



## **Braiding Resources to Collaboratively Develop and Strengthen Housing & Services Partnerships**

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**LORI GERHARD:** Happy New Year, everyone. Hello and welcome to the Housing and Services Resource Center's webinar, Braiding Resources to Collaboratively Develop and Strengthen Housing & Services Partnerships. Our goal is to create a robust dialogue for you to discover new opportunities and we need to hear from you, so we have also built in a variety of opportunities for you to be an active participant in today's session. Thank you so much for joining us.

My name is Lori Gerhard and I'm the Director of the Office of Interagency Innovation at the Administration for Community Living. We are an operating division within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This webinar is hosted by the Housing and Services Resource Center. I will be serving as the facilitator for today's webinar, and it is a privilege to have so many of you here with us today. Your active involvement in this webinar is essential, so that we have an engaging conversation and discussion.

Today, you will discover how the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development are setting a meaningful example for partnership. You will learn how a state is braiding financial and programmatic resources in the creation of dynamic housing and health partnerships and you will hear best practices for developing partnerships and solutions for challenges that sometimes we encounter as we develop these partnerships. You will also develop an understanding of the resources that can be used to strengthen housing and health services partnerships over time, particularly access to technical assistance resources on recruiting and retaining landlords.

First, we would like to share a few housekeeping items with you. This meeting is being recorded. By staying to participate, you are consenting to the recording. Also, all attendees have been muted for audio quality. One hallmark of our webinars is active participation from attendees. Please frequently use the chat to make comments or submit your questions anytime in the Q&A feature in the Zoom dashboard or you may e-mail a question or comment to [HSRC@ACL.HHS.gov](mailto:HSRC@ACL.HHS.gov). We reserved time to address your questions later in the session. You can use the chat or e-mail if you have a technical issue or comment for other attendees.

Our goal is to support you in developing housing and services partnerships that effectively identify and coordinate rental resources and services to support independent community living for people in need of stable housing. We'd like to conduct a short poll. Does your state or local community have partnerships between community living support service providers and rental housing assistance providers? If we can put up the poll. Possible responses are, yes, no, or unsure. If you would take a moment to respond to that poll, that would be great. If you do answer yes, can you please place in the chat your state and local community and provide any additional details about that partnership. Your responses will help us learn more about the partnerships already in place across community living support service providers and rental housing assistance providers.

While you're responding to the poll, if we can go to the next slide, I would like to tell you about the Housing and Services Resource Center, HSRC, which is a partnership between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. In every state and community there are a number of entities and programs helping people access housing and supportive services, but the housing and service systems are often siloed. We are working together to create stronger collaborations between these systems so more older adults, people with disabilities and people experiencing homelessness can achieve housing stability, live with dignity and independence in their community and avoid homelessness and costly institutional care.

I'm proud to say the federal agencies in the Housing and Services Resource Center all strive to model this cross-sector collaboration at the national level, which you will hear more about in a minute. After the webinar, we hope you will look at the HSRC website at [ACL.gov/housingandservices](https://acl.gov/housingandservices) at the end of the webinar. We will share an e-mail address, too, so you can be in touch with us and get periodic updates. Please close the poll.

Wow, so it looks like 41% of you do have, or know about, a state or local community partnership between community living support providers and rental housing assistance providers. That is great. We are looking forward to learning more about the partnerships. 11% are not aware of any and 48% are not sure. Thank you for responding to this poll. Your responses are really helpful to us.

We are going to start our webinar today with two very special guests. First, we have Melissa Harris who is the Deputy Director of the Disabled and Elderly Health Programs Group at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, or CMS. We also have Dr. Richard Cho, Senior Advisor for Housing and Services from the Office of the Secretary at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or HUD. Partnerships across disability, aging, health, and housing programs and entities are the key to best supporting the people we serve. As you know, our topic for today's webinar is focused on braiding resources to develop and strengthen partnerships between housing programs and community support service agencies. Dr. Cho and Ms. Harris exemplify the type of partnership and cooperation that studies show provide the best wraparound support. Dr. Cho is going to tell us a little bit about the origins of that partnership and Ms. Harris will talk about those partnerships and how they have been used to develop comprehensive programs and pathways to services. I will hand the presentation over to Ms. Melissa Harris and Dr. Richard Cho.

