

RHY COVID-19 FAQs Listening Session

April 23, 2020

Elizabeth Darling: Good afternoon everyone. We are delighted that you have joined us today. And on behalf of the Department of Health and Human Services and the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, we welcome you to the Runaway and Homeless Youth COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions webinar.

Elizabeth Darling: My name is Elizabeth Darling. I am the commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, as well as the acting associate commissioner of the Family and Youth Services Bureau. I hope you're staying safe and healthy during this, especially trying time for all of us. We hear at ACYF and FYSB know how critical and challenging your work can be under normal circumstances. And with our nation facing this pandemic, we certainly understand the challenges that are testing the ability for you and your programs to provide the vital services that youth experiencing homelessness and their families need at this point in time.

Elizabeth Darling: So please know that we at ACF are working as quickly and diligently as we can to send you up to date and relevant guidance about available administrative and programmatic waivers and flexibilities in order to help ease some of your burden. In fact, in one month's time, ACF and FYSB have translated guidance issued by the Office of Management and Budget into two documents that I hope you've had time to review. The first is the ACF Grant Flexibilities in Conducting Human Services Activities Related To or Affected By COVID-19. It was issued on March 31st. The second is the RHY COVID-19 FAQs which were released a few days ago on April the 20th. During this same timeframe, we've been diligently working to award \$25 million in supplemental funding provided through the CARES Act, which was signed into law by the president on March 27th. You should start to see those award notifications very soon along with the guidance regarding the use of the funds.

Elizabeth Darling: And just so you know, I have been making those award approvals this morning, and so we are moving along as quickly as we can. Thank you for that. We've accomplished a lot in this very short period of time, but we know there's more work to be done. So in the coming weeks we plan to convene program-specific town halls. We want to learn more about your ongoing needs, but we very much want to hear about the creative and innovative ways that you are addressing these challenges. We know that this work is local. And it's your local communities and the partnerships that you've created that allow you to serve our youth. And finally, before we get into our conversation about our frequently asked questions, we wanted to share a valuable resource on dealing with youth who may be experiencing additional trauma and anxiety at this time as well as tips for you and your staff, and for us who no doubt are dealing with additional anxieties during this time. So I'd like to introduce you to Futures Without Violence. Jess Fournier and Tien, thank you so much.

- Tien Ung: Hi. Thank you so much. Can everyone hear me okay? Lovely. Very grateful for that warm welcome, Commissioner Darling. And as we get started, I just also want to give a very generous thank you to the Family Youth and Services Bureau and also the Administration of Children and Families for inviting Jess and I here today. As Commissioner Darling said, my name is Tien Ung and I am Director of Impact and Learning at Futures Without Violence. And what that means is that I work with my team. We have a children's team at the organization to sort of leverage evidence in science, in service of program, practice, and policy design for children and families who are impacted by gender-based violence. My pronouns are she, her and hers. And before we get started I'm just going to step aside and give some room for my colleague just to introduce themselves. And I'm going to turn off my webcam just to make sure that my bandwidth doesn't get me stuck so we can get through this presentation for you.
- Jess Fournier: Thank you, Tien. Thank you to Commissioner Darling, and to FYSB, and ACF for having us. My name is Jess Fournier. My pronouns are they, them and theirs and I am a program assistant and work with Tien in Futures Without Violence in our children, youth, and families team. So I will turn it back over Tien and I'm also going to turn off my webcam.
- Tien Ung: Thanks Jess. So next slide please. Jess and I have put together a presentation for you that's really focused on thinking about how you might design to intentionally promote resilience for runaway and homeless youth. But in order to design for resilience, I think it's important for us to take one quick brief step back to zero in and think about what it is we are actually trying to mitigate. So really briefly, I want to talk about the three types of impacts. We know from research and science that trauma has on youth development.
- Tien Ung: And the first of that is that the experience of trauma and exposure to trauma in youth had biological impacts, meaning negative, stressful, and traumatic experiences get under the skin and into our youth's health and biological systems negatively impacting multiple systems across their life's course. Cardiovascular systems, their metabolic systems, gastrointestinal system, even their pulmonary system and sort of raises the risk for disease that's preventable in later life like heart problems, lung problems, immune deficiency disorders, as well as physical disorders like obesity.
- Tien Ung: We also know that trauma impacts our youth through psychological functioning. And by that we mean it impacts how young people feel, think, act and learn.
- Tien Ung: And lastly, we know that trauma impacts our young people's social capabilities. It impacts how they engage with others and engage the world around them, which is a two directional street because how they engage with others also informs how others engage with them. So those are the three domains of functioning that we try to encourage people to design intentionally to when they think about setting up programs and designing strategies to promote resilience. We're trying to mitigate the biological, psychological, and negative social impacts of trauma. Next slide please.

Tien Ung: So when we think about resilience, we really wanted to highlight six components of resilience that's been talked about over and over again in the research and in literature with respect to child and youth development. So these six components are what we're encouraging programs and interventionists to think about when they're thinking about designing strategies to fuel youth spend stress, anxiety and trauma. It's important as we think about design for resilience to repeat and remind people that resilience is, it's not a characteristic or trait like perseverance, or grit, or endurance. But it reflects a person's capacity to bounce back from and deal with adversities that they faced in life. And the literature and the science points us to six different components of resilience, emotional intelligence, energy, which speaks to sort of our physical wellness and our health. Certainly the importance of relationships, perspective taking, priority setting, as well as agency. So now we're going to sort of think about these six components and offer some specific strategies that you and your team might consider designing to in service of youth during this unprecedented time. Next slide please.

Tien Ung: So one of the things that I think is challenged for folks who are serving runaway and homeless youth right now are engagement strategies. So we wanted to call some of that out for all of you who are serving runaway and homeless youth, and really encourage you to think about how you might design engagement strategies as a mechanism to promote the principle of agency and perspective taking as a way to build resilience. And when we're talking about perspective taking here, we want to call your attention to helping young people just step away from the experience of negativity and hyper vigilance in their life and step into sort of growth-promoting experiences, hope, and incapacities. I'm going to turn it over to Jess to talk to you a little bit about some of the strategies that we've highlighted here.

Jess Fournier: Sure. Thank you Tien. And we won't read everything that's on the side and I'm sure you'll be able to see the slides in the recording after the fact. But two of the major themes that we wanted to call out are taking youth seriously and being proactive as a means to empower young people who have often been disempowered, who've been told by society and by the people around them that their perspectives, and experiences, and decision making are not valuable. So one thing that we think is very important and one thing we've coached others in the field and seen from our own experiences, is to find ways to take youth seriously and to get their input in what we're doing. So specific to COVID, ask youth about if your organization is creating safety protocols, ask them what they think is important, ask them what their priorities are. And these are all ways to signal to young people that we trust them to make decisions, that we value their perspective, and that we think that they have the capacity to make changes in their lives to help themselves and the people around them.

