

(Captioners standing by)

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SPEAKER:

Welcome everybody. It is now 2 o'clock (Indiscernible) and I would like to during your attention to our interpretation team.

SPEAKER:

Thank you and hello everyone. I am Kai, one of your interpreters today. I am here with my co-interpreter. (Speaks Spanish). We are facilitating a multilingual space. If you are not bilingual, please listen for the interpretation and announcement. (Spanish).

(Speaking Spanish)

SPEAKER:

Next slide, please. Hi everyone. To access interpretation via computer today, please select the globe icon and then your language channel, either English or Spanish. To access interpretation via smart phone, please select the 3.on your screen and then language interpretation, and then your language channel, either English or Spanish.

Please remember to speak at a moderate pace for the interpreters and to speak one person at a time.

(Speaking Spanish)

Thank you.

MARLENA MOORE:

Thank you. My name is Marlana Moore. I use they/them pronouns. I am a black person and I am the senior program specialist here at NRCDV. I am a black person. I have relatively long, curly hair. I have glasses on. I also have a cardigan on to. I would like to share some brief housekeeping notes with you.

We are committed to making this an equitable space in which people of all abilities can participate fully. And in their preferred linkage. This takes everyone's commitment and effort to make a reality. For

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We will also ask about accessibility in our post webinar evaluation. Please let us know your experience and ways we can improve. We now have much to learn and we want to improve our practice. This event features live captioning. You can access this feature by clicking caption at the bottom of your screen.

We are recording the event and we will share it through our website and YouTube channel. The Q&A feature provides an opportunity for attendees to enter questions for the presenters to respond to. We may not get to all of them, pending on how many questions are provided or given during this time. We may try to find a way to answer the questions at a later time if we can.

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At this time, I will pass it out to Funmi. To start the webinar. Thank you.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you, Marlana. Good afternoon everyone! Good morning depending on where you are. Inc. you for being here with us today. My name is Funmi Ayeni and I use she/her pronouns. I am a Nigerian American woman with shoulderlength black hair and I am wearing a black button-down shirt with a red floral design.

I am the director of research and evaluation at the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and I will facilitate and moderate this panel today.

I will start off by giving you an overview of the webinar. And considering what the overrepresentation of LGBTQ+ Youth and young adults are in the United States, it is really important that we are examining the innovative approaches that can adequately respond to experiences of homelessness and housing instability among this population.

Some across the nation, we have identified Rapid Rehousing as a very innovative solution to homelessness that continues to grow in popularity for diverse populations. So, for LGBTQ+ young adults, it is important to explore how Rapid Rehousing, this innovative solution to homelessness, can

be amended for this population.

Which brings us to the purpose of our webinar today. Our focus is to learn about the core components of the Rapid Rehousing program that is currently being implemented by the LGBT Center of Central Pennsylvania for LGBTQ+ young adults.

As part of our conversation today, we will discuss the challenges and the successes that they have encountered in their process, as well as the perceived impact of this program for young adults.

The LGBT Center will share their past -- path to implementation. We will talk about some of the nuts and bolts of how they're broke -- program operates as implemented and we will respond to any questions from participants. Next slide, please.

And so, this particular innovation that we are discussing today was identified through a needs assessment project that was completed by the National resource Centre on domestic violence in 2022. And specifically, NRCDV conducted a needs assessment project where we were looking to document what the current and emerging barriers to safe, stable, and accessible housing was for Black, Brown, Indigenous, people of colour, and survivors and also document any innovative practices that were being implemented by grassroots organization and community-based agencies to address survivors housing needs.

So we conduct a desk review. We held several listening sessions with service providers, as well as survivor advocates, and we also conduct some interviews with researchers. A Rapid Rehousing programs was identified as one of the innovative practices being implemented by a community-based agency partner of ours, which is the LGBT Center of Central PA. To address the needs of LGBTQ+ young adult.

The report and the infographics that discussed the findings from that needs assessment are available on NRCDV safe housing partnerships websites, and you all are welcome to review those.

Next slide, please.

And so, to kick off our conversation today, I will pass it over to our panelist from the LGBT safe centre of Central Pennsylvania to briefly introduce themselves and the centre and we will get started with Amanda.

AMANDA ARBOUR:

Hello everyone. My name is Amanda Arbour. I use she/her pronouns and I am the executive director of the LGBT Center of central PA. We are located in Harrisburg County region here in Central

Pennsylvania. Our mission is to foster unity for LGBT because people through social, educational and cultural engagement. I will pass it over to Carter.

CARTER:

Before you continue, --

SPEAKER:

Before we continue, can you will speak a little bit? Thank you.

CARTER:

Hi everybody! My name is Carter. I use she/her pronouns. I am a dark skinned black American woman with short hair, a black T-shirt, and an oversized knit cardigan. On top of the T-shirt.

I am the site director for GLOW Harrisburg. I work for the LGBT Center of Central PA. We are a community resource centre for LGBTQ+ Youth and young adult of colour, ages 14 to 34, although most of our participants are in their twenties and early thirties.

I will toss it to DL.

TL WAID:

Hi, I am TL weight, pronounce she/her. I am the housing case manager for GLOW. I will leave it at that because I think Amanda covered most of the information on what we do.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you for those introductions. We have prepared some questions for our panelists, which will guide our discussion today. And if you all have any questions as audience members, please include those in the Q&A checkbox. After our initial discussion, we will then have a Q&A session where panelists will be able to respond to any questions from the audience.