**MELISSA HARRIS:** Thank you, Lori. I'm really happy to be here with you today representing CMS. We have acknowledged for some time the important links between access to affordable and accessible housing, health coverage and health outcomes, including for Medicaid beneficiaries receiving home and community-based services, or HCBS. Linking housing and health can improve coverage, access, and health equity for Medicaid beneficiaries. We are continuing to partner with states to find pathways under the Medicaid program to integrate services and supports that can assist Medicaid beneficiaries with obtaining and maintaining housing. In 2021, CMS released a state health official letter that described opportunities to cover housing related supports under the Medicaid program and those can be covered under state plan benefits, HCBS waiver programs, managed care delivery systems and section 1115 demonstrations. A couple of things to note: Medicaid typically does not cover room and board. We are statutorily prohibited in doing so, except in medical institutions, unless we have conveyed special authority to a state under an 1115 demonstration.

Housing related services and supports also must be medically appropriate and documented in an individual's person-centered care plan. Housing related supports and services must be the choice of the beneficiary who can opt out of receiving them at any time. CMS also recognizes the partnerships with state and local housing agencies are essential to success and implementation of allowing housing related services and supports under the Medicaid program. Medicaid can play an integral part of collaboration with state and local housing agencies in three main ways.

First is in developing formal and informal agreements and working relationships with state and local housing and community development agencies to help beneficiaries access existing and new housing resources. We can also participate and contribute to the planning processes of state and local housing and community development agencies by collecting, through beneficiary surveys and claims data, and providing demographic, housing needs and other relevant data for Medicaid eligible populations. Finally, we can help coordinate with available housing locator systems or listings and developing or coordinating data tracking systems to include information on affordable and accessible housing.

CMS has also been forging policy avenues to support states with developing and strengthening partnership opportunities between health and housing systems. Under the Money Follows the Person, or MFP demonstration, CMS expanded the scope and definition of MFP supplemental services. Effective January 1 of 2022, the definition of supplemental services was modified from one-time services to short-term services to support an MFP participant's transition that are otherwise not allowable under the Medicaid program. The expanded definition of supplemental services includes 100% grant fund coverage of short-term rental assistance up to six months. States must have a partnership with a state or local housing agency to administer the short-term housing assistance. CMS anticipates that this provision will help to advance and strengthen health and housing partnerships.

We also have section 9817 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, under which states are expanding and enhancing access to HCBS by using ARP funding to implement activities to develop and strengthen partnerships with state and local housing agencies to assist individuals receiving HCBS to gain access to non-Medicaid funded housing. And finally, you heard me reference a minute ago 1115 demonstration. Under that authority, CMS has established a new framework in which to evaluate state proposals to address health related social needs. The key to the framework is a required component that states must have partnerships with other state and local housing entities to assist beneficiaries in obtaining non-Medicaid funded housing. That is just a snapshot of what CMS has been doing to move the ball in this combination of health services and housing supports. I am so happy to have CMS represented with you here today. I'm going to turn it over to my colleague Richard in Housing and Urban Development to pick things up from the housing resources perspective.

**RICHARD CHO:** Thank you so much, Melissa and Lori, and all of you for joining this important webinar. Among the many ways that HUD is looking to advance our mission to increase affordable housing and create strong, sustainable and inclusive communities is to meet the housing needs of people with disabilities, older adults and certainly those experiencing homelessness. We have a variety of tools to address the housing side of that equation, but we also know that for many people who are experiencing homelessness, who are leaving institutional settings and entering the community or aging and wishing to age in place, that it is the combination of housing and services that is the key to their success in having a stable

home, but also to meet all of their life goals.

We know that HUD cannot achieve that part of our mission alone. We need to do that in partnership with HHS. We are particularly proud at HUD to be a part of this Housing and Services Resource Center that Lori Gerhard mentioned and today's webinar is one of the many ways that we're trying to provide more information to communities on how to link our programs at HUD with the many opportunities at HHS to provide supportive services.

This is a particularly exciting time to link housing and services for the populations we're discussing. You heard from Melissa, some of the opportunities within CMS through the Money Follows the Person program, and the changes they have made to supplemental services, as well as the growing number of states using 1115 waivers to cover some of the supports and services that can help obtain and maintain housing. On the HUD side of that equation, we have put out pretty significant resources in the last two years to meet housing needs, particularly those for people who have disabilities, as well as for people experiencing homelessness. Through the American Rescue Plan, we issued close to 70,000 emergency housing vouchers, over 60% of which are now leased, which are intended to serve those experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including those exiting institutional settings and who are at risk of homelessness. We have also awarded additional mainstream vouchers, known as the section 811 vouchers. These are rental assistance vouchers that are intended to serve people with disabilities, and with a greater focus on those leaving institutional settings or exiting or transitioning from homelessness.