Jess Fournier: And something else that we think is important is also just to be proactive and thinking about, especially because right now this is a very re-triggering and re-traumatizing time for so many of us and also for young people that you are serving. So anticipating the need for things like trigger warnings. And giving

young people an opportunity to choose how they engage with all of the breaking news that is constantly coming out about best practices, and infection rates, and all of the public health recommendations. So for example, asking young people, do you want to, is this a good time for you to hear this information about a new public health practice in our program? Do you want to hear this information in a group versus one-on-one? Do you want to have somebody say it to you verbally, or send you a text message, or call you on the phone? Opportunities for young people to be able to choose and to feel like they have agency over how they're receiving information. And that both of these are aimed at encouraging people to have a sense of their own belief in their abilities and to know that we are supporting them and trusting them are really important ways to sort of correct the really damaging patterns and histories that a lot of people have experience where they haven't been empowered and they've been sort of maligned and disbelieved. So next slide.

Tien Ung: So when we talk about trauma informed strategy, we want to focus your staffing and your programming decisions on just correcting the traumatic experiences that a lot of runaway youth and homeless youth have experienced in their lifetime. We know from the research and also from just our practice wisdom, that youth find themselves in unstable housing conditions or homeless because of exposure to family violence. Sometimes they are fleeing with their families from domestic violence or sometimes they're sort of abandoned and rejected by their families because of their own behaviors, their own struggles. And sometimes those struggles come from making the decision to come out to families as part of the LGBTQ community.

Tien Ung: We also find that youth find themselves in positions, in vulnerable positions of housing instability, or the lack of shelter because they're aging out of congregate care, foster care, and juvenile systems without any support or resources and find themselves again on the streets. So addressing some of their needs during this time, we think is an opportunity to promote perspective taking to help them sort of focus, make decisions, organize priorities. We know from the trauma literature and from the science that trauma's something that happens to the body. The body keeps score and the past becomes the present. So it's not uncommon for youth to feel a sense of hyper vigilance, which can negatively impact their capacity to focus, to make decisions, and to be hopeful to problem solve. So thinking about the ways in which you can create opportunities for youth in your programs or even if you're still doing street outreach, to move from a stance of fight and flight and hyper vigilance to a stance of freeing and finding resources, making connections with other people who matter, having agency, and finding ways, effective ways to engage in their own safety, and self-care, and health will be really important. So Jess is going to highlight a handful of strategies that we've been coaching people towards in service of supporting youth during this time.

Jess Fournier: Yeah, thank you, Tien. I think the most basic foundation to start is to provide support and reminders for staff in your programs to be able to manage their own trauma, and their own anxiety, and that this is a very re-traumatizing time

for everyone, not just for young people, but also for people that are working on the front lines day in and day out. And so being able to provide space for staff to get support and to understand what's coming up for them right now, their own triggers, potential blind spots and biases is the foundation of really being able to help others to manage, you have to put on your own oxygen mask before helping others. And keeping that principle sort of front and center as we work with young people.

Jess Fournier: Two others that I wanted to call out are harm reduction and acknowledging that this is a time where young people might be struggling with sobriety, or self-harm as efforts to manage and cope with trauma and stress. And validating that this is a difficult time and opening up conversations to problem solve with young people and make a plan with them instead of for them, or in a more punitive sense to how to reduce risk and reduce harm in behavior. So things like if you're feeling triggered instead of cutting, would it be possible to do things use a rubber band around your wrist, or to like pull on hair without pulling it out. Things like that, that are encouraging people to think through how they can manage their own stress but without shaming or blaming them for behaviors that are about survival.

Jess Fournier: Another one that is more specific to sort of something staff can do to create a welcoming environment, but I can also encourage people, especially people that have experienced trauma and violence because of identity is to do things like identify your own pronouns, when you introduce yourself and encourage others or invite others to do the same to send a message to LGBT youth, particularly to transgender youth, that they're welcome and that people want to see them and respect them as whole people.

Jess Fournier: And then finally, as Tien was saying about energy. It can be really difficult for people to, especially if they're dealing with trauma, to do things like maintain... Especially also there is limited resources because people are homeless or housing insecure. Things like organizing community meals and encouraging people to do physical activity together while maintaining physical distance. Thinking about how staff can maybe, okay, we're going to do a physical activity challenge where people are exercising on their own but they're recording it on a big whiteboard in a shelter, or everyone is eating at the same times while maintaining six feet of physical distance. Things that can encourage and help people to support their basic needs that will give them energy to better cope and also feel supported and connected to the people around them at the same time. And next slide.

Tien Ung: Just to pick up from some of what Jess was talking about. Body awareness and emotional regulation as well as community and relationships are really important components of resilience for youth. And while we are all as a community needing to abide by and comply with physical distancing strategies, we've been trying to encourage programs and leaders to shift their perspective, especially when you're working with youth from using even language like social distancing and using instead the language of physical distancing to open up

avenues, and creative thinking, and brainstorming about how do we maintain physical distance but create the experiences and conditions that one, helps young people feel supported, have community, engage in positive, supportive relationships with one another and with other adults in their life. Just want to call out specifically here to the importance of body awareness.

Tien Ung: We know that young people who have been traumatized have experienced violence, physical violence, sexual violence, and sometimes being housing insecure or being homeless has led to the need to engage in survival sex work as a way to just survive and get through. And so it's really important as we kind of think about strategies for safety and how to keep young people safe and lower their risk of either spreading or contracting this virus that we also pay attention to finding ways to build young people's capacity to re-engage their bodies while they're thinking about how they engage in physical discipline.

Tien Ung: Jess, do you want to talk about some of the things that we've been sharing with other people who work with youth around this dynamic?

Jess Fournier: Sure. Yeah. I think that, yes, exactly. As Tien was saying, safe ways to engage your body while also building community. Things like staff leading a breathing exercise or a body scan, inviting young people to tell stories and share their interests and strengths. These are all ways to help people to not only feel connected to themselves but to one another at a time when both of those are simultaneously very important and helpful.

Tien Ung: Next slide.

Jess Fournier: Think next slide. Yeah. Oh, sorry. Yeah, put my cell phone mute too soon.