To get started, our first question for the panel is: what is the role of Rapid Rehousing as a strategy to address homelessness, particularly among LGBTQ+ young adults? --

AMANDA ARBOUR:

Rapid Rehousing is an effective strategy we have found for working with LGBTQ+ of young adults who are on house or unstable he or unsafely house. We use this model whenever possible to help get participants out of unsafe situations, that could be living on the streets and being vulnerable to violence or victimization. It could be living with an abusive partner or family member. Or in other unstable situations, such as living in an apartment that is not fit to be lived in by humans.

So we found that getting people out of those situations, as quickly as possible, through the Rapid Rehousing approach is really effective because once they are in a stable housing situation, they have a safe and stable place to live. Then they can focus on improving other areas of their lives, whether it be finding a job, addressing mental health or substance misuse issues, physical health, pursuing educational opportunities, those things are much more possible once people have a stable place to live.

So this is in keeping with the housing diverse model, which is really just meaning that we house people first without a bunch of prerequisites or hoops for them to jump through before accessing housing.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you very much, Amanda. I will pause to see if Carter and TL have any additional thoughts to add before we move to the next question?

CARTER:

Nothing for me!

FUNMI AYENI:

OK. Thank you both.

TL WAID:

We are good!

FUNMI AYENI:

The next question is: can you share more about the Rapid Rehousing program that is currently being administrated by the LGBT Center of centre -- Central PA? Specifically touching on what the funding source for this program is?

AMANDA ARBOUR:

Absolutely. The at-home program is funded by a grant from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance agency, PHF A. Through their Pennsylvania housing affordability and rehabilitation enhancement fund, or Fair for short. Which was established by act 105 of 2010 in Pennsylvania.

So we are very grateful from this grant from pH FA which made the at-home program possible.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you. And who does this program support? In terms of the target population for the audience?

AMANDA ARBOUR:

The at-home program specifically supports LGBTQ+ young adults of colour, ages 18 to 34. There is sort of a method as to why that is.

First, as an LGBTQ+ organization, we always Centre LGBTQ+ communities and their needs. We also apply an intersectional lens to everything that we do. And so, LGBTQ long -- young adults of colour live at those intersections and experience greater disparities in housing and access to housing. And they are often marginalized, not welcome, were treated poorly within mainstream policy programs. So we have a very unique role to serve in providing housing for our communities and we specifically decided to focus on the young adult age range because there are actually more resources available for minors who are on house, so folks under 18, in our area.

There is a gap with folks who are in their twenties or thirties where there are really very few housing programs available to them. And so often within this age range, we see these are folks who may not have had family or other kinds of support growing up, so they are on their own but in survival mode and if any one thing goes wrong, if they lose a job or breakup of the partner who lived with them, then they are without a safety net and without housing so that is the gap we were seeking to fill with this program.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you very much for the comprehensive response. I appreciate you highlighting the intersectional lens you apply to your work and the specific focus on the experiences of young adults of color, as well as naming the program funding source, as we recognize that identifying funds to support programs is one of the top issues that service providers and community organizations are typically facing. So, thank you.

As part of understanding more about this Rapid Rehousing program, can you tell us more about your screening and selection process? How exactly do people get into the program?

TL WAID:

A lot of our funding comes through our HIV testing, on-site and off-site. A lot of times that is the first contact with participants. The screening questions to include information regarding housing and safety issues. We catch a lot of people that way.

Also, all of our new participants that come in fill out a needs assessment form. And that kind of lets us know what kind of housing situation and they are in, what they might require, additional needs such as educational assistance or help with job placement.

And from there, we are able to determine whether or not they are a good fit for the housing program, and which program they would fall under. Once we make that determination, we generally fill out an

intake form for the housing program. And that just includes a list of responsibilities for the participants, how the program works for them, it also includes a list of responsibilities that GLO falls under. So they know what to expect from us.

Once we have that in place, we generally work on a support plan for the participant. And what that encompasses is working with the participant to set up goals for themselves, what they would like to achieve throughout the program, and we break that up into sections. Each section is handled by a different staff member.

One member might work on educational issues, one might work on setting up doctors appointments. And all of this is going on in the background but we are searching for housing for the participant.

We work with the participant to find the housing, generally. We will have them search things, and we will also be looking at things and communicating with landlords that we have partnered with.

Once we do that, we also work with a lot of participants who have been victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or just in general feel unsafe on their own. So we help develop safety plan that works for them, that is going to make them feel or -- more comfortable in their living environment.

From there, we try to focus on Rapid Rehousing. A lot of different agencies in the area, it can take years to find housing for people. What we try to do is if we encounter somebody on the street, we try to set them up with a hotel stay for a while while we look for additional housing. Then we look at our additional partners and landlords that we built opportunities with to go ahead and get them housed as soon as possible.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you so much for sharing, TL. What you have said, the process for screening and selecting, as well as the types of services and supports that clients receive in the program, is very expensive. -- Extensive. Can you share more about how long people are staying in the program?

TL WAID:

The program is set up for a 12 month session. We have a lot of people who don't need the 12 months. Once we give them help for the first couple of months, they are fine on their own. But throughout the year, they can come back to us if they do need additional support. It is a 12 month program, it is kind of a tiered program. We will help with moving costs, security deposits, during the first three months we cover 100% of the rent.

In month four and five, we covered 75%. Seven and nine month out, it is 50%. Month 10 through 12 is 25% of the rent recover.

The hope is once they have hit that 12 month point, they are OK on their own and able to handle rent on their own and feel more comfortable in their living space. In addition to that, they are always welcome to come back to us for any other needs they might have during that time.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you very much for sharing that. Staying on how really extensive this program is, from the point of entry into receiving services up until hopefully they are then able to sustain themselves after the 12 month mark, can you speak more to the organizational operations, infrastructure, or supports that are in place to ensure that this program can be successful?