We have other programs known as the Section 811 program and the 202 program that provide affordable housing opportunities to people who have disabilities or older adults. All of those programs are kind of targeted specifically to the populations that are the focus of the Housing and Services Resource Center, but many of HUD's other programs, including the regular housing vouchers, can and should serve people who are exiting institutional settings or transitioning from homelessness.

HUD has provided, in addition of providing more resources, we have also been providing additional guidance and tools to help communities use vouchers. I know one of the greatest challenges to using tenant based rental assistance to help people obtain housing is actually finding available housing on the private market or landlords who are willing to rent. HUD has provided additional tools on how communities can engage landlords and recruit them to participate in the voucher program, and you will hear in a little bit from my colleague Nick Bilka who has developed new tools that public housing agencies can use to engage and recruit more landlords to participate in the voucher program.

In addition, HUD has also issued guidance around uses of administrative fees to the roughly 3,000 or so Public Housing Authorities, many of whom administer voucher programs. They all receive administrative fees that come along with those voucher programs, and HUD has issued guidance on clarifying the many uses of administrative fees, including to cover things like housing, search and landlord recruitment, to cover landlord incentives, as well as to pay for things like security deposits or moving assistance. Many of the tools and opportunities that communities have through the Medicaid Money Follows the Person program supplemental services are similar to those that can be covered through HUD's administrative fees. I want to reiterate, there are many more tools than ever to provide the kind of glue and connective tissue that enables you to pair housing resources with supportive services.

I would say the most important connective tissue or glue to making housing and services work together are the people who are doing this work day-to-day, many of you who are joining us today, who spend your work collaborating across sector, whether you're on the healthcare side or you're on the housing side and you're reaching across that sector to your colleagues and building the partnerships. It is through that collaboration and collaborative thinking that you can problem solve and take advantage of all the opportunities, resources and tools that are available to connect housing and services. Excited again to welcome you to this webinar and to have you hear from one exciting community example, as well as to hear about HUD's resources.

**LORI GERHARD:** Thank you so much, Richard and Melissa. This was a great overview. Now, it is my distinct pleasure to introduce you to Ms. Whitney Joy Howard and Pam Parr who are going to share information about their partnership where they are braiding resources in the state of Washington to provide access to rental assistance and supportive services and really create housing stability. Whitney Joy, who is the Lead Supportive Housing Manager for the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, and Ms. Pam Parr is the Executive Director of the Spokane Housing Authority. I will hand the presentation over to Ms. Whitney Joy.

**WHITNEY JOY HOWARD:** Thank you. Hi, all. Whitney Joy Howard. I'm going to quickly go through some slides with more high-level information to give a baseline understanding and then we'll open to questions and let you all guide the conversation to make sure you're getting the information and the level of detail that would be most helpful for you.

In Washington, the bulk of home and community services division or HCS, highest acuity clients are served in home. There is some belief out there that people with high needs need 24-hour care. In reality, in-home care allows flexibilities not found in other settings and provides a more stable option while providing individual choice. The Money Follows the Person demonstration gave HCS the opportunity to create a statewide housing team. Among other things, the housing team acts as liaisons between the long-term care case managers, various housing related contractors and community providers and available long-term services and supports. I like to think of the housing team as the bridge and the translators between the worlds of long term care and affordable housing.

Providing housing resource opportunities to individuals via the home and community-based service delivery system gives us the flexibility to combine housing subsidy with physical housing, actual units, actual apartments, and then layer in a variety of services, including transition assistance, in home and supportive services. This integration creates a support structure or the stability for our participants, which helps them maintain both housing and service connection. There's a rich discussion to be had here around how to acquire and actually braid these resources together to holistically support an individual. Our team is always happy to talk with others about this work, so if you're interested in a more involved conversation than we have time for today, please reach out. That is a perfect example of creating partnerships and putting them in action. I do want to flag that the aim is to do the patchworking or the braiding on the back end as much as possible, so the user experience is streamlined and not administratively burdensome. It is user friendly and hopefully this process is also continuously user informed.

This slide is also a visualization of the resources we have to support our partnerships. As

Washington's long-term care system, we can have conversations with Public Housing Authorities or other housing only entities and discuss our array of in-home services. We have transition assistants included in our participants' in-home benefits package, so funds for moving assistance, setting up a home, funds to sustain tenancy or things like pest eradication that can be used for costly treatment of bed bugs to save a tenancy or emergency rental assistance. We also have our statewide housing team, a Program Manager to act as a point of contact for these housing entities if things need to get escalated. When you think of building partnerships to support your ability to braid the housing and subsidy, you need to map out what you bring to the table as you're looking to partner with other entities to create those wraparound supports for housing sustainability.