Tien Ung: So before we wrap up here with some COVID related strategies that we want to share, which we've been sharing with others we again wanted to underscore the importance of supporting healthy relationships. And promoting the idea of in helping youth grapple with constraints on peer relationships and intimacy during this time. We think that for young people who are going through this period, they are going to be a lot of questions that pop up about how current constraints are impacting their social relationships, their peer relationships, but also their intimate relationships. And we think this one is particularly important because it's never easy to think about how to open up those conversations with young people about intimacy, and closeness, and healthy relationships. But we think now is the time, more important than ever to prepare your work staff, to give them the supervision they need to practice opening up those conversations with young people who are in shelter. To be...

Tien Ung: Setting up those conversations with young people who are in a shelter to be prepared to engage in those conversations with youth. And we'll send it to you that they're doing street outreach and issues around loneliness or intimacy or fears and worries around that come up. And I'm going to ask Jeff to step in here

a little bit and maybe just unpack some of the bullet points that we have here about goals and objectives and nurturing those types of conversations authentically and genuinely with our young people.

Jeff Daniels:

Yes, definitely. And I think it's important to acknowledge that these are often really difficult conversations to have and intimidating for staff and also for young people, especially if it's not something that folks are used to talking about. And to that end, we have a couple of resources, I have pictures of them here on the slide that are conversation starters that young people can use with one another or that staff can use with young people to talk about healthy relationships, what your hopes are for relationships in the future or for relationships you're currently in. And then also to start to talk about the impact of things in the past, like abusive relationships, trauma, sexual abuse, and other kinds of violence. And so that can be one resource that I think it's important to be proactive about. Thinking about how you will have those conversations with young people isn't something that's going to come up and I'm sure has already come up for a lot of people.

Jeff Daniels:

And I think also to that end, it's important again to think about how to structure those conversations in a way that can be welcoming and nonjudgmental, particularly for LGBTQ young people who may have already experienced rejection and violence because of their identity. So thinking about if you're asking somebody, I think it's important just to come with an open mind about and to try to minimize the assumptions that you have about people's relationships and to ask young people who are the important people in your life. How do you talk about those people? What words do you use to refer to your partner or your boyfriend or girlfriend? And to not assume that somebody has a particular, you know that this person must have a boyfriend versus a girlfriend and to speak in a way that leaves room for young people to tell you how they identify themselves, how they think and talk about their relationships as one way to build trust. To be able to be vulnerable and to have a deep dialogue about the stuff that is so important. And the next slide...

Tien Ung:

Sorry, Jeff. So were going to back up now and hand it back to the rest of the panelist. I'm sure a lot of the strategies on here are things that you and your programs have already thought of, but just to zero in on one which is the last bullet here. A lot of things that we've been trying to invite other programs to do is to do an echo scan of your neighborhood in terms of what types of services are out there relative to health care centers, public health, partnerships that you can engage in, wrongly serving the needs of runaway and homeless youth and maybe do a little bit of advocacy and education with those new partners. Because there are a lot of organizations out there now who need to make room and space for communities and clients and patients that they may not be used to engaging with on a day to day basis. And we trust that you and your community can provide valuable information and training to new partners in the [inaudible] to guide them to think about how they can engage and provide the necessary information and services to use in runaway youth in order to keep them safe during these challenging times.

Tammy Hopper: Hi everybody. This is Tammy from the National Safe Place Network and RHYTTAC. Wherever you are if you are in a shelter, working extra hours with the kids right now or you are at home working remotely and feeling isolated, regardless of where you are. Thank you for joining us today and understand and appreciate how much we really do have compassion and empathy and hope that this will get better soon and that we appreciate the hard work you're doing in your communities and with the kids. So as we transition to the next part of this presentation, we want to thank commissioner darling for the good news she started out with. And certainly, thank you Jess and Tien for your presentation. That's so timely about what our young people are experiencing. I know everybody listening can say yes, that's what we've seen. That's what we're trying. That's what we're doing. And so it really validates that you guys out in the field really do know what you're doing and we appreciate it. We're going to do a few polling questions.

Tammy Hopper: There's only three. So for those of you who are accounting, you don't have to be stressed. We're going to try to do a couple of polling questions just to see where you guys are. Now, for those of you who get frustrated that your answer isn't there, in the best way of self-care that I can recommend, just let it go. Just pick the best answer. You won't be held to it. In fact, we won't even know how you answered. But there are three polling questions. So we're going to try to launch the first one now. So how have your RHY programs been impacted by COVID-19 and in this one you can check all that apply. I won't read them to you. They are there. Actually, for those of you who are detail-oriented, you will notice that the post has checked all that apply and you were only allowed to check one. And so this dichotomy that you've been in, we'll just continue in this presentation for this first polling question. So I have heard from lots of grantees that you are experiencing much of this.

Tammy Hopper: So, Shoshana when you close the poll, will you let us know what the results were? Okay. So 27% decreased in allowed capacity for intakes of youth. I know that the state licensing requirements and some of the things that have happened locally have really impacted it and yet you guys are still trying to adapt your outreach services screening protocols. Perfect. Look at that, 19% of you said RHY programs are fully functional, you're all doing good work and you continue to do it under unimaginable circumstances. So thank you. Let's go to the next poll place, Shoshana. So thinking about your staff, how has staffing in your organization been impacted by COVID-19? And this might be your biggest impact. Certainly we know that several of you have communicated with us that you're experiencing all of these things. Shoshana, when you're ready to close the poll, let me know and you can put up the results.

Tammy Hopper: So more than half of you that responded are working remotely. And that sounded really good a few months ago and now it doesn't feel so good for everyone. So thank you for paying attention to that. 5% have laid off staff. I'm very intrigued by the third option of implementing hazard pay, or supplementary incentives to support your staff. Thank you for that. And we know the staff appreciate it. 4% of you know that your staff has been exposed

to COVID and 17% say your staff is afraid to work over concern for exposure. Absolutely, that's human nature under what we're experiencing right now and that families and friends and they're taking care of seniors. So that is a significant percentage. And it represents what people are dealing with. So let's go to the very last polling question, which will take us into our discussion of managing things with staff. What are the ways that your organization supports self-care? And this doesn't necessarily have to be specifically related to COVID-19. It can be what does your organization do culturally around self-care? And again, I know many of you do multiple things. Okay, Shoshana, whenever you're ready.