CARTER:

I am happy to touch on that. TL mentioned support plans, which is a huge piece of infrastructure in our programs. The support plans are outlining what someone's bowl is -- goal is in any particular area. Employment, health, obviously housing. That has been a great tool that has been helping us and participants a lot.

It has also been something that has helped us when one staff person is out, for instance, if our housing case manager is out, anybody on staff can pull a participants support plan and see what we are actually supposed to be focusing on. That has been a big help.

Another thing is ongoing education. Sometimes we have to remind ourselves and have talks with the team about why the work we are doing is so important, and why we are doing it the way that we are doing it and why that matters.

I always try to remind the team that we are a revolutionary space. Sometimes we get caught up in the way that we have seen things like this done in other areas, other cities, other experiences. And that does not matter. We are not doing things the way that other agencies do them.

What else... our intake process, you kind of touched on this already, TL. Our intake process is a structural support has been really helpful. Lastly, our open door policy. Participants have expressed opportunities -- or expressed interest in wanting to take on leadership roles, to have a bit more response ability. That helps our programs, because there is real buy-in. They step up and become a bit more responsible. A bit more assertive. They carry themselves a bit differently in front of the other participants, because they are trying to show, "Hey, I want to do this work too." Having that buy-in has helped us a lot as well.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you so much for sharing that, Carter. One of the things I heard you mention, specifically, the

ways in which your approach to this program differs from some other mainstream approaches. Can you speak more to these intentional decisions you have made at the LGBT Center to tailor your program specifically to your audience?

CARTER:

Absolutely. One of the biggest things is having a youth advisory board. We have a group of young people that actually come from the populations that we are prioritizing. And serving. And they meet monthly to pretty much tell us what types of programming makes the most sense for them. And what is not necessarily helpful, or even of interest.

That is the biggest thing. I think another thing is just doing our best to maintain an environment where our participants know that they are not only safe, but also prioritized. I will make the comparison of our center versus a doctor's office. Some of you might come into the doctor's office and sit down, it is a very formal process. There waiting in the lobby to be called on. They have a few minutes with the doctor, they get sent on their way.

This is very different. People walk in here, they are dabbing us up, they want to talk about what happened last night or what they are looking forward to tomorrow or the job they just got. They know that we are listening and we are supportive. We care about the whole individual. And it resonates with them.

TL WAID:

I think a big part of our success with this is the ongoing communication we keep with our participants. We see most of them weekly. If we don't see them, we are calling, checking on them, emailing throughout the week to say, "Hey, how are things going?" We make a point over holidays to contact people because that is a low point for a lot of people. We try to make it feel like a family community epicenter.

AMANDA ARBOUR:

I will add, as we developed housing programs over the last couple of years, it has been in response to the needs and lived experience of our participants. A few years ago, when we did not offer any housing services, we would send people to different agencies. And either their needs would not get met or they would be treated really poorly. Or it would just take forever, and they would be stuck in whatever situation they were in.

It really came out of the necessity of what we saw, where needs were not getting met, and we needed to do something different and we could do it differently. That is how this has evolved for us.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you for those responses will I appreciate the emphasis on the whole person approach and focusing on communicating regularly with clients, as well as building meaningful relationships that move beyond very transactional ways of providing services, and focuses more on a relational approach. Thank you all so much for sharing those.

With a program of this nature, I imagine that you all have encountered some challenges in the process. Can you speak more to any anticipated or unanticipated challenges that you have encountered in managing the program, and how you were able to successfully mitigate those challenges?

CARTER:

We have several challenges. I will start with... sometimes having to fight to get the resources that we need from other agencies that purport to provide resources.

Just today, I had someone tell me that they could not help my participant because my participant, who is currently experiencing homelessness, needs to prove that they have residency in this county. So, things like that can be very frustrating.

I mean... part of what we do, GLO as a program and the LGBT Center, is HIV prevention and education work. And we know that a lot of our trans women and gay men that we are serving are engaged in sex work at higher rates than people who don't identify like that. It is hard to stop them from engaging in sex work, because we can't Aaron T that they -- we can't guarantee that they will get jobs.

People are going out, sharing at the resumes and talking to people, and they're getting looked over for positions that they always see qualify for. That is a huge challenge. We also have to take into consideration that a lot of our participants are living in abject poverty. There are so many things that we take for granted, like having a cell phone and being able to keep it on so that recruiters and potential employers can contact you. landlords can reach out and say, "Hey, you have the apartment." That is a big challenge.

People miss important appointment because they don't have the money to keep their phone on. If they aren't doing the best with communication, they aren't able to tell us, because we can pay their phone bill.

Food insecurity is a big thing. Transportation is a big thing. In our city, in Harrisburg, we have a terrible public transportation system. It is not safe for some of our participants to navigate the city on foot. Which precludes them from going after certain opportunities that they would otherwise.

I could go on forever. We didn't realize it would be this difficult for landlords -- difficult for us to find landlords that would be willing to work with us. TL has done an excellent job of building a rapport with different landlords, so we do have this list of folks we know we can house people with. But there are all of these other landlords that are just not rocking with us at all. We don't understand.

TL is like, "You can pretty much guarantee you have rent paid for one year. What are you saying?"

The last thing I will leave you all with... capacity. Just as a staff, as you can see, our entire staff isn't here, but we are a small team. We don't have enough stuff to do things exactly the way we want, and to serve our participants the way I think we imagine they should be served.

So yeah, plenty of challenges. Also plenty of successes, but those challenges are definitely important to highlight.

TL WAID:

I just want to say along the lines of the challenges carter mentioned, it is hard finding housing for our community just because of, you know, racism, homophobia, but I mean, we have the hardest time I think with our trans participants because they just go through so much with employment, it is difficult. With the housing it is difficult. So we are really always trying to work hard to help them as much as we can.

CARTER:

One more thing I meant to add. Undiagnosed or untreated mental illnesses or something that we see a lot, that makes everything obviously more difficult than it would be otherwise. So we are kind of, like, a catchall agency where people may have been navigating life and getting by in a certain way but they spend so much time at DLO and a lot of times they are in communication with staff, we are catching things that people might have missed that work with them for a year, you know what I mean? But there were case managers that only checked in once a month for 30 minutes.

So that is a challenge but also a blessing because we are able to connect people to the appropriate resources when we do find that.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you both for sharing, carter and TL. I heard you both mentioned very salient challenges that you have encountered in your process, ranging from prudent security to lack of employment to transportation issues to mental health problems, as well as even issues related to the lack of capacity within the organization.

And still, you all have been able to record successes in your work which is really, really impressive and

exciting. Can you both tell me a bit more about the ways in which you have been able to mitigate some of these challenges when you have encountered them, whether that is in relation to working with landlords? I know Carter, you started talking about a situation. Or related to working with clients and participants who are having difficulties accessing employment options, transportation, keeping cell phones on, all of these challenges. What are some of the strategies you have applied to address those?

TL WAID:

I am just constantly talking to landlords about the situation. And about the need in the community for the housing. A lot of people are unaware how hard it is for the LGBT community to navigate sometimes throughout different situations that we'll take for granted. And a lot of times they are on board, once you take the time to talk to them, build a relationship, and always guarantee they will get their rent for at least a year (Laughs)

And Carter does a lot of leg work. Carter, as far as employment, will take people to drop theirs. She just did to job fairs I believe last week. We take people to their employments. We will take -- appointment. We will take them to do a walk-through of an apartment they want to look at. It's a matter of being there for them and really trying to meet them where they are at.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you so much for sharing that. So I want us to talk about the successes, because you will have definitely recorded successes in your work. So can you tell me what successes you have encountered in managing the program? Some of those emergent positive outcomes that you are starting to note among participants?

CARTER:

Sure. I'm going to shout out TL again because she is the reason that so many of our participants have you simply been housed. -- Recently been housed. That is the goal for most of our participants and we can say that we have housed quite a number of participants in this year alone. Sometimes that is short-term housing, sometimes long term.

But, I mean, that is a huge success that we can never overlook. Obviously the relationships that we have built with different community stakeholders, landlords, even people that help us go on apartment hunt. (Laughs) People that don't even come to GL oh that will email us and text us and say "hey, so-and-so is renting an apartment, you should check it out."

All of those things are great successes just to see how engaged and involved the community can be.

We also see better mental health outcomes. We see more participants taking advantage of substance use disorder programs. We see more people getting employed and staying employed.

And I want to attribute that to people who wants may have thought they were out here navigating the world on their own, now there is some accountability there because there is a support system, like, you will have to come back and hear one day in CS and we are going to ask you, "did you go to that interview? Did you submit that paperwork? How was your first week of work?"

That you know that there are people, excuse me, that care and are invested and are going to want to know that you are working towards your goal. Because you are not in it alone anymore, you know what I mean? Now me, and TL, and Tony, and Amanda, they are going to follow up! So definitely and ask -- a success, just to see goals are being met that word before and are now being met because people have the proper supports.

Yes.

TL WAID:

I think and just the overall confidence that you see in participants over time is really great. A lot of people will come in for the first time and they are kind of shy, kind of keep to themselves. As time goes on, you really see them start to blossom. They are engaged, want to volunteer, want to look at colleges or just different classes and things they can do.

>> FUMITAKA: Thank you both for sharing that. So it really sounds --

FUNMI AYENI:

. Thank you both for sharing the full stop it really sounds like the participation and support extends beyond that need for access to housing. Not only are participants being able to maintain housing but they are also able to address some of the other co-occurring issues that are commonly happening with individuals who are experiencing housing instability or homelessness and noting some of these mental health impacts, social impacts, economic impact.

So it really does sound like the whole person approach that you all are taking to the work is eventually resulting in the whole person processes and outcomes for you all. Thank you so much for sharing about some of the success that you have encountered in the program.

And so when we take into account some of the structures that you all have in place, right? And put that side-by-side to the challenges and successes that you have encountered, both anticipated challenges and unanticipated challenges, what are some of the recommendations and guidance that you have for advocates, for service providers, for agencies that are interested in securing funding and starting to

implement their own Rapid Rehousing programs?

CARTER:

I'm sure we all have something to contribute to this but I will start by saying, I think it's important that a service provider take the time to get to know the person in front of them and don't put that person in a category, in a group, in a box. Just because someone presents as well spoken and pretty issues, nice makeup, doesn't mean that this person can read. Just because someone looks super rough, does not mean that they are not bright and OnPoint and motivated. So it is super important to take the time to take -- talked with the participant, see exactly what they are dealing with, and how we can support them instead of just putting our assumptions on them. Like, you probably need this this and that and that's what will work on. TL, what you got?

TL WAID:

Yes, just communication is so key with participants. I mean, we all know what our participants made -- need in our own head but it's very important to ask them what they need in addition and then try to fill in some of the gaps or help them recognize where they have gaps, rather than just saying hey, you need this, you need to go here. What is it you would like to do with your life? Where would you like to see yourself? I think that's just very important. And it makes them openable little bit more to you.

CARTER:

And I think -- I know I said this before but I want to reiterate it, I think it's that important to follow through. We all know agencies that say they offer case management and they are going to follow up, but their follow-up and case management looks different than it does on our side. Like, we really are may be blowing up your phone! We're meeting you every time you walk into Jell-O at the door to say "come into the office and tell me what is going on".

At but is much as that might annoy a participant, we see over time they appreciated and they look forward to it and it leads to results that are positive.

AMANDA ARBOUR:

Yes, I would add in terms of agencies, (Indiscernible) funding around us. There are a lot of different funding opportunities out there for housing and we have a number of distraint housing streams -- back funding streams that the port a number of different ways at glow. For anyone that's in Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania housing finance agency grant is a great one to apply for. Some of our other funding streams are very, very restrictive and kind of don't have this whole person approach of like, if someone needs housing they might also need food and might also need us tickets and all of these other things.

The pH FA does take that into account so we are able to use funding to support those other things along with rent to kind of support that whole person. So I would definitely recommend that, or if you are

in other states, maybe there is another funding stream at your state level as well.

In terms of kind of building the culture of the program, like Carter was talking about earlier, really being able -- committed to doing it differently from a lot of mainstream agencies where it is more transactional, you have all these hoops to jump through, and caseworkers are not really treating people as real people.

So I think really being committed to having an approach that treat people with care and centres there need and approaches it in a collaborative process, and really uses this housing first model. I think that is really important in doing that ongoing education again, like Carter was talking about earlier. Making sure the team is really on board with, you know, people shouldn't have to prove that they need things for jump through all of these hoops, you know?

We can give people what they need with dignity in collaboration with them and so, making sure that folks kind of breakdown for some of the harmful things we often encounter in nonprofit or social service dividers in terms of that mindset. And kind of transforming that into something different.

CARTER:

Very good points, Amanda. I just wanted to add one more thing. I want to encourage everyone venturing out (Laughs) Into this work or that is already doing this work to remember the little things.

Sometimes we can get really focused on the big things and forget the little things which are super important. For example, this person is experiencing homelessness right now and needs to be in a hotel. He put them in a hotel, pat ourselves on the back. We did it!

What, that person is at the hotel and they do not have transportation to get to the job interview and they do not have money to eat while they are at the hotel. And they do not have a cell phone that is turned on. So, those things can't go overlooked. If you are committed to doing the work in a way that actually respect that participant as a whole person.

And some people are going to offer, "I need this, I need this, can you will help with this?" Because we have provided this one big thing what it is on us to say, "do you have this? Will you need that? Can we support with this?" So they can give us a yes or no answer. He kind of learned that the hard way. We would put someone in their own apartment and be like yes! We did it! We forgot that this person does not have a bed! There is no furniture in the apartment.

So we have to figure out a way to get that done. And we did, because TL is amazing but it is important to remember the little things.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you for sharing that. Taking from what you all have said, it is not just about getting people housed quickly. That is the starting point. But in order to support people to be able to maintain housing afterwards, there is a lot of intentional support that needs to go into making sure they have access to all of what they need.

And it shouldn't really be waiting for people to voice a need, but consistently checking in with them to ensure that they are aware of all of the services and options that are available to them, and if they do have a need, there is that open door policy that you all have also mentioned. That they can come and share those needs with you.

I appreciate you, Amanda, highlighting the funding streams and naming that it is true that some funding sources are very restrictive. It is also something that we have learned in our work with you all under the Flex funding project. And really emphasizes the importance of grading funding streams, and able to identify multiple sources of funding. If you identify one source of funding that will specifically cover rent for folks, and it would be helpful to identify other pots of money that may be able to cover some of these other needs that we have discussed today around transportation, or mental health support, or just helping people keep their cell phones turned on.

Thank you all so much for sharing. Before we move to open it up to receive any questions from the audience, are there any final thoughts that you all would like to share about any of the questions we have discussed so far?

AMANDA ARBOUR:

One thing I will add, for folks who are may be contemplating starting a program like this, it might feel overwhelming. How are we going to get the funding, staffing, and everything to do all of this? For us, it started very small. 3 1/2 years ago, a staff member brought up housing as a need that was emerging from participants, and we decided to start GLO emergency housing fund. It was literally like a Facebook fundraiser, that was her very first funding support -- we raised maybe \$2000, and that was our seed money.

It was able to fund maybe a month of back rent here, or a gift card for food here, or some bus tickets there. It was not a lot, but it was a starting point. That is something that in addition to grant funding, tapping into community resources and people who are willing to give even a small amount can have an impact. And can kind of start something. And you are able to grow from there.

Once we had established an emergency housing fund, we were able to share more about the needs that we see emerging, the needs we have been able to meet, and the needs we were not able to meet. I think that really helped us to be positioned well to apply for some of these bigger grants, since we

had some of that data and the start of an established track record in addressing housing needs with our community.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thanks a lot for sharing that, Amanda. We are going to segue into going over any questions that have come in from members of the audience. If you have not already shared a question in the Q&A chatbox, I encourage you to do so so that our panelists are able to answer those questions for you all today.

The first question that we received is, "How do you engage landlords in working with the youth who do not have rental history, poor or no credit, and for those who do not have three times the rent?"

TL WAID:

It is definitely not easy. Apartment complexes are usually out of the question. You usually have much better luck with private landlords, just explain to them what the program is and who it is focused on. And then we let them know that we are always there a support, not only for the participant, but for them if they have any issues. Such as, maybe, this person has never lived on their own before and they are not used to quiet hours, or something like that. We will address it with the participant for them.

Like I said before, we mentioned to them that we are going to make sure you get there rent, so long as the participant is living there, for the first year. If the participant cannot keep up with their part of the rent for the month, we will help them with that. Really, there is no reason for a landlord to say no once you start talking to them and letting them know that things are going to be OK.

We do check ins with our participants, some of the younger ones, we will go meet them at the apartment. While we are there, will look around, talk to them, ask if they have any maintenance issues or if anything unsafe is happening in the building. If it is, we will address it with the landlord for them. And the landlords generally appreciate that, because they want to make sure the property is well taken care of.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you. The second question that came through is, "My community once had a Rapid Rehousing program for people with mental health diagnosis. And from what I remember, there were issues with landlords not wanting to work with the program because there were issues with program participants damaging the rental units. I would be very interested in learning more about how you were able to build relationships with landlords."

TL WAID:

From my end, we go to landlord events. There are different ones throughout the community throughout

the year. We get an opportunity to meet them face-to-face, phone calls with different landlords, agent...

CARTER:

I want to add to that person's question. We have had our fair share of people destroying property. It definitely happens. But we try our best to prepare the participant before they go into a hotel or an apartment, especially when they fall under the criteria that person had mentioned, you don't have three months of rent, you don't have rental history, you may even be unemployed or currently in the process of starting your job.

Please act like you have some sense. Please respect this person's property. Please respect the relationship we have struggled to build with the landlord. Please understand everything that you do has a consequence. You want to have your own apartment in the future, and when people check rental history, just like the relationships you have had in the past, we want to be able to say good things.

We have had to be tougher and tougher on that, but we do see things improving.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you for naming that, and specifically referencing how this is not an issue that you have not encountered, in fact, it is something that you have had to also deal with in your process of administering this particular program.

The next question that came through is, "For the challenges discussed with other providers, what efforts have been developed to minimize that barrier, if any?" You discussed landlord engagement, but what does community outreach look like?

CARTER:

Community outreach takes many forms. Tabling events, just showing up with the table and brochures and flyers and talking to people that walk by so we can spread the word about the services we provide and the environment that we have created.

It also is cold calling different agencies and organizations and asking if we can come by, or hop on a zoom with their staff, and talk a little bit about the work we are doing.

Every month, we send out a calendar to anyone that has ever expressed interest in what we have going on, so that they can be in the know. And spread the word amongst their individual networks.

So, community engagement takes a lot of different forms in the work that we're doing. I mean, our

biggest means of engagement is word-of-mouth. Our biggest means of promotion and marketing is word-of-mouth.

People come here, thankfully, and receive great services. But above that, they are treated very well. And so that reputation precedes us. I hope it always stays that way. That is our number one.

AMANDA ARBOUR:

I will add, in terms of how we navigate some of those relationships with other agencies that are not providing as good services, it depends on the situation. Sometimes our staff are there advocating with our participants, either at the appointment with them, or following up with the case manager at the other agency, or taking it to the person above them if they are being really shitty with our participant. Our staff does that kind of advocacy with other agencies on behalf of our participants.

Sometimes, if we have a relationship with that agency, it is sitting down and having a really honest conversation with them to give them feedback about, "This is what our participants have experienced with your staff, this is not OK, how can we work together so this doesn't happen again?"

It depends on the agency. It depends on how they react to that. We find ourselves in a kind of role as well.

And then sometimes, you know, there are some agencies where there are enough consistent poor experiences where we make an internal decision that we are not going to refer to them, ever. We hate for it to get to that point, but some folks aren't open to hearing feedback or making changes in how they do that work. We have to protect our folks and they sure that where we are sending them is not going to actively harm them.

I will say, all of the other agencies are terrible. There are some -- are not terrible. There are some really good agencies as well, and we know they will treat our folks well and help them access services. We are really grateful for the partners we have. And really happy we are able to refer folks there as well.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you, Amanda and Carter, for your responses to that question. I am noticing we have some questions in the webinar chat. I will read those as well as we move through the conversation.

There was a question that came indirectly for TL. The question is, "What if they are not employed and cannot cover 75%, 50%, or 25%?" I believe this is in reference to your earlier comment about that tiered approach to providing support.

TL WAID:

Part of our intake, list of responsibilities, is that they will do their best to achieve employment within the first three months of being in the program. You certainly don't expect people who are in need of housing and have been living in a tent somewhere to come in our door and already have a job.

Carter handles a lot of the job-training issues, we try to connect them to places like career Link that has paid apprenticeships and different employment agencies, things like that. Generally, everybody does have employment by the third month. Of course, they don't all managed to hold onto it the whole time, but if something happens, we start that process over again. In the meantime, if they cannot cover a 75% at month, we pick up what is owed, as I said, to guarantee the landlord is getting their money for the full 12 months and that person continues to have a place to live.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you so much for responding to that, TL. The next question that came in is, "How do you manage to be helpful and empowering without enabling the participants?"

CARTER:

That is a tough line. I am not even sure that I know the answer. I personally try my best to let the participant know that I am proud of them every time I see them make a stride toward their goal and support plan, whether it is small or large.

So, positive reinforcement when we see them making a move. But also, trying to let them know that they don't need to panic, stressed out, do anything drastic when things don't go as planned. Because we are still here, your support system still exists.

A lot of times, we are dealing with people that have been so self-sufficient, whether or not they are thriving, they have been surviving on their own. And it takes a lot for them to come into the office and closed the door and sit down and tell us that they actually need help.

So, it is a tough line to toe. But I think that is how I have been navigating it. Trying to strike that balance between positive reinforcement, but then also not allowing them to beat themselves up when something goes wrong.

TL WAID:

I think it is very difficult and I know I struggle with it sometimes that I try to let people know – you will always see people come in and everything is a need, everything is a wand. And I try to let them know, hey, we are here to help you with whatever you need but you also have to do some of the work too. I think that is an important part of what we do, is trying to get them to work on things on their own and create their own goals and help them to achieve their goals.

Like Carter said, we always let them know how proud we are of even the smallest thing they do and try to keep encouraging them.

CARTER:

I think it is important to add that a lot of the programs we offer are incentivized. And incentives increase as we see someone doing really incredible things.

So we have participants, for instance, some of our participants that are Spanish speakers, one of them in particular, just enrolled in school. Like, in an ESL class so they can improve their English. And then requested a laptop. Granted, the laptop was only \$200 or something and we had that available in one of our funding sources, but that is so easy to accommodate when we see this person making moves on their own.

Like yes, we're going to meet you right here to support you with that laptop. And I think word gets around. Obviously word gets around. Like DLO just provided me a laptop. Not because it's a Thursday. Because you did the legwork to enrolling this class that is going to improve your job opportunities.

FUNMI AYENI:

I appreciate that insight around the distinction between supporting their men and their goals -- them and their goals but also they have to do the work to create those goals. Intake act -- check -- and take action to support those goals. Thank you both for responding to that. The next question we got was: do you all currently have a landlord mitigation fund to support of a property is damaged?

AMANDA ARBOUR:

That is not something that we have. That is definitely a great idea and if anyone has resources about that, feel free to drop it in the chat.

FUNMI AYENI:

Yes, and I will also highlight that Britney put in the chat, some resources on landlord risk mitigation funds so I encourage folks to check those out. And then the next questions that we received is: -- a comment and a question. So it goes, "you all have done a great job at displaying the success and challenges the program participants face while in your program. Can you expand on what are some of the challenges you have seen with the programs designed? So, Rapid Rehousing for LGBTQ+ young adult."

TL WAID:

I don't know if I can specifically address anything because it is constantly changing for us. We are constantly looking at it. If something's not going well or it's just not working for participants, we go back

and we rewrite it. So we are constantly rewriting how we do things, constantly changing how we do things. But at the same time, keeping in mind that, like, our support plans are not a blanket thing.

Everything is Kate -- tailored specifically to that participant.

FUNMI AYENI:

Inc. you, TL. The next question is: "how do you navigate a lack of affordable housing opportunities in the community? In my community, affordable housing is few and far between. And the existing affordable housing is often in poor condition. Does your organization do any work with local government or other organizations to encourage government -- development of affordable housing opportunities?"

CARTER:

So, at this time, our organization does not that I know of, as Amanda might know some things I am unaware of. We are so focused on just getting people housed. But my hope is that, as the housing program expands and develops, that we can play more of an advocate role and be in the years -- years of government to improve the situation because yes, we have the same issues that that particular person present.

AMANDA ARBOUR:

Yes, and I will add that I think earlier this year or last year, CLOAK had a housing forum that was under -- glow had a housing form that was under one of our other housing forms and a great conversation with different community leaders doing different types of housing work within our community. So I think that was a great way for community members and participants and staff to have kind of a higher level conversation around that. Like Carter said, we are in the day-to-day of like, we have to get this person off the street or out of their situation and they do someplace safe. But there are these your picture things going on to. So I think that was a great opportunity and one of the people who was there was a developer and we had, well, I guess carter, you can talk about how you had more of conversation with him.

CARTER:

Yes, the developer was awesome. Was fully aware of the issues that we have in Harrisburg as far as it pertains to housing. And I know he is working on a couple small project that might be able to benefit us immediately but obviously he is putting the bulk of his money towards a much larger housing project that we are going to do our best to be involved in.

AMANDA ARBOUR:

And the LGBT Center is also starting to explore some bigger picture things. I don't know if I shared this with the rest of the staff, Carter and TL, but we are having a housing form later this month that will be

specifically looking at, like, LGBTQ senior housing but we hope to have a series, one will look at LGBTQ youth and young adult housing, one will look at LGBTQ intergenerational housing, with the eventual goal of actually building some housing that is ours. And that is affordable. You know, several years down the line.

So it is still in the very exploratory kind of gathering information phases, so nothing is kind of set in stone were immediately applicable, but those are some of the conversations we are starting to have.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you both. I will add that these are conversations that are also happening at the national level. And in our -- NRC DV has been involved in exploring options for what it would look like to develop affordable housing opportunities and to document some of what is happening across the nation, and so that is a resource that you all can look forward to in the future. But this is a national level conversation that is happening stop I wanted to share that.

And then we have another question in the webinar chat and it reads: "can participants enter the program with children or pets? If so, how are their children and pets supported?"

CARTER:

Yes, we definitely have some participants that have children. The support is just the same, it's just a wink at family type support. If they need help finding they care, we will look into that. If they need family therapy, we can look into that sort of thing. We try to find housing that will fit their needs and the size of their family if we can. Sometimes we can't just make the best that we can out of it. Help divide the same type of situations, additional food, and I think carter and I just had about a half-hour conversation the other day about diaper sizes. I was like, I don't know how to buy diapers!

But yes, it works the same way. Pets can be a little difficult. It depends on the housing situation and if they are support animals. So we are still looking -- working a lot out of the pet thing.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you, DL. So it sounds like there is generally more difficulty with supporting participants to secure housing when there are pets involved.

TL WAID:

Definitely.

FUNMI AYENI:

And have you been able to successfully house any participants who have pets? Are there any specific strategies you applied to be able to execute that?

TL WAID:

I just do my best to specifically look at landlords that will accept pets. If 70 find something that is, you know, the perfect area and price range for them and they have a support dog I am like, we will work with them to try to get the actual paperwork to say it is a support animal and then try to work with the landlord. It doesn't always work out, people are less willing to rent to people with pets.

You also have to look at things like pet fees, which are outrageous at this point. It's a whole another rent. So it is definitely a work in progress.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you. And then we had some more questions come in to the Q&A but I will first start off by reading some of the comments that came through. So this participant or audience member says, "it is also important to explain to your clients that when they aren't respectful of owner's property, landlord and property managers may decide not to work with the program in the future, which reduces the housing options for the next person."

Another attendee shared, "I love the idea of incentivizing for the clients. I have been on a lot of webinars where landlord that gives -- incentives are discussed and we have another question that came through which says, "what happens if they can't pay for the apartment after 12 months on their own?"

TL WAID:

Once they are in the program or just any participant that comes through our doors, if they need additional assistance, we will provide additional assistance and do what we can to help them get back to a place where they can continue the rent on their own. Sometimes it is just a matter of hey, they just had a bad patch. And they need a minute and additional help. And that is what we are therefore.

CARTER:

Right, and that assistant comes with additional case management. Like oh you might thought we are out your life a little bit but that! We are back!

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you all for sharing that. Those were all the questions that we received. Thank you all for sending in those questions. We do still have some time, so if you have any additional questions, these do not hesitate to share those. But as we move towards wrapping up our conversation today, one of the questions that I wanted to ask of our panelists today is when we think about some of the current structures that exist today and all of the challenges that you will have encountered, in supporting participants to access housing and how these funds have been really important, in helping you all do

that work, what can you say about sustainability of ending beyond the grant period? What are you all exploring in your processes to keep the funding sustained? And what advice do you have for organization to keep funding sustained?

AMANDA ARBOUR:

Yes, that's a great question. And definitely something we are always thinking about. For this particular program in particular funding stream, our grant period actually ends today [so we are wrapping up this grant and the exciting thing is that we have been awarded another grant from the same funding source, the Pennsylvania housing finance agency that is much larger and will allow us to actually purchase the building with at least two housing units in it. So we are really thrilled about that. And some of the lessons learned through this first implementation of home program -- be at home program sort of informed how we approach the second grant application.

We've seen amazing successes and have in really thrilled with the limitation of this twelve-month tiered renters assistance program. But we've also learned some participants need even more intensive case management than what we have been able to provide, which is more than most other agencies provide. And so we decided to kind of give it for this next iteration of the program participants at least in this bone building that are ours and be able to focus really on providing intensive case management over the course of a year, so they wouldn't have to worry about rent during that year. It would be really focused on helping them address mental health issues or physical health issues. Sub- substance misuse issues.

Getting and maintaining stability, and -- employment, pursuing educational roles. Honing in on some of our folks who have hired me and being able to provide that stable housing without the pressure of having to pay even a portion of the rent. And focusing on helping them to achieve some of their goals in these other areas so by the end of that year of transitional housing, then they would be set up for success to move into their own apartment. It is a different model, transitional housing versus Rapid Rehousing, but it is something that we are excited to drive. And the fact that we will have our own brick and mortar housing, it will be small but it will be ours and that's a really big step. That's kind of what is coming up next for us with this program.

And we have other funding streams that support housing work in other ways that will continue which is exciting. So I think for other agencies, finding that mix of funding streams that works for you and figuring out what models work for you and the folks that you are serving, and finding the funding streams that will support those long-term is key.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you so much for sharing that, and congratulations to you and the center for securing this funding. Look forward to all that you are going to do with it. We should definitely do another webinar to

talk about learnings from that transitional housing program.

We had one question that came in, and considering our time today, I believe that is the last question we will take. "Has there been enough data collected to show..."

My apologies. The question reads, "Has there been enough data collected to show HUD that an RFP should be put out to look for agencies to apply for funding?"

AMANDA ARBOUR:

We don't get any HUD funding so I'm not sure of the details of how that works. We do collect data for this program, demographics, housing unit income for when someone is coming into the program, family size, services provided to them, and we look at what are their outcomes at the end of the program and after the program.

So, certainly we are happy to share that, if that is helpful to anyone. I certainly hope that federal funding agencies are looking for more and innovative ways to support community organizations doing housing work.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you all so much. Many thanks to the audience for all the questions that you and in, and a special thanks to our panelists for going over those questions and providing a very comprehensive responses. As we move to close out our conversation today, I want to open it back up to the panelists to see if there any concluding thoughts you would like to share.

TL WAID:

I would just like to say, it is not easy. The housing work that we do. But it is gratifying and it is important. You might get discouraged sometimes, but just take a breath and come back at it.

CARTER:

I don't have anything else to add, I just wanted to say thanks for having us and best of luck to everyone watching.

AMANDA ARBOUR:

Yeah, I am grateful for this opportunity as well, and excited to hopefully see and learn more about other housing work happening across the country.

FUNMI AYENI:

Thank you all so much. Once again, many thanks to all of the members of our audience for engaging with this webinar, for being here today, and for sharing a very insightful questions as well as comments

for those who also shared resources in the chat. We do greatly appreciate your participation today.

Again, thank you to the members of our panel. We are excited to see the work and continue to be in collaboration and community within the LGBT Center of Central PA. And finally, to all of our interpreters, as well as NRCDV staff members that have been supporting everything from the administration and logistics, to our technical support. We greatly appreciate all of your support for this conversation today.

And we will move to wrap up! Thank you all so much. Please visit the [safe housing partnerships.org](https://www.safehousingpartnerships.org) website for resources and more information on supporting survivors as it relates to addressing homelessness and housing instability issues.

Thank you very much, and everybody have a wonderful rest of your day.

SPEAKER:

We also wanted to let you all know that the NRCDV is putting on a prevention town hall in September. September 13 and 14. We are dropping a registration link in the chat, if you would like to register. Please register for it. It will be happening from one to 4:30 PM Eastern time both the 13th and the 14th and September, if you would like to register.

Have a good day, everybody!