Our housing team has a position dedicated to building housing capacity for HCS clients. This position leans on existing partnerships and works to develop new opportunities through engaging some of the entities listed on this slide. Our housing capacity partnerships braid services and funding through HCS with housing units via set-asides from developers, nonprofits, property management companies, so we are providing rental dollars and in-home services and we're getting access to units within new or existing apartment buildings. The set-aside approach is a hybrid of project and tenant-based subsidy models, so we're providing immediate access to housing while honoring principles of housing choice.

In 2012, HCS launched a state funded AL TSA subsidy as part of our Money Follows the Person demonstration. As the program grew and our legislature approved state funding to expand our subsidy, in 2016, we issued a request for a proposal for a single entity to take on the centralized administration for our subsidy. In Q&A if people want to hear, Liz Prince can speak more to the nitty gritty, but we knew subsidy administration was bread and butter for Public Housing Authorities and there is a statewide meeting where all of the Public Housing Authorities attend and Liz got on the agenda and spoke about this radical idea and the Housing Authority stepped up and ended up contracting with us. That initial contract was for two years at \$130,000. Our current contract is for three years at \$8 million. Wrapped into our contract for the subsidy dollars is an administrative fee, which allows Spokane Housing Authority to retain staff needed to support the program and have them specialized in this work.

This partnership has given us access to Housing Authority knowledge on how to administer the subsidy and together we have created policies with the flexibilities that state funds allow to have enabled subsidies growth. Now, I will turn it over to Pam Parr to speak from Spokane's perspective on this partnership.

**PAM PARR:** Hello, everybody and thanks for having me. I want to say, first, Liz Prince who you will meet in a little while can talk me into just about any crazy idea, let's start there. I think we both enter the work with a spirit of innovation, collaboration and flexibility. Braiding together funding and programming is really interesting. The Housing Authority put together a program, just in our jurisdiction at one point, to connect services and housing. We had voucher holders who were having a really hard time finding a place to live even if they had a voucher and we knew that services was the key. Having someone to actually help get a landlord to yes, identify a unit, help them move in. So, we created a local preference program here that partnered our voucher assistance with local service providers, including aging and long-term care.

This has allowed us to change our success rate from about 37% to about 80%. Just pairing those services with that voucher absolutely results in better outcomes for the client. Whitney gives me a hard time, because I have this philosophy that I would rather ask forgiveness than

permission. I want you to think about that, because Housing Authorities in collaboration with HUD have great amounts of flexibilities to create these local preferences that address local community need. If your Housing Authority is not at the table, one, they should be, and two, they can be creative and still follow the rules within HUD's structure and system. Housing Authorities now can provide landlord incentives. I know I saw a comment in the chat box that was one of the issues and we can provide local incentives now using those administrative fee flexibilities, and so, I think there's lots on the horizon that will push us forward.

**WHITNEY JOY HOWARD:** Okay so, we want to make sure we have time for questions, again, let you guy guide the conversation. We did just include here as a wrap-up slide some concrete strategies that we have developed to support our program. I want to quickly call out, Spokane Housing Authority and Washington's Home and Community Services Housing team has dedicated staff for this partnership, so that first bullet there around timely voucher issuance, we're currently hovering, from the time the application is submitted to Housing Authority, around 1.5 days for the subsidy to be issued to the client, which is pretty remarkable. The other thing I want to call out is training, training, training, you can never, never train enough. It is an endless loop. There is a lot of turnover within this field. People learn differently, we've built up different formats to provide training, we built up a website, create a lot of different materials, so just be really mindful of training, training and training some more. With that, let's open it up to questions.

**LORI HERHARD:** Thank you so much, Whitney Joy and Pam for that presentation. We're joined now by Ms. Elizabeth Prince and Ms. Jonnie Matson from Washington's Department of Social and Health Services under the Aging and Long-Term Services Support Administration. Ms. Prince is the Project Director for Roads to Community Living and Housing Unit Manager and Ms. Matson is a Housing Program Manager. We do have a couple of questions that have come in. First, can you talk about your success rate? I think Pam, you called that out, like, how did you reach, I think going from 30% to 80% success rate. Can you tell us more about that?

**PAM PARR:** I'm talking about a program we have called the Referral Voucher Program, which is a partnership we have with aging and long-term care and about 15 other local supportive services agencies, so the success rate is 87%. I would guess that the success rate in the Bridges program, which is the other program we're talking about, is higher than that. I don't have it, but off of the top of my head I would guess it in the 90's.

**JONNIE MATSON:** We do have a really high success rate once a voucher is issued. We also have flexibilities built in, like we can extend a search time. A lot of vouchers have 90 day or 180-day limit. For us, we will let a client search up to a year if needed, especially if they have certain accessibility issues or live in certain part of the state where finding an affordable unit is more challenging. We work with the client to the end of the earth to make sure they are able to lease up. One of the main things that supports that is either using supportive housing provider through FCS or through our state GOSH program or what we call a Community Choice Guide. It is a person who is specifically dedicated and trained on housing. Their number one job is to find apartments for people, so our clients get attached to one of these providers and as a pair, they go out and search for the housing and find it.

**PAM PARR:** I would add that the Housing Authority has full-time staff dedicated only to helping people secure units as well. We have a full-time in-house landlord liaison that assists people as well.

**LIZ PRINCE:** The only I think I would add is whenever you can get people to specialize, it's a great thing to do because it really helps to move the process along. This is really complicated stuff often, and it is hard when you ask people to look at a bunch of different programs and services and figure out how to make it work.

**LORI GARHARD:** That is terrific. Can you talk about how the partnership began? Who you reached out to, and how you have been leveraging funds?

**PAM PARR:** Sure, do you want me to start, Liz, and you can dive in? The state of Washington Housing Authorities, there are 37 in the Association of Washington Housing Authorities, when this started I actually was the President of the Washington Housing Authorities. Liz came to me with this wild idea about providing state-based rental assistance paired with services. She asked all 37 Housing Authorities if they would be willing to partner and pilot this \$130,000 program. And I was the only one that said yeah, I think this is a good idea. Let's try it. Out of 37.

Because the need is statewide, what I did, is was said, oh, well, we can do this. I approached every other Housing Authority in the state and I executed local agreements with each and every one of them that allows us to operate this program in their jurisdiction. The aging and long-term care folks gather all of the information and hand it to us on a silver platter, which is amazing, because that is how we get to that one and a half day processing time. We then contract with the local Housing Authorities to do housing quality inspections locally, so all of the paperwork runs through our office in Spokane, but the inspection is done by the local Housing Authority.

**LIZ PRINCE:** The only thing I would tell you is a little bit of back story. When we first started through rebalancing funds to do some subsidies for some of our folks in the Money Follows the Person program, we started out by having to contract with every individual landlord in order to get that money to them. And I would tell you within a few months, the whole team was up in arms saying, we can't do this. It will not work. And that's when I talked to Pam first and went to that meeting, and really we were so open to, you know, whoever would step up and thank goodness, Pam was right there. I will tell you having a statewide way to do this is really ideal, because it does go towards what Whitney Joy talked about trying to create the seamless interface for clients. It just makes things flow.

**PAM PARR:** It streamlines the process, only having to deal with us.

**LIZ PRINCE:** Absolutely.

**WHITNEY JOY HOWARD:** I want to call out part of what is not being said, is you have these two amazing people here who are willing to go for it and think outside of the box and have the personality to be bold and experiment and, you know, not ask first. I think that is an important piece of that as well. You have to have the right people in the right places at the right time.



**LORI GERHARD:** People make all of the difference in the world and also just taking the expertise from both of these sectors and bringing it together really creates such a great opportunity for people that live in Washington state. We commend you all on that. Can you talk, too, about any formalized agreements that you have in place in order to support this initiative?

**PAM PARR:** Sure, we have a contract to provide these services for aging and long-term care. The other thing I would say is, we took all of the HUD voucher forms, "we," me, took the HUD voucher forms and created new forms specifically for this program that were modeled after the HUD forms, so the programs and the rules, basically work the same way around what we're gathering and what we're keeping track of. We aligned it with the voucher program to simplify it for staff. So, we just took the voucher forms and created new forms specifically for this program.

**JONNIE MATSON:** What is really great is every time through the years, as we develop a new efficiency, new idea or new flexibility, we have the control here at the state to say, you know what, let's update this form, let's make this easier, either for landlords or Spokane or for us or for the client, and we can do that. We can revamp our forms. We have discussions with Spokane about, "We want to make this change, are there any unforeseen complications that you can think of?" We partner to make these decisions and we enact them and that is how we move from here forward.

Our team holds a policy document, if you will, where we have our own set of policies and procedures to administer this subsidy, because we want to make sure we're consistent with everyone and that everyone is treated fairly, treated the same, much in the same idea about how HUD goes about things. It is really great because we can carry that sort of culture and idea forward into improving the subsidy as the years go by.

**PAM PARR:** One of the things that we're trying with a new tax credit project, is we're going to look at project basing a few of these, so it has direct access to the units, and we created new forms for that, too.

**LORI GERHARD:** That's terrific. I think when we were prepping for the call, we were impressed, too, about how you're leveraging the expertise of both sectors or organizations, and you know, with helping people get placed in a home that might not even be a qualified property, and then helping that property become qualified. Can you speak a little bit around how you all leveraged those areas of expertise?

**LIZ PRINCE:** The Spokane Housing Authority contracts with individual Housing Authorities to do those inspections, so we do make sure that we're sticking with, you know, that quality framework before we will pay our subsidy to a particular landlord. That winds up being important just to be able to make sure that our dollars are going towards sustainable ways.

The only other thing I would say about that is if you are in a fortunate enough position to have this flexibility, you do have to be mindful of balancing staying within the HUD guidelines, which when people move on to a federal subsidy, which is our goal, they need to be able to sustain

their new subsidy with those federal rules attached and the dollar limits and all of that. So, we can make some changes at the state paid subsidy level, but you do have to kind of do that dance of making sure you don't change it so much that it is not going to be sustainable.

**LORI GERHARD:** Thanks, that was really helpful. The other question we had is, how do you maintain the relationship? What is your regular cooperation as partners? Do you meet regularly? Can you tell us more about how that works?

**LIZ PRINCE:** We email about 100 times a day, I think, but we do have regular meetings, Jonnie can speak to that.

**JONNIE MATSON:** Like we spoke about earlier, each of our teams does have dedicated staff, so that cuts down on who needs to communicate with who and also helps corral the training. We know who we need to advise and tell about changes. Both of our teams have long-term staff, which has been helpful. I know the original person at Spokane is still with the team. Whitney Joy and I have had long tenure on our housing team, so that has been helpful as well, to retain the staff and historical knowledge, right? But yes, we email. Spokane has a centralized e-mail, which is wonderful, so no matter who is working on vacation, what have you, someone is answering our e-mails all of the time, Monday through Friday, so that is a helpful thing.

Almost all of our communication is by e-mail. We sent attachments, PDFs and whatnot, and it is communication with landlords as well. The main communication is between us, between the Housing Authority, between our contracted provider that is supporting the client leasing up and then with the landlord, so we have four important entities working together to get people housed. Not to mention, our home and community services case managers, which are the ones that are authorizing the services to make a lot of this happen. It is a ton of communication and I think it is something that we strive to work towards improving constantly, as far as looping everyone in, but also not, being on every single e-mail, right? So, there is a balance there. We also do meet in person. COVID disrupted that a bit, but we do meet in person, the Spokane Housing Authority team and our team. I think we're looking at increasing that, because as our client base grows, the more important it is that our relationship with them is watertight. So, we do some Zoom type meetings, but we put the travel time in to actually meet in person as well.

**WHITNEY JOY HOWARD:** I will quickly add one last thing for individuals thinking about maybe trying to replicate this. We are looking now, thinking future forward, to integrate into an online platform to minimize some of the e-mail communication that gets pretty overwhelming, so if there is a possibility of having some kind of online platform in your community to have some integration there, that would be a great thing to pursue.

**LORI GERHARD:** Thank you so much. Thank you for your leadership in Washington State. We will bring you back for the Q&A section. We're going to shift gears a little bit. I would like to introduce Mr. Nicholas Bilka. He is the Housing Vouchers Program Director at the U.S. Department of Housing and Program Development, HUD. Mr. Bilka will share technical assistance resources that states and community agencies can use to increase landlord recruitment and retention. Over to you, Nick.

**NICK BILKA:** Thank you so much. I've been reading the chat and Q&A and I am impressed and overwhelmed by the number of questions that have come in. You can reach out to me at [landlordtaskforce@HUD](mailto:landlordtaskforce@HUD) and I'd be happy to answer some of those questions that I haven't been able to answer today.

I'm going to talk today about some of the landlord resources that we have put together over the last few years. As I'm sure you're aware, housing choice vouchers are a big tool to reduce homelessness and provide economic opportunities. This has been demonstrated by empirical research and stories of countless families across the country. While a voucher can offer hope and promise of greater opportunity, that opportunity can't be unlocked without a willing houser willing to accept the voucher. Given the shortage of housing in many areas of the country, voucher holders have faced a more challenging landscape in recent years. In response to this, administrative data that we have in a growing body of research, HUD started to take steps to reach out to landlords, and this is pre-pandemic. We know during the pandemic, the housing market got weird in a lot of places. People moved places, the rent increases over the last year have been very extreme. So, we have been working on providing resources to help.

PHAs reach out to landlords to have better relationships and get them involved with the program. We've incorporated the lessons we have learned into this into new programs like the emergency housing voucher program, where we have a \$3,500 fee that can go to participants to use on things like landlord mitigation, funds, security and utility deposits, etc. One thing we have is a landlord strategies guidebook and this guidebook provides information on recruitment, retention, responsiveness strategies and how to minimize bureaucracy. We also include some of the administrative flexibility that HUD has provided. I think there will be a series of links going out. So, we will have a link to all of these resources to get sent out to you and I hope you will find it very useful.

As Richard alluded to, we have also put out a notice on use of admin fees this year that show some of the flexibilities that PHAs can use to try to recruit landlords. We have also given more money for mainstream leasing so that PHAs can use \$500 per voucher if they are accepted to use on things like security deposits, I know application fees were mentioned, that is eligible under PIH notice 2218. There will be a lot of links going out on that.

There will be a lot of resources, things that local governments and stakeholders can do is help bring PHAs together with landlords and things like landlord symposiums. Damage mitigation funds are something that we have seen in some states, particularly in the west, I think Utah and Oregon do these, and it is less costly than security deposits, because you only have to pay when there is damage to the unit. Landlord incentives, providing grants, so one-time payments to participate in the program, and funding landlord liaisons. In addition to this, what is also useful is housing navigation and help with that process, because with all of the changes in the housing market in the last year, or the last few years, technology, the different websites and such, it can be overwhelming for people participating in the program and dealing with all the paperwork that HUD has, that the PHA has, so anything you can do on that front is helpful as well.

Here we have a bunch of links to landlord resources. I would point out the first two, there is stuff in Spanish, English, myth busting, testimonials from landlords, etc. I think we have other information as well on PHAs' role in the program, and different research studies we have done, etc. We know it is a challenge with the administrative fees that are out there, for landlords to do this, which is why we've tried to give these extra funds for mainstream and with the new

vouchers and with the EHV we've awarded this year. We will continue to try to get more resources to help PHAs be successful. We look forward to continuing the dialogue. Again, send questions, suggestions to [landlordtaskforce@hud.gov](mailto:landlordtaskforce@hud.gov). I have a lot more information I would be happy to share with you but I know we're limited on time. I appreciate all you're doing and thank you for having me today.

**LORI GARHARD:** Thank you so much, Nick. Now back to you the audience. We would like to know what support we can provide at the Housing and Services Resource Center to help you develop and enhance these statewide and community partnerships where you live and work. Using the chat, please respond to this question, "what technical assistance resources or activities could the Housing and Services Resource Center (HSRC) create to help support the formation of rental assistance and supportive services partnerships in your state, community, or region?" We'll be watching and reading the responses that we get in the chat after the webinar.

Now, we're going to welcome back all of our presenters for a lively discussion and some Q&A. If you haven't already, please submit your questions in the Q&A tab in the Zoom platform. Now we will go to our presenters and start with some of the questions and thank you for all of the questions you have been adding as we have been going through the session. Maybe we can go ahead and start with Washington state. Were landlord incentives a part of the discussion when you began developing your partnership?

**PAM PARR:** Not initially. HUD's Emergency Housing Voucher program has provided some tools that we see can be really effective, so it might be part of more discussion in the future. Also, Spokane Housing Authority is one of the most recent Public Housing Authorities to be designated as a moving to work agency and we are part of a landlord incentives cohort, so we are going to be testing some new things.

**LIZ PRINCE:** I would add that making sure that people know the services that we also offer are a big incentive, as are the subsidies and the way to braid those subsidies.

**JONNIE MATSON:** We also do partner with Washington State Department of Commerce, and they have a variety of housing programs that our landlords have access to, because they do accept subsidies. One of those is called the Landlord Mitigation Program, which offers different types of financial incentives for clients to accept and rent to people who are using vouchers. We do our best to educate our providers when working with landlords and landlords directly that that program exists.

**WHITNEY JOY HOWARD:** I was going to add that prior to the landlord mitigation program. We have those transition assistance funds that we're able to do things with like double deposits to help support landlords agreeing to rent to clients, so that was sort of a landlord incentive program without being an official program.

**LORI GERHARD:** Thank you for that response. Nick, the next question goes to you. Are there ways that social service agencies can provide support to housing agencies to streamline the voucher leasing processes?

**NICK BILKA:** Appreciate the question. The way service agencies can help is helping with the housing search and filling out these forms and trying to keep them on task to make sure these things get completed. There is a bureaucracy to the program and the faster you can move those along, the less bottlenecks there are and helping with housing search can help with a lot of tight housing markets across the country.

**PAM PARR:** I would also say helping with the upfront paperwork is super important. It is a lot, and sometimes people struggle to get through it because there is a specific requirement about what PHAs gather. So, helping with paperwork and verifications of income, etc.

**LORI GERHARD:** Thank you, all. Great responses. Richard or Martha, can you tell us a bit more about why state and community collaborations like this are so important?

**RICHARD CHO:** Sure, from HUD's perspective, the Public Housing Authority you heard from here, Spokane, and the other housing providers that we work with can't meet supportive service needs on their own. Their primary job is to meet the housing needs, and so relying on partnerships with, particularly state agencies, who have the bird's eye view on the different resources that can provide the supportive services is key. I would say that it really starts at the state level but is not exclusive at the state level where we need to see these strong agency partnerships. Public Housing Authorities, there are several that work at the state level, but most of them work at a regional level or local level, so it is important to understand how the housing landscape is organized in your community and state and to know who the various partners are.

I would say, on the health and services side, you want to find your state housing finance agency, your Public Housing Authorities which may be several in your region as well as your homeless continuums of care. Those are the key entities that you want to forge a partnership with to look at the full scope of housing resources. There is not, unfortunately at the state level, one single agency that administers all of the housing resources.

**LORI GERHARD:** Thank you, Richard. Martha, was there anything you wanted to add?

**MARTHA EGAN:** Sure, I will just add to what Melissa said earlier from CMS. CMS has fully recognized that individuals with disabilities and older adults need stable housing opportunities, affordable and accessible housing opportunities, in order to access health coverage and to achieve their community living goals. The partnership on the housing side is just integral to the success of any Medicaid program who is serving and providing services and supports to individuals who want to live in the community for older adults and people with disabilities. The Medicaid program just has multiple pathways that states can use to provide the services and supports and to forge these partnerships, to strengthen the partnerships, sustain them through different avenues under the Medicaid program, whether it is the MFP program, an 1115 demonstration, or even administrative functions of the Medicaid program. So, multiple opportunities that exist within the Medicaid program and as Richard mentioned earlier, too, there are so many new opportunities on the housing side, so, urging and encouraging folks to take advantage of these opportunities in both housing and services.

**LORI GERHARD:** Thank you all. Unfortunately, we're getting close on time here. We have about three minutes to wrap up. We will respond to all of the questions we received in today's session. We want to offer a big thank you to our Washington housing and services partners for sharing with us their dynamic and evolving partnership. Thank you to Nick for providing a glimpse of additional technical assistance resources that can be used to recruit and obtain landlords. Today, all of us heard opportunities that we can act on in the coming weeks.

Before we close, I want to remind everyone that in the coming days, we will post the recording of this webinar and the slides on the Housing and Services Resource Center's website. You will receive an e-mail notice when they are available. In the meantime, keep using the HSRC, or Housing and Services Resource Center's, website, which staff is providing in the chat. You can bookmark our "what's new" page, which we are constantly updating and there are a lot of activities that continue to come out in announcements.

The HSRC team is very excited to feature a webinar on importance of partnerships between housing and transportation. It is the first in a series of tools the HSRC is developing to bring these two important entities together. We are aiming to make this available to you in February. Then in March, watch for the first of a series of webinars on housing needs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In the spring, look for a webinar on partnerships with the homelessness services community through the continuums of care and partnership opportunities there.

If you registered for today's webinar, we'll send notices to your e-mail once we finalize the details on these webinars and we encourage you to regularly visit HSRC at the website <https://acl.gov/housingandservices> . Once on the site, click on What's New for more details and information. You can also sign up for ACL updates at ACL.gov. Now I would like to ask each of you to please take three minutes to answer our short feedback form. The link is in the chat. There are just five questions, and your responses really help inform how we can continue to improve our webinars and make them effective.

The Housing and Services Resource Center, or HSRC, is your resource center, so please e-mail us at [HSRC@acl.hhs.gov](mailto:HSRC@acl.hhs.gov) about your technical assistance needs, website suggestions and your own cross-sector partnerships.

Finally, we want to thank our colleagues at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Administration for Community Living, along with our contractors, Mission Analytics, USAging, our Alissa Enders, our ASL interpreter, and Kara D., our CART specialist for their roles in developing and producing today's webinar. We're especially grateful for everyone who joined us today. Thank you so much for your participation, it really makes the webinar. Have a good afternoon.