Tammy Hopper: Okay. So a broad variety. And there's certainly a third of you are focused on self-care check-ins at team meetings. And I know many of you have made this part of your organizational culture and it couldn't be more timely than it is right now. Increased staff training and allowance of paid mental health days. You know, certainly we know with secondary trauma, vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, any way that you want to look at it, staff can need a day off without having a sore throat. Right? And so we know that options towards mental health, time is important. So thank you guys for participating in that. And the reason I did that is I just have one slide, again, just to contain the anxiety, that focuses on specific things that we would like you to consider. I am trying to move this slide. There we go. Sorry. Just the tips for managing staff anxiety. So here's the thing. I'm not going to talk about this for a long time.

Tammy Hopper: I have gotten calls as have all the right RHYTTAC team members. We've talked with you and we've heard from you and we know that you are doing a stellar job managing staff anxiety. Part of what I want to share is that sometimes you're the person that's managing everyone else's anxiety and you haven't had an opportunity to manage your own. You are so busy taking care of everyone else, that stepping back and allowing yourself to manage what's going on in your life is like a dream. When do you have time for that? And so the tips on the slide are certainly clear, certainly self-explanatory. Yet sometimes it's hard to do it. The ones that I would call out is understanding that this is a very individualized experience. So when we talk about managing staff anxiety, people represent their anxiety in different ways. So the very staff that you think are doing great, they're offering extra hours, they're coming in on the weekend, they're doing whatever that may be, how they're managing their anxiety, and they still may be having a physical response to what's going on.

Tammy Hopper: So having the conversation about how this is impacting each and every one of your staff when you can as an important question because it is easy to fall into the assumption bandwagon that when you see someone crying, they're depressed and when you see somebody smiling, they're happy. Those aren't always the same thing. And so being able to know your staff and have those questions is important. You know, recognizing the value of challenge by choice, right? There is a place for team-building, there is a place for virtual team building and there is anxiety and stress that can go along with forced activities when you're feeling poorly, when you're feeling disconnected. And so in

certified youth care we talk about challenge by choice, put it out there and let your staff opt out of some activities if it's going to increase their anxiety or make them uncomfortable.

Tammy Hopper: Allowing staff to appreciate that taking mini breaks throughout the day is important. If you get 45 minutes out of every hour, that's really good and then your staff who are working remotely can take 15 minutes to go outside or check on their child or play with their cat, that's going to help them function for the next 45 minutes with increased efficiency. And remember just to express yourself however that works for you, whether that is creatively or talking to a close friend or calling us at RHYTTAC, whatever you need to do to deal with those emotions and feelings and frustrations that are going on right now. It's critical. And finally, minimize defensiveness. If you're an executive, if you're an administrator, you're doing the very best you can. If that involves laying off staff or making tough choices or decreasing insurance support, whatever that is, transparency and good communication is going to see you through. People do know what's going on. They just don't want surprises. They don't want secrets. That instills a sense of fear and anxiety and a lack of control.

Tammy Hopper: So, we encourage you guys to listen, listen more and communicate as much as you can. In terms of helping you guys with resources around self-care. There are two resources that I'm going to call your attention to. They're going to be on the slides, they're available to you. One is a self-care worksheet that your staff can do to create their own plan and one is 45 self-care tips for staff. And remember, just because something feels like self-care to you, it might feel like punishment to someone else. Right? And so the idea of jogging in a park is traumatic to me. It's not something that I would ever do.

Tammy Hopper: And somebody else might not want to sit there and read the Archie comics I read to relax. So we all do our own thing and we want to encourage you to do that and to take care. So how do you take care of yourself right now? You get your questions answered, you got tons of questions, you want them answered and you want to figure out what is going on federally. So that you can do your best job at the local level. So to that end, I'm going to turn it over to Chris Holloway with the Family Services Bureau and he's going to take you through the FAQ and the team at FVSB's going to address the questions that they can and, Chris take it away.

Chris Holloway: Thanks, Tammy. And thanks again to Tien and Jess for their presentation and the time that all of you took to, not only put that information together but to spend with the group today. We certainly could have gone into this conversation and focused exclusively on the FAQ and I have no doubt that there are lots of questions out there from our grantees, most of which we're not going to have the time to answer today. And so that's why we are capturing everyone's questions, as well as recording session. But we felt it's important enough given that the amount of stress that everyone is facing and as the commissioner indicated in her opening remarks, you are all facing and already difficult jobs. Not to mention adding the additional layer of a global pandemic

because I feel like there should be music in the background that says din-din-ta. Because that's really what it is. It's a very heavy thing that we're all contending with right now. And when you're trying to care for others, as well as for yourself, it can be extraordinarily challenging.

Chris Holloway: So, I hope you appreciate the information that futures without violence and RHYTTAC provided and I certainly hope you're able to take it and use it for your teams and for yourself. Just a couple of housekeeping notes. We are recording and we are going to be capturing all of the questions that may pop up regardless of whether or not we can answer them today. We're going to try to work through each of the FAQs briefly, I'm going to highlight just a few important elements to the responses that we provided. We'll pause to see if there are overarching questions that we can answer. The more specific questions, those that are dealing with very granular nature of an issue that you may be facing in your program. I would ask that you make sure that you contact your federal project officer or the regional program manager and have a conversation with them about those specific issues because there are so many different ways that this pandemic is manifesting itself and how it is that to do your business across the country, it's almost impossible for us to provide an answer to every single question given the granularity of the situation that you may be dealing with.

Chris Holloway: Also, the polling was there as a diversion for a few moments to give you a sense of what your peers may be dealing with across the country. And I noticed as the polling was going, there was a number of folks saying that they couldn't respond for whatever reason. The system wasn't allowing them. It wasn't scientific, we're not using the information for anything other than interests. I think it was certainly very interesting to see the way that many of you responded in the situation that you're dealing with, but I think that emphasizes the point that I made a second ago that this looks very different across the country. What you're experiencing in New York is going to look very different from what you're experiencing in Kansas or Montana or Southern California. So with that, if we can move on to the first question. Actually go to the next slide please.

Chris Holloway: There you go. Just a few really important points. In the document, that was emailed with the e-blasts as part of the registration. This is the opening statement and the FAQs. The few things that I want to point out in the statement are that the FAQs is are based on guidance that had been previously provided both by the office of management and budget as well as ECO. So you'll see these references in the documents 2m-20-17, as well as IM-ACS-0A2021. If you drop either of those in a Google search, those documents will come up. Much of it may be government Jargon that doesn't necessarily make sense, but there are some good pieces of information there, particularly if you're working in finance or you're an executive director and you need to understand the specific regulatory language that's being referenced. So I would certainly encourage you, when you have some spare time, and you're looking for some light reading, to Google those documents and take a look at them because they all flow into one another. The LMB document flows into the ACF flexibilities and the ACF flexibilities flow to the RHY FAQs. Next slide please.

- Chris Holloway: So question one is a very dense answer and I've specifically bulleted the response in the slide deck, not only so that you can see that there are really five different answers to this question and I'm certainly not going to read the responses to you, but the items that I want to highlight in this series of bullet points specifically in the first bullet point is that you do have the ability to continue to charge salaries and benefits for staff who are paid for out of the grant if they become sick. In bullet 0.2, you are allowed to charge other costs to the grants, to resume activities, as long as those costs are associated with the purpose of federal award. So things that would be outside the scope of what you would ultimately do with RHY funds. You wouldn't want to charge those. You want to charge anything that is consistent with the purpose of the award. With respects to 0.3, we understand that you're making changes in an effort to deal with the day to day situations that you're facing, whether it's staff coming in sick or having to not come in at all, or arrangements as are with respects to meals.
- Chris Holloway: To the composition of your daily schedule, all of those things are going to be impacted depending on how severe situations that you're dealing with a COVID-19 pandemic. What we're saying in this bullet point, what ACS and OMB has said in this bullet point is that we evaluate when this is all said and done with. What it is that you can resume and what you've had to do with a reasonable approach. So if you're making efforts to do the work, keep you safe, keep your staff safe... We're going to go back and look at that and we don't want you to stress about whether or not you're going to be able to meet every single goal and objective that you've put forward in the grant application at this very minute, but we'll evaluate those things at a later date. Next slide please.
- Chris Holloway: Having said that, it's critical that you maintain records and... Well, there's a silver lining of offering some flexibilities with the implementation of your grant. It does require that you maintain sufficient records so that you're keeping yourself administratively pure and you're also letting your federal project officer and your grant management specialist know on the backend that these are some of the adjustments that we had to make as a result of the situation. I would encourage you, and I know that all of the staff, those that are already listening, the federal project officers as well as the regional managers and Debbie and the commissioner. Debbie and Liz darling, both will say how conversations with your federal project officers or your regional managers, if you can on the front end, make people aware of these issues that you're dealing with and the challenges that you're facing. Put it in an email, put it in some form of documentation so that we have a record and it makes it much easier on the backend as we're analyzing the total impact and how it is that we need to respond to your needs as a grantee. And the last bullet point for this particular question is, while you have...
- Chris Holloway: The point for this particular question is, while you have a fair amount of flexibilities, what we don't want to see happen is that you violate rules around supplanting where you're using one fund to pay for expenses that were supposed to be paid for out of another federal government grant. As much as

possible, keep those cost categories clean. Document, document, document. Make sure that you're tracking everything, make sure that you know where the money has been spent and which pot of funds that it's come from. Please don't cross-pollinate across federal grant programs because that could be very challenging on the back end.

Chris Holloway: I'm going to pause here briefly to see if there are any specific questions, burning questions that are overarching related to question number one from the FAQs and we are monitoring with the question box here.

Tammy Hopper: Shoshana's looking, and we will let you know if there are any questions on this specific question. If not, we'll move on.

Chris Holloway: Okay, sounds great. Thanks, Tam. If we want to move to the next slide, Tammy.

Tammy Hopper: Sure. Encourage everyone, if you think of a question later, it doesn't mean you can't go ahead and put it in the question box on the top right of your screen. Please make sure to document your questions and we'll come back to them.

Chris Holloway: All right. Question number two is related to the stay, beyond what TLP and BCP allow for in the statute. Unfortunately, because these are statutory mandates, we do not have the flexibility to grant permission for youth to stay beyond what's allowable in the law. Specific to TLP, we know that there is language in TLP that talks about exceptional circumstances.

Chris Holloway: Generally speaking, if a youth comes in 17-ish and they turn 18 as they are in the transitional living program, they can stay up to 540 days. If there are exceptional circumstances, they can stay up to 635 days. We have been given the green light to tell you that this is an exceptional circumstance, meaning the COVID-19 emergency is an exceptional circumstance that you can use to justify keeping a youth up to 635 days in a transitional living program.

Chris Holloway: If a youth is just turning 16 as they enter, so they come on the very first day of their 16th birthday, they are actually authorized to stay in the temp transitional living program until they turn 18, so they could potentially be in a TLP for two years, almost two years. That also is in the law listed as an exceptional circumstance. So either one of those scenarios, whether they come in at age 16 or they turn 18 while they're in, the exceptional circumstance clause does provide them to stay to the maximum amount of time permissible by the law. So, 635 days over the age of 18, and up to two years if they come in on the very first day of their 16th birthday.

Chris Holloway: We have said in previous FAQs that youth who are discharged from TLP may apply for readmission if they're eligible, and while that's not necessarily in the spirit of what the law says, there is nothing that is in guidance that we've put out that says you cannot do it. Obviously you'll have to make the determination and document why it is that that decision has been made. Just want to make

sure that we're clarifying that point. I'm going to pause here and see if there are questions that we want to pick up on either one of these two items before we move on. Tammy, Shoshanna, anything you want to feed to me?

Tammy Hopper: Chris, there's a question in the box. Is there an application for the additional funding through the CARES act? I know Elizabeth addressed that at the beginning. Would you like to say more in response to that question?

Chris Holloway: Yeah. I'll just say briefly and I will certainly ask Debbie or the regional managers to jump in as well. Or Commissioner [Darling 00:00:55:14], for that matter, if she's still listening. We're handling all of that internally. There's going to be a notice of award that has five or six terms and conditions that will require grantees receiving the CARES Act funding to take certain steps once they've received the funds. That includes filling out paperwork, putting together a budget.

Chris Holloway: The purpose here is to get the money out the door as quickly as possible, and then we're going to follow up with you on the back end once those awards have been made. If the Commissioner was approving awards today, it's very possible that you'll start seeing those hit your inboxes early next week, if not sooner. I would pay close attention to the language in the terms and conditions but also know that we are pulling together guidance that we're going to send out, not only for what the funds can be used for, but also reporting requirements and back end expectations once the award is in place, so please stay tuned. I know that you're all very anxious to know what the status of those funds is, but we are providing guidance. There's language in the terms and conditions and the notice of award that you want to pay close attention to. What else, Tammy?

Tammy Hopper: Chris, there's one more question.

Chris Holloway: Anything on those two topics?

Tammy Hopper: Yeah. It is not on those two topics but I think it is urgent in the sense that several people have asked the same question and if you can get it out of the way early, I think they'll be able to focus better for the rest of the event. The question is about, will there be a release of a basic center and street outreach funding announcement this year? Just making sure that they should be looking for it.

Chris Holloway: Yes, those are in a review and development and they will be released sometime soon. I can't give much more detail than that. We're hoping very soon that those will be released. But yes, we are releasing a basic center and a street outreach funding opportunity announcement.

Tammy Hopper: Great. Thanks, Chris.

Chris Holloway: You bet. All right. If we want to move on to question three.

- Tammy Hopper: I will try. The system is just a little slow, so if you guys will be patient, there is a question three. There you go, Chris.
- Chris Holloway: Thank you, Tammy. Again, I hope everyone has had a chance to read these already. The link was in the registration notice for this webinar as well as they had been published on the RHYTTAC webpage. This is just an opportunity to try to highlight some of the key points in the responses. This one talks about BCP and staying beyond 21 days. Similar to the situation with the transitional living program because 21 days is the statutory maximum that's allowed by law, we cannot authorize youths to stay beyond 21 days under RHY funding. Of course, as we've said in other contexts, if a youth is not able to leave, they don't have an appropriate, safer, appropriate exit to go to, that you can always retain them in your shelter using a different funding source.
- Chris Holloway: Similarly with BCP as with TLP, if a youth is discharged and for whatever reason there's recognition that they are still in a runaway or homeless status, meaning that they meet the RHY eligibility requirements, you can readmit them and certainly we are going to look for the documentation and the verification of eligibility. Again, that's a program decision and one that we just want you to make sure that you document so we can see what the justification is for that. Can we go on to question four?
- Chris Holloway: This talks about capacity. I know that this is a challenging question for many programs, even in normal circumstances. I suspect that as you're dealing with youth coming in the door and they have nowhere to go, this is made particularly challenging given the current situation. As with our previous two questions, we are dealing with a statutory requirement, meaning not more than 20 in a single structure for both TLP and BCP. However, I will say for BCP, the caveat has always been in the statute that should there be a law or regulation that requires a higher maximum to comply with licensure or state law, that's allowable. The quintessential piece to this response, however, is that your local regulatory or licensing agencies determine that an increase is required because of the COVID-19 emergency. Not that it's allowable, but they're requiring it. They're coming out and saying, "We know that there needs to be more beds and so we're mandating that you have more capacity in your facility." That would be the only way that you get around the maximum 20 bed capacity in a single structure for the Basic Center Program.
- Chris Holloway: With respects to TLP, there's a little bit more nuance to the response, but what's important about that is that the capacity to accommodate not more than 20 individuals is within a single floor of a structure. If we're talking about an apartment building or multiple levels of apartment building, the regulations do say single floor of a structure. I don't know whether or not that helps offer flexibility, but it is language within the law that I would focus your attention on so that you can make an educated decision about whether or not your particular facility's structure lends to increase or decrease capacity during the COVID-19 situation. I think I've covered a couple of questions. I just want to pause briefly to see if we have any questions related to questions three or four.

Shoshana Rabinovsky: Hi, Chris. We do have a question. It's, "Will there be an extension deadline 60 days after award is announced, after BCP or street outreach?"

Chris Holloway: Will there be an extension deadline after the awards are announced? I'm not sure I understand that. Can you identify who... I see it right there. That's from Marsha. Will there be an extension time? If the question is specific to how long the funding announcement will be available for response, we do anticipate having the announcement available for a full 60 days. We don't anticipate shortening the announcement period and I don't know.... "Great, that's exactly what I was asking." All right. Good to hear, Marsha. Glad I was able to figure that out. Other questions related to these past two items, capacity or flexibility and time?

Shoshana Rabinovsky: Yes. Another is, "How long will organizations have to spend the CARES Act dollars?"

Chris Holloway: That's a great question, and that's one of the important items that we are looking to get a definitive answer on. The law says that the money has a certain shelf life. We're verifying with HHS to ensure that we know how that translates to how much time grantees have. Debbie, I don't know if you're on the line, if you have any more specific information around that question. Debbie, if you're talking, you may be on mute.

Debbie Powell: Hi, Chris. Thank you.

Chris Holloway: You bet.

Debbie Powell: I was so engrossed in trying to figure out how to unmute. Could you repeat that question for me?

Chris Holloway: Sure. The question was regarding, this is specific to the CARES Act money, have we been given guidance yet on the available time that the money can be spent? I was under the impression that we were still waiting for a more clear answer to that, but I didn't want to move forward without checking with you first.

Debbie Powell: Sure. When you receive the funding, you will see that it's been added to your current grant, so it's supplemented versus us doing a whole new award. We were trying to get it out of the agency as fast as we could so we supplemented your grants, but the funding can be expended through September 30th, 2021. But what you will see in your grant award will be the end of this fiscal year and if you still have funding available, you can request an extension to use that funding.

Chris Holloway: Great. Thank you. I think specifically for grantees who have budget and project period end dates this fiscal year, this September 29th, 2020, if you find yourself in a position where you have additional CARES Act supplemental funding still available, then an extension request can be made. For those whose budget and

project periods carry into the next cycle, it's less likely that you'll need to ask for an extension because your budget and project are still active. I hope that answers the question. Any other questions that we want to focus on in these two slides before we move on?

Shoshana Rabinovsky: Yes, there were a couple more. I just want to make sure everyone has their question answered. Mary wants to make sure that this is correct. "Let's say a BC is up for competition this year. It appears you are saying that program can choose to have a no cost extension for up to one year or the BC can compete in the FOA that is released soon, per your comments. Is that correct?"

Chris Holloway: Well, those are two mutually exclusive things. The waivers that have been issued do allow programs to ask for a budget and project period extension. Obviously, if there's money remaining on your grant and you're using it particularly for the purposes of responding to COVID-19 related issues, then that's the justification to allow you to extend the current grant. Typically, your grants don't maintain the same grant number. For example, if you are a BCP that ends in September and then you apply and are selected for a new award, the award numbers are different, so they're looked at as two separate grant awards. One would obviously carry on whatever it is that you explained you needed beyond the end of September of this year and then the new award would start for any activities beginning on the very first day of that new budget and project period. All right.

Shoshana Rabinovsky: Okay, great.

Chris Holloway: How about we go ahead and move on to question five. I'm just being cognizant of our time. Okay. What can providers do to assess for the virus? This is an area where I think we really do want to turn your attention to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and asking you to work very closely with your state and local health authorities. The CDC's website that's dealing specifically with services to homeless individuals is a tremendous resource, and I would certainly encourage you to take a look at it. I know it's referenced in a couple of other slides. This particular hyperlink is to the public health gateway that lists all of the local health agencies in communities across the country. We did not want to give guidance outside the CDC's recommendations. Really, this is a local community issue because it's impacting you all very differently, and therefore it's really important that you have those conversations with your local health officials.

Chris Holloway: Next question. Can we deny youth from entering our shelter if they are positive for the virus? The question, I think, is twofold. The answer is twofold that we've provided here. First and foremost, in governing regulations, there was a requirement that you determine eligibility for program activities, and that includes an assessment of not only the youth but the health and safety of others as part of the factors. If there's a determination that you do not have the physical facilities available to accommodate, then you'll have to make that

decision after you've had appropriate consultation with your local public health authorities.

Chris Holloway: As I referenced a moment ago in question five, this is a place where you definitely want to take a look at the interim guidance for homeless service providers. On the CDC website, there's a lot of tremendous information there that talks specifically about some of the steps that you can take in dealing with individuals that you believe are COVID-19 positive, to include quarantine recommendations and how do you work with your local public health authorities in order to keep that person safe, but as well as your staff and all of the other residents and young people that you're providing services to. I'll pause briefly here to see if there were any questions related to those last two items.

Shoshana Rabinovsky: Yes. One second. Let me try to grab those questions for you. Michael asks, "Will there be a match for the COVID-19 supplement?"

Chris Holloway: There is no match requirement for the CARES supplemental funding.

Shoshana Rabinovsky: Okay. This question was asked a couple of times by multiple people. Are all current grantees going to receive CARES awards?

Chris Holloway: Yes. We have approximately 610 active grant awards between BCP, street outreach, transitional living, and the maternity group home program. All of the active awards who are... Yes. I'll put it that way. You should consult. If you're not sure of the status, I would definitely encourage you to have a conversation with your federal project officer or your regional program manager, if there's any question about the status of your existing grant and your eligibility to receive that supplemental funding.

Shoshana Rabinovsky: Great. Sally asks, "Are youth and staff required to wear masks, or is it a recommendation?"

Chris Holloway: Sally, that's a great question and I would return you back to the Center for Disease Control website and the advice that you're receiving from your local public health authorities. That's the most appropriate source for that information.

Shoshana Rabinovsky: Sounds good. Amy asks, "How..." Oh, did you want to move on to the next question?

Chris Holloway: No, go ahead. Go ahead. We can pick up that one.

Shoshana Rabinovsky: Okay. Amy asks about the people who refuse to comply with safety recommendations. "Can we deny services or move them from the program?"

Chris Holloway: Yeah, that's a great question. I would turn you back to the response from question number six, where we talk about eligibility for the program. I believe

you all have established protocols for appropriate behavior within your shelters and your programs. I think this current situation extends an appropriate set of behaviors when it comes to social distancing and other measures that are intended to keep staff and other clients and youth safe in the shelters. While I'll say that that's a local decision, I would hope that you have policies and practices in place that allow you to make informed decisions that are in the best interests of the young people and the staff. If you find yourself in a situation where somebody is not willing to comply with those, then I would assume that you also have policies and procedures in place when people aren't willing to comply with those standards under normal circumstances. I think that's probably the most appropriate answer that we could provide for that question.

Chris Holloway: We're on to question number seven. What guidance is available for programs running RHY street outreach programs? I would again turn you to the CDC's guidance. We don't want you to recreate the wheel. There's a lot of really great information there. I know a lot of programs have signaled to their federal project officers that they're having to make adjustments in the way that they conduct street outreach.

Chris Holloway: Project officers that they're having to make adjustments in the way that they conduct street outreach. And I think, there's a lot of flexibility in the way that the PFOA and the regulation and the statute are written. It's really about consulting with your federal project officer or the regional program manager to make sure that the flexibility that you're seeking in terms of altering your approach fits within the program guidelines. And I would say more often than not, it probably does. That's a general statement. That's not a specific to any one approach, but that's why I say consult with your local federal project officer or your regional program manager. And I think this feeds into the next question. So if we could move on to question eight, Tammy.

Chris Holloway: And this is a question about compliance. What we've said here is that you're encouraged to do the best that you can and to the extent practicable. But if you have found that you just are not able to do outreach at all, then that is when you have a very specific conversation with your federal project officer about how significantly your street outreach efforts have been impacted. And we can explore on a case by case situation, local program flexibilities that are provided to us through something called the Stafford Act.

Chris Holloway: But as we saw in the polling and that [inaudible] really happy that we went forward with that because I think it does reveal that things are so different across the country, that it would be inappropriate for us to try to do something unilaterally for every program. And to that end, this is definitely one of those areas where if you have to suspend activities or the alternative approaches that you're considering may not meet the programmatic requirements, then please have that conversation with your FPO so we can discuss where adjustments can be made and what flexibilities and waivers we can allow for. So I will pause there and see if we have any specific follow up questions related to item seven or eight.

Shoshana Rabinovsky: There are more questions in the question tank, but I'm not sure if they're specific to this question. If you want to keep moving forward.

Chris Holloway: Okay, great. I see a lot of questions about cares and I know that people are absolutely interested and excited about that money. We do hope to have that guidance out to you as soon as possible. I don't want to provide anything specific until that guidance has been cleared. I want to make sure that anything that I say is in line with the guidance that's been cleared by the department. So if we have a few minutes after the fact and we'll probably have a little bit time to go over, I know we're scheduled for three, but if we want to take an extra 10 minutes to get through our questions, we can certainly do that. So why don't we go ahead and go on to question nine.

Chris Holloway: So, do RHY grantees have flexibility in implementing required training requirements amongst staff who typically do not serve in direct care of youth? That's a great question. And some of the feedback that we've heard thus far is that due to staff illness or because staff were not comfortable working, for fear that they're going to be exposed to COVID-19, that some programs are turning to volunteers and non-youth-care staff. And what we're saying here is that you should really look to your organizational policies when it comes to nontraditional youth care staff having contact with young people. I would assume that you all have some basic level of training that you require for all of your staff, just because they're going to come and even casual contact with young people, whether that's a maintenance person, somebody who works in the food service agency.

Chris Holloway: Speaking from my own experience, everybody that was in the facility that I worked in, regardless of what their job was, had to have some basic courses like CPR and dealing with nonviolent crisis intervention. That's really where you need to turn to your local policies or your local licensing requirements, when you're using nontraditional staff in this current environment. And then with respects to monitoring. We are obviously postponing any onsite program monitoring. I know that the FPOs has been diligent in reaching out to you all on regular basis, continuing to schedule bi-monthly calls. I also know that there's been a fair amount of contact with RHYTTAC. We're going to continue to reach out to you, as the commissioner stated, with some additional events in the coming weeks. But for the time being, the onsite monitoring is going to be postponed. Next slide please.

Chris Holloway: All right. I think this next one is probably well past its ripening stage, so it makes sense that when we first started drafting these that we thought about this question, but the likelihood of us doing any grantee meetings at this point is probably very low. Looking at question 12. Can a grantee prorate match requirements because funds are unable to be raised during the crisis? And when exploring the response to this question, what we learned is that many of you in your application exceed the 10% requirements. 10% is the statutory requirement. And if you feel that you've exceeded that 10% you may want to consider going back and reevaluating how much match that you committed

against the award, so that those funds could potentially be used for other purposes.

Chris Holloway: And then lastly on this slide, can RHY grantees modify the outcomes in their grant agreements? And this goes back to the reference that I made to the other guidance that has been issued by ACF. And while we are encouraging you to consult with your grant management specialist and your FPO to talk about any official changes scope, you're not going to be... the outcomes are not going to be looked at for a while. And so there's an opportunity for us to make adjustments and consider what your outcomes look like down the road once we've worked our way past through this, past this situation.

Chris Holloway: So this is just an area where I would say if you just feel like there's no way that you can meet the expectations, first and foremost, have that conversation with your federal project officer and the grant management specialist, and then they can talk about what our next best steps are. So I'll pause again. We only have a couple of questions left. In fact, only one more after this, but I'll pause to see what other questions we folks might have related to those topics that we've just discussed.

Shoshana Rabinovsky: No questions about these particular topics have come in just yet, but if you'd like to give it another couple seconds, we can wait. I don't see any further questions. Chris, if you'd like to continue.

Chris Holloway: Okay great. So, Pip, could we move on to the last slide please? What flexibilities do grantees have to make budget modifications to respond to the crisis? So the guidance that was issued by ACF that was translated from the guidance that was issued from the office of management and budget says that you have prior approval to move money around as long as it's related to COVID-19 emergency in order to address the response. So you submit to us a budget, and in that budget you have very specific line items that you're going to spend money on, whether it's staff, whether it's rents, whether it's training. You do have the authority under normal circumstances to move up to 25% of those funds around without getting prior approval. In this environment based on the flexibilities that had been issued, you have effectively unlimited authority to move the money around between those budget categories as long as the movement from one category to another is for the purposes of something that's related to the program and it's focused on the COVID-19 emergency.

Chris Holloway: So for example, if you are going to spend funding on sending staff to training and you put money in the travel category, and this is just a hypothetical, and you now need to buy personal protective equipment or cleaning products or other things that will help the physical environment of your facility, you have the flexibility to make those adjustments without seeking prior approval. Certainly, as stated previously, you want to document everything just so that you can keep adequate financial and programmatic records, but you don't need to ask permission in advance to make those expenses... or to pay for those expenses. And then certainly as we work our way through this, if you want to go

forward with the official budget modification requests so that we have your budget's in line with the way that you spent the money, then that would absolutely be recommended.

Chris Holloway: And the last item on this slide is just an encouragement to go back and take a look at the previous FAQs that are posted on the RHYTTAC website. There's actually a lot of information that we pulled for the purposes of these FAQs from that document. And while we've expanded some things slightly, recognizing the totality of the COVID-19 situation, there is still a lot of a really valuable information in those FAQs. And there's a lot of flexibility that you all have with your existing grants to accommodate some of the needs that you're facing. So, that's the end of the formal presentation. We've got four minutes left on the clock. We could probably go a couple extra minutes longer for the sake of asking questions for any of the things that we've discussed thus far. I certainly want to open up and offer Commissioner Darling or Debbie Powell or my regional manager colleagues to make any points that they'd like to make as well. So, additional open questions. Go ahead.

Debbie Powell: Hi, this is Debbie. I did want to take this opportunity to share with our RHY grantee community that coming down the pike you will be receiving calls from your federal project officers in the near future, I wouldn't say in a couple of weeks to come, but in the very near future, in a month or so, to ask you to document how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected your program. This is being used by the department at OMB to help to know for future reference, and hopefully we don't have a future reference, but to put together challenges that you might've experienced, how you addressed those challenges, how the COVID pandemic impacted your program and how you responded.

Debbie Powell: So that's coming. Don't want you to get blindsided, so you'll know that it's not coming from a FYSB perspective, it's coming from a departmental OMB perspective. So all grantees across at least ACF, I'm sure HHS as well, and the federal government will be asked to provide this documentation. So just wanted, and I'm sure you're documenting, but just wanted to give you a heads up so you can get ahead of that before you receive your calls. Thanks Chris.

Chris Holloway: Thank you, Debbie. So, other questions that we want to field in the last few minutes that we have?

Shoshana Rabinovsky: Yes. So, Sally asks, are grantees allowed to use federal funds to pay employees for time off in compliance with the Families First Coronavirus Response Act?

Chris Holloway: So that's a great answer, and I would return you back to question number one with respects to policies related to paying staff. You have to, ultimately, rely on your programmatic policies for leave and time and attendance. And there is flexibility, based on what was issued from OMB and ACF, to cover staff, whether that's due to sickness or vacation time. If there are an employee who's already been identified to be paid for out of the grant, then you absolutely can use the funds based on just them receiving a basic salary from grant funds. I think if

you're looking at extending the use of grant funds beyond staff who are already on salary, that's something you'd want to check with your federal project officer and grants management specialists about, because those staff would not have necessarily been on the grant prior to that. And if they're not related to RHY, that may call into question the appropriate use of the RHY dollars.

Shoshana Rabinovsky: Great. And can you add budget categories not in the original NOA?

Chris Holloway: Right, so that's a great question. The notice of award has five or six basic categories that include salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, contracts, and there's another, something called other. Typically, budgets come in such that you're either paying staff salaries and their fringe benefits. Very rarely do we see much in the contracts consultants category unless you have a specific sub-award for services. So a lot of money ends up being in the quote unquote other category, which is really a catchall. As long as those funds are being used for the purpose of RHY program generally as well as in response to COVID-19, moving money between those categories is not a problem.

Shoshana Rabinovsky: Perfect. Alison asks, is the RHY national conference going to be impacted by COVID-19?

Chris Holloway: Ah, that's a great question. I think we're being cautiously optimistic. We're still planning for November in Seattle. However, we're also being pragmatic. So at the same time we're considering alternatives in the event that that's not something that we can go forward with. So at the time being, we're moving forward, but we're also planning... we have contingency. We're working on contingency plans if that's not going to be doable.

Shoshana Rabinovsky: Gotcha. Peg asks, do any budