments were made to the policies, some of which included the removal of that formal application process and the removal of the request for supplemental documentation.

In terms of how funds were disbursed, funds were disbursed in multiple ways. The most common method that was used in the pilot were direct payments made by the agency to third parties on behalf of the survivors. Without accounted for about 77% of the disbursements. So that included making payments to landlords, making payments dentist -- institutions, merchants, and other service providers. And then merchant gift cards like door – and Insta cart were also provided directly to participants, and the least common method of disbursement was of these are -- Visa gift cards and direct payments which account for only about 7%.

So we also sought to document the length of time the disbursements took, and we found it ranged from same day, one day, to 20 day payments after the crust was made.

Most of the disbursements were made within one day so that accounted for about 80% of the disbursements, and very few were made within 2 to 5 days. And about one or two were made longer and that was because they were using checks which took longer to process.

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And so who was part of our study? About 30 participants received funding for this pilot project, and of those 30 participants more than half actually disclosed personal experiences of domestic violence and experience with witnessing violence in the home.

And then when we think about the composition of age we had participates that ranged from 18 to 36 years old, most of I did -- most of our participants identified as Black, accounting for 97%, 10 of our 30 participants identified as transgender, seven reported that they had children, and only three shared that they were immigrants or refugees.

So in terms of how funds were distributed I mentioned earlier that this project lasted between August and December. So funds were actually dispersed between August and November. Starting off in August there were about 17 participants who were served, funds disbursed were a total of 25 times, and the highest amount received in anyone payment made to, or on behalf of the participants was \$1800.

So we see a similar pattern in September, 14 participants, but we see an uptake in the number of times funds were disbursed, about 42 times. We also see an increase in the amount of money that was dispersed at one time which is 25... 2500.

Then in October we are seeing similar patterns, 15 participants served, funds dispersed 35 times, and the highest amount received in anyone payment was \$2250.

And finally on November 12 participants were served, funds were dispersed a total of 25 times, and the highest amount that was dispersed at any one time was 1100 and -- \$1920.

The number of funds dispersed comprised of people who received one or more times, so one participant could have received funds multiple times or could've received funds one time.

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So in total we were able to disperse a little over \$36,000, and we dispersed in a range of eight dollars to \$2500 for each unique disbursement that was made, and when we think about the dollar... When we think about the total amount of money that was received by each participant it ranged from \$50 to as high as \$4894.

I will note again that there were no restrictions placed on the number of times that they, the participants could receive funding, or the amount that participants could receive at any time.

So this was truly in response to the need that were disciplines identified.

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And so, a total of 127 payments were made. So that's the total number of times that funds were disbursed either to, or on behalf of, of the participants.

For each person who was a part of this study they received funding 1 to 15 times. That the number of unique payments that we made either to or on behalf of each of the participants.

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So we also looked at what people were spending some of this money on. I will note that this is solely based on the self reporting, and we took no steps to ask for any sort of supplemental documentation or anything to verify what people accounted that they spend money on. But through conversations with the advocates participants reported spending money on the following categories. There were more categories that participants reported spending on but these are the highest categories of sharing with you all today.

The first being transportation, so funds were related to transportation a total of 51 times and that includes people needing to get gas in the car, people needing to get a car, needing to replace car parts, car repairs, all of that was considered under transportation. Also taking over, getting from one place to another.

The second highest category that funds were disbursed and were basic needs, third being rent and mortgage, we also saw high numbers for emergency hotel stay as well as supporting household utilities and other bills.

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So in terms of the total amount of funds that were dispersed per category we saw the highest amount being dispersed to cover rental and mortgage assistance, which is no surprise, considering the sustained housing need and need for housing support in this population. We also saw that moving costs and deposits, that was the second highest category, where a total of 13% of the total funds went towards covering those costs. While transportation had the highest number of times funds were presented in the last slide, we actually saw that just 11% of the total funds go towards transportation followed by basic needs, emergency hotel stays, and then general debt assistance.

Again, as a reminder, these are not the only categories that funds were disbursed to cover these are just the top six that I'm sharing, and the report of, that summarizes the findings of the study, includes a longer list of all the categories, the amounts spent, the number of times payments were made related to each category, and a description of what is included or what is considered as a cost in each of the categories.

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So one of the things I mentioned earlier is that flexible funding of principal flexible funding is survivor driven advocacy. So in this context, what that meant was other services were being provided and offered to the participants that received flexible funding. A total of 67 participants received additional services. These included things like HIV and STI testing, case management, support with completing housing applications, and food and hygiene pantry. They also received other supports which are noted in the full report.

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So we also wanted to document how effective was it to provide this emergency financial assistance resource to the participants, and we were able to get some preliminary evidence of this model's effectiveness for the population served. Statistically we saw 68% of the participants were able to state stably housed, which means they were able to move from one rental housing to another, or moved from one home to another, but they remained stably housed.

We also saw that 67% reported an increase in their well-being. So a lot of the particular funds that were provided to them went towards -- supporting one or more aspects of their well-being and that was



documented.

Finally we saw 26% actually be able to move from homelessness to temporary or permanent housing. What that looked like was the survivors who actually had no housing being able to secure some rental housing. We sought survivors moved from having no housing to be able to survive emergency hotel stays, and then seeing those who were in emergency hotels being able to move to securing their own rental housing unit.

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And then through our in-depth conversations with the advocates we also wanted to document what they were seeing in terms of the impact of this fund on the outcome of survivors. So this is one of the quotes from the advocates interviewed about how this program, pilot program, impacted housing. They say, "I worked with one family, they were a trans man, a transgender man, assist gender woman, and they had six kids. They were in a pretty bad position here in Harrisburg, they came to the center, filled out a emergency housing application, they talked to us about where they wanted to go, they were saying that they didn't think Harrisburg was just right for them. They found a place through a friend in West Virginia, and we were able to cover the cost of a moving truck, rent, and security deposit to get them down there."

So this is just an example of ways in which emergency funds that were provided were able to support not just the recipient of the funds, but their entire family, and was able to help them move from an environment that was unsafe to access safety.

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And then we also have a quote here from our advocates on the impact of well-being. Less shame, more ownership and excitement about what the participants are working on, and I think that's just human pride. They think, "OK, you might be covering my rent this month... Because what? This time next month have the check from this job and that job and I'll be able to cover my own rent." Just knowing that one thing is going to be taking care of -- taken care of, allows people to free up space in the mind to dream, plan, and work towards a goal."

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Finally am sharing a quote about how this impacted the participants a safety, and this advocate said, "these are individual autonomous people with their own thoughts, goals, plans, and we are able to support them on those missions.

The flex funding has been an instrumental tool in making that possible. Not to mention we will never be able to count how many people may not be engaging in sex work because they know they can come here and get help."

This is really important because while we have talked about flexible funding and its role in increasing

access to safe accessible, affordable, permanent housing, it's also a way to increase access to safety, which is being demonstrated here. Where we have recipients no longer having a need to engage in survival sex work, because they have access to emergency funding resources.

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And so we also did not want to disrupt the flow of the ways in which the center was working with survivors, so we didn't talk to survivors directly. However, we asked if the center could reach out to the participants who received funding and see if they would be interested in sharing any quotes with us. About how the funding has been beneficial for them. So I pulled out two of those quotes to share with you all today, (Reads quote)... this is really taking away the barriers that would typically be encountered when seeking funds in other spaces or through other programs.

So, as I concluded today, it is really important to take a moment to pause and think through all the information that we have been able to collect through the conversations with the advocates, the data gathered from the flexible funding tracker, who we serve, what their needs are, as well as the really important ways in which flexible funding can support them.

Taking this together, it tells the story about strengthening economic support for survivors is a necessary approach if we are looking to prevent domestic violence. It tells the story that survivors are knowledgeable about their needs and that we, as the systems and structures that are responding to them, have to listen, pause and take a leave from the survivors.

It also tells a story that flexible funding assistance is a very useful (indiscernible) in increasing safety, increasing housing stability and increasing the well-being of survivors.

Finally, it highlights for us that we need to continue to support research that uses diverse research methods with larger and more representative groups of survivors who are most impacted by issues so that we can continue to build the evidence.

So, as I leave you all today I wanted to highlight that it is important that we get to a point where all funding should be flexible funding. A lot of the struggles to support survivors in these ways that we have mentioned, through the principles of financial assistance, is because of the restrictions that a lot of funding sources come with. So, with advocates, community-based organizations, especially cultural organizations, are left to navigate the murky waters of trying to determine how much money can be spent through what source without potentially getting funding for that were getting in trouble for that.

It's really important that we move toward this,... All funding is flexible and can be flexible to respond to the needs of survivors. It is important that we increase flexible support to survivors. It took less than four months to spend \$36,000. And that did not meet the needs of all the participants and the people that the center serves. So there is a real need. The need has been articulated, time and time again. It is time for us to step in and step up to fulfill those things.

Finally, it is really important that when agencies are limiting flexible funding programs, they are well

resourced. We are making sure that there is money for the flex funding programs, there is an administrative part of the program. Making sure that when we are thinking about providing flexible funding for survivors, we also think about what the agency that is going to implement the program and the advocates who are going to manage the program, what do they need to be able to do this effectively? And making sure those resources, whether monetary, time related or training and technical assistance, are provided.

So as I conclude today, I will pass it on to Lavon Morris Grant, our director of community engagement, who will be a panel discussion with our wonderful, wonderful community partners from the LGBT center of Pennsylvania, where this pilot project was begun. Thank you all.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Thank you, wow, the more I hear this study -- and I was part of working with the study -- becomes that much fuller and necessary.

Hello everyone again, I'm back! I Lavon Morris Grant, the director of community engagement at the national resource center on domestic violence. Once again, I still have the daycare, curling and a little bit kinky and shoulderlength. I have the big earrings, brown skin and the multicolored blouse. It's me again and I'm glad to be back with you all to facilitate earnings, this will be as informative as last because our community partners are often and very informative work they do.

I have enjoyed my role as the director of community engagement and working with these people and all the community partners that I have had the opportunity and honor to work with. So, because they are all from one particular agency, I am going to give each of them a chance to give you a description of what they are and their role and what they do.

I will give you some information about the LGBTQ Center of Pennsylvania. They enforce their communities holistic well-being for LGBTQIA+ people through social education and cultural engagement. I'm going to leave that part there and bring in Amanda... And we can message to our other Amanda who we know as Alan Carter. And then down to Tony. You will all have the floor. Thank you so much for being a part of this!

AMANDA ARBOUR:

Thank you so much Lavon, we are so happy to be part of this pilot project. It is wonderful to hear again the (indiscernible) of the impact. We are happy to be her. My name is Amanda Arbour, I used she/her pronouns. I am a white woman with dark hair, it is shaped on one side. I have black framed glasses and a black and white striped blazer. My role in this project was the management and financial management side, so making sure we were meeting the grand goals on our (unknown term) and making sure, practically speaking, the payments were going out to meet the needs of our participants. Tossing it over to Carter.

AMANDA CARTER:

Hello everybody, I am super happy to be here. My name is Carter values she/her pronouns. I am a dark skinned, Black woman with short curly top. I do know how to say, yeah. I don't have anything else

going on on my face. I am wearing a thin blue sweater with a collar and some stripes, but the camera can catch the stripes!

My role: I worked for the LGBT center as the site director to GLO Harrisburg, which is the LGBT centers newest program. We are a community resource Center where LGBTQIA+ people of color. Tony.

TONY HALL:  
(muted)

Sorry. Hi everybody, my name is Tony, he/him pronouns. On the community engagement specialist here for GLO Harrisburg and micro with the project is supplements to the funds to participants when they come in!

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Thank you, Tony Amanda and Carter, once again. Again, for the sake of time, we can never get past that time thing! And this particularly holds our attention span as adults, and being virtual over so long. I just going to jump right in and I believe, Amanda, I'm going to address this first question to you. And, Carter, if you have anything you'd like to add please feel free.

This is very informal, there is no one way for us to have to do the panel. Particularly because you are all from the same agency. Whatever added information you have for a particular question please feel free to do so. That includes you, also Tony I don't want you to feel left out of the conversation. We are all here again, relax have fun and breathe, it's us! Technology is going to do what technology is going to do. Let's get started with this.

My first question, for you to answer first Amanda, what were some of the sticking points and challenges the organization encountered in the process of dispersing flexible funds?

AMANDA ARBOUR:

That's a great question. From my vantage point on the admin side, there were two that I wanted to speak to. One was adjusting our internal fiscal processes and we did have a lot of folks needing to access those funds. We had to quickly adjust our processes to make sure we were able to turn around checks quicker, make payments quicker and also be able to hand out higher volume, a lot more payments processing then we had done prior to having access to these funds. That was one of the challenges we encountered on the admin side.

Then, at the end of the grant, people knew about the resource and we were getting more and more requests. But once the funds were disbursed, we no longer had the same funds to offer to the same degree. That is that current challenge that we continue to work in terms of how can we continue to provide service through other funding streams that are not always as flexible. I will toss it in Alan Carter because I--

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

I just have one more question for you Amanda, just so we can... When you talk about some challenges to the internal infrastructure, can you tell us what that look like?

AMANDA ARBOUR:

Yes, so previously we had cut checks only every two weeks. That was our accounting cycle. But now I'm getting all these requests on rental assistance, they needed to get a check to a landlord to secure housing. One of the ways we had to shift was working with our accounting firm to cut checks every week instead of every two weeks.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Thank you for that, Amanda, I think that is so important for organizations to understand in working with flex funding. That was something we all discover together -- wait a minute! The financial infrastructure to change. Thank you for that,... I know the clients were very appreciative of this so thank you. Alan Carter, I will turn it over to you to and what pieces you want. To any of the challenges of sticking points.

CARTER:

Thank you Lavon, one of the challenges I noticed was shifting staff expectations -- perspective because not everyone was gung ho about the concept of flex funding. I may have been excited about it, but there were people on staff we had to, I don't want to say convince, but we had ongoing conversations about this during our staff meetings, because some people were uncomfortable with the idea that we are just giving people money because they say they need it.

I think, at one point, the language was used that we are spoiling participants. I think that all stems from a lot of us being programmed that we have to struggle, first, in order to receive something. So we had a lot of conversation around that and eventually we all landed close enough to the same page that we could implement the program as intended. I know, Tony, you have something to add.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Before you go Tony, I just want to say to you Carter, I so appreciate your transparency in that piece because that's a hard piece to unload right? The mindset of us as advocates right? So I just wanted you to know that I so appreciate your bravery and courage to put that out there because, though it happened that (indiscernible) it's good for the other audience members to see how this can go within their programs, that it just doesn't impact you all that are dispersing the funds, but impacts the totality of the organization right? Of getting that mindset, and I believe Funmi talked about that in the findings, and so did Lul when they talked about us changing perspectives on the African immigrant population right? And how we've all been programmed against trusting people and not getting receipts so to speak right? Getting proof that they are even worthy of receiving these funds... So thank you for that, and Tony it's all yours.

TONY HALL:

Just to piggyback off of Carter's last statement about shifting perspectives, one of the reasons why we kind of had to shift perspective is because with some of our funding we weren't sure if folks requesting the flex funding would be using the money for what it supposed to before. For example, if there known

to be struggling with substance abuse disorder, it was challenging to figure out, we know you need the funds, but also are you going to be utilizing the funds for what we're giving them to you for?

We didn't really, I'll say that was a major sticking point for us. We had to have ongoing conversations like Carter said, for a few of our participants. And then another sticking point that we had was that one of our participants in particular came to rely on the funding, seeing it as a forever source for them to be able to use, and trying to get them to understand that it's not a forever thing you know what I mean?

So those were two of the major sticking points for us.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

Wow, thank you. I know we had many meetings Carter, around some of these issues and trying to, of us all just trying to get on the same page and get everyone is comfortable with the understanding and principles of flex funding right?

Going to when I came in to the project I was like yes! Let's give it! Giveaway! Never thinking the upside of it, of how people's perspectives were going to be taken into account right? Never thought about it from that process, and the money is going from the organization directly to the person and knowing some of the history of the people's lives right? As Tony so elaborately said about the substance abuse piece. And we work through it right? We work through that piece, we had quite a few conversations on that piece, and we worked through and learned a lot, we learned a lot of other things that we were not looking for in the findings right? Other things showed up, and that was one of the other, for me, that was one of the other exciting pieces of the research. A finding things that were not part of the findings. So hopefully we will be able to capture that, and as we roll this out to the field, right? We will be able to give some nuance of the things that took place that we were not expecting. So thank you all for such candid answers on that.

So as I move us into the next question. Carter, I'm gonna start with you if that's OK? I'm gonna start with this question off with you and then you all can decide to add to it. That would be: what were the major takeaways and lessons the organization learned from the flexible funding pilot project?

CARTER:

Sure. I have a few, but firstly, flex funding works! Hands down. As a pilot we saw what money like this can do for a participant in our small Harrisburg community, queer and trans black and brown Harrisburg community. It was able to take people from a really rough place to a place of relative stability that they might not have ever had or hadn't a very long time. So especially when it comes to a rental assistance because to me that seems the thing that had the biggest impact. I know Funmi mentioned this in the report, but the participant that comes to mind, that I wanted to share their story with you all. They were incarcerated, and when they came home, they came to GLO, they were already a GLO participant, they came to GLO, and they were making it clear they wanted to do things different. They just needed support getting into the apartment. They needed the first month's rent, they needed the deposit.

They needed, like, that push. That booster. They had a job lined up, they needed transportation to get to the job until they got the first check and they could take it from there.

They needed groceries until the food stamp card arrived in the mail. And we were able to make those three different disbursements, and the good. To this day there doing well in their new apartment at the new job. So it works.

The other thing I wanted to say is that all the hoops, paperwork, applications, it's not necessary. I know those of you who are already doing the work know this, but it's something we need to learn on our side. We were able to provide support to people who were struggling without making them feel more shame than they already were experiencing. Just being able to provide quote unquote charity without making the person feel low.

Yeah, I feel like that was one of her takeaways. You. And we were, you know, it distinguished us from other resource providers in her area because we knew, and the participant knew, if you go anywhere else you might hear back from someone (indiscernible), whereas if you come here, we can walk into the room, pull out a gift card, and put it in your hand.

The last thing that I took away from this is that money is not everything. There were a couple of instances where we were putting money in the participants hands so they could tackle an issue, and then we see down the line, this issue has not been resolved. So that brought to our attention that, OK, this participant needs more than money. This participant needs more intensive case management than we've been offering or that we are equipped to provide.

So that was a really eye-opening experience that had is reaching out to other agencies and organizations that were doing work that we don't do. But it really helped us get much-needed support to participants that we weren't providing close to what they needed before the flex funding was introduced. Tony I know you wanted to say something.

**LAVON MORRIS GRANT:**

We will go with Tony and then we will get to the last question and I will start that off with you Amanda on the last question.

**TONY HALL:**

I think one of the major takeaways for me of the project is that it helped to strengthen the relationships that we have with our participants. Like Carter said, before we got the flex funding it was like we had a rapport with our participants, but I think once we did get the funding the relationships got a lot deeper. Only because we were able to assist with so much more, and with that participants felt way more comfortable with us. Being able to, you know, say what they needed to say, but with the understanding that, you know, you're not gonna have to jump through hoops, if you tell me this dramatic thing we only go over this once. You not I mean? We don't have to hash out much more than that. But like Carter said, I think it helps to strengthen our relationship, and not just for that period of time we had the funding, we are seeing is an ongoing thing.

Programs we implemented well we had that funding is still going on, and those folks are still coming into the center. So that's been a really good take away for me.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

That is so awesome to hear Tony. And Amanda and Carter, for the organization right? Wow. I want to say so much more but we are so limited in time, so I want to leave space. But I am like bursting hearing this information. So thank you! And Amanda, Carter, they know how I burst, but I'm gonna keep it under keel so we can get to this last question, and if there are any questions from the audience maybe we can answer one or two as we move into our next segment of the agenda.

So Amanda, and then whoever else, how did the flex funding grant enhance the capacity of the organization to GLO's participants.

AMANDA ARBOUR:

Yeah, so the biggest area was it allowed us to hire a full-time housing manager at GLO which was a game changer for us. Prior to that Carter and Tony were handling all of our housing emergency requests on top of what was already more than full-time jobs that each of them were doing. So our housing case manager kind of came in at the tail end of this pilot project, and has really done incredible work being the single point of contact on staff for all of our housing and emergency requests, setting up a lot of great structures and processes, and really taking the burden off of the rest of the staff so they can focus on their unique roles and developing relationships, keeping those developed relationships with landlords as well as participants and other agencies. So that's something that has really helped us to become more sustainable for us as an organization.

LAVON MORRIS GRANT:

That is awesome Amanda, and like I said, I would love to deep dive into so much more, but you know, time is what it is, and I know we've probably got questions, but what we want to do, maybe come back if we have time at the end and if not I know one of the things I was thinking about was bringing you all back to do a webinar on what we've discovered, what worked, and go into more detail. So that's something that is already swirling in my mind. So Amanda, Carter, Tony, be ready for my email, will put together a webinar, and hopefully our audience will be able to come back so we can hear how it worked for you you will, and I want to thank each of you for being a part of this panel and just a part of NRCDV and the work you do and informing us of how we can work with you and inform the field of making, hopefully one day, getting into all funding being flexible. So thank you for being a part of the study, and I appreciate each and every one of you.

So, at this point I will pass it on to my colleague Sheila Mars, and thank you again for being a part of us.

SHENNA MORRIS:

Thank you so much for that great panel discussion Lavon, and all of our panelists, good afternoon, my name is Shenna Morris, and I am the Vice President of policy and systems change at the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence.



I identify as Black, I have my hair in a braided bun, and I am wearing glasses on my face. I'm dressed in affordable shirt and a black blazer.

So I'd like to weave together our conversation with policy recommendations that surfaced from some of what our panelists shared today as well as other conversations that we've had, and other work that we've done with them. It's important to note that centered in every new learning or new idea and policy recommendation that we take away today are the stories and experiences of survivors and advocates.

The policy recommendations that it will touch on a different, and I want to lift up that Black, Brown, Indigenous survivors, survivors living on the margin, and who have been historically oppressed in their communities, are the creators of these recommendations, by way of the stories that they have shared. The full policy briefing will be released after today's webinar. Before going directly into the recommendations that surfaced, though, I feel it is important to always grant our audience in the policy priorities of NRCDV. My hope is that, in doing so, you will see that we strive to create solutions that are survivor - generated, and...

Next slide, please. Quickly, because I know we are limited on time, NRCDV prioritizes the following: in our policy and systems advocacy efforts, building and supporting survivors advocacy capacity, meaning variability to actively engage... Priorities promoting around equitable and just policies. Promoting family and community center policies. Next slide, please.

Increasing economic security for survivors, their families and their communities. Increasing survivor access to affordable housing options. And building advocates' state and local advocacy capacity.

So, each of these priorities act as a compass guiding where our organizational attention and focus is in policy advocacy. It also helps us to communicate our areas of focus externally to allied partners such as all of you joining us on today's call!

I want to acknowledge that we know there are many issue layers to look at and engage in within each of these priorities and in addressing gender-based violence.

So, as we now move into looking at some of the specific recommendations, I hope that you will see how our priority areas and the solutions shared are connected to the wisdom of the advocates and survivors you have heard from today. Next slide.

Again, I have taken the approach to restate some of the mentioned priorities you have heard. So that you can see the connections between them and see the recommendations. When we talk about the priorities of promoting survivor centered, equitable and just policies, as well as increased survivor access to affordable housing options -- next slide please -- the recommendation that arose from the listening sessions with Black immigrant communities as well as the study, was to develop policy tools such as housing, eligibility waivers that can relax eligibility requirements for trauma survivors such as survivors of the domestic and sexual violence. We know this can be challenging for the survivors as they navigate the range of emotions and dips they are experiencing.

We have heard today that often the added layer producing documentation and other forms of evidence to meet eligibility requirements for services can further intensify the anxiety and trauma that survivors are experiencing. Eligibility requirements around criminal records frequency of engagement with criminal justice systems is also very often barrier- producing access to housing.... Particularly as they relate to some of her sharing around the nuisance ordinances.

We also heard how survivors housing eligibility requirements can look different across the country and across the many identities that survivors bring. For example, eligibility requirements connected to documentation status, credit history, and family size can present barriers that have greater levels of complexity for immigrant and LGBTQ+ survivors.

Policy tools such as a housing eligibility waiver would prevent survivors housing eligibility status and access from being measured in the same ways as individuals who are not experiencing trauma.

Additionally, this type policy solution provides a more trauma informed approach to survivor's needs.

Connected to the priorities of survivor centric equitable just policies, again like we just mentioned, and promoting family and community center policies. It is the recommendation to broken definitions of "family" used to determine eligibility for services and access to housing in progress. I have heard many sentiments from communities of color and specific communities over the years. Survivors of domestic and sexual violence they often have family networks that are beyond their immediate biological families, as we heard from our panelist today.

This might include nieces, nephews, cousins, or what I like to term a "family" such as elders in the community that survivors may house with them. A survivors ability to remain housed with these members can significantly impact their decision to seek out safe housing and other supports. This is especially true, as we heard today, for survivors from small, cultural or close-knit communities.

So the recommendation of broadening definitions of eligible family members acknowledges the diversity of family configurations that survivors of violence may have AND recognizes the support networks that may be (unknown term) that may be supporting their outreach for assistance.

Now, let's look at what emerged that is connected to the policy priority building advocates' state and local advocacy capacity. Next slide please.

As it relates to this priority area, the recommendation is to increase designated funding supports for culturally specific programs that have deep expertise in responding to the needs of survivors. As we have seen through today's panel discussion, culturally specific programs having deep knowledge and understanding of the methods of outreach, the service needs and the barriers survivors from specific cultural communities face, they are best positioned to respond to these survivors' needs.

This does not dismiss the collective responsibility for all of us to (indiscernible) in equity-based practices. Nor does it excuse us for being the most prepared and having culturally responsive services and community outreach. However, by increasing supports for culturally specific programs, we

enhance the ability of housing and social services that are culturally diverse and innovative.

Again, looking at this priority to build advocates' state and local advocacy capacity. Next slide please.

Additional recommendations surfaced as an administrative policy opportunity to require applicant and grantee submissions of accessibility and equity plans that demonstrate population inclusivity across programs and service designs. This recommendation would include opportunities for programs to capture qualitative data on progress, plan implementation during recording periods.

I acknowledge that there are efforts currently in place to do this in some of our founding administrative systems and universes AND there still remains opportunity to dive deeper. After all, we know that the path to racial equity is indeed a journey of continuous change and progression. We often hear from survivors of color, immigrant survivors, survivors with disabilities, LGBTQ+ survivors, that despite the programmatic, culturally responsive mechanisms and resources that exist, the base is still at the service of meeting people's needs and the ways they need.

For example, thinking about the linguistic needs of Black immigrant survivors, limitations continue to exist and having resources that meet the specific dialect needs of survivors. The approach often remains to lump identities and offer, perhaps, common language resources. I think we heard this today.

Development of accessibility and equity plan really gives communities an opportunity to lay out a roadmap of what is available and what gaps exist. Now, again, the full review of these policy recommendations will be released post-call and I want to conclude this portion, given our time, of the recommendations highlighted in the briefing.

With that, I am going to pass it over to Caroline LaPorte, and I thank you for your time.

CAROLINE LAPORTE:

Hi everybody, since we are short on time, will quickly introduce myself. I will go through my slides. My name is Caroline LaPorte and I am the director of STTARS... Where I also serve as an elective associate judge.

... With regards to controlling the slides, so first I'm going to describe myself: I am a native woman, I have brown skin, dark brown long hair, I am a black and I do have on some strawberry earrings that I purchased at the Seminole travel fair.

What I am going to do very quickly if it is alright with everyone, is I'm going to do a quick reminder this is the week of action for missing indigenous women and girls. Most of you have had -- are not going to go through my slides, cam, but what I will say is that STTARS, and at the indigenous (indiscernible) housing center,... Is taking a different approach and is focusing on a prevention lens at IW and considers housing to be one of the key protective factors in regards to reducing risk towards (indiscernible) in that space.

Two things I wanted to make everyone aware of is that the (indiscernible) action is going on. Britney posted a link in the chat, there are things going on now and you can also watch them next week if you choose to do so.

We do have a webinar specific to STTARS, specific to housing, to what we had talked about today. The link to register for that is there if you want to do that. And quickly, I am going to drop into the chat: we have the practical responses brief that we created for tribal housing entities, tribally designated housing entities, tribal policymakers, community makers, presidents, advocates etc. with regards to MIW specifically at the housing framework. I will share that.

Certainly if anyone has questions my email is right there. I am more than happy to sit down and have had conversations with everyone. Thank you.

**SPEAKER:**

Thank you for dropping it into the chat box. I want to apologize for our inability to give you enough time to get your presentation. I would like to thank you all for attending today's policy and research briefing. My understanding is that materials will be forthcoming and the recording shared from this briefing. I wish you all a great and wonderful day and again, thank you all for being with us this afternoon.

Live captioning provided by Ai-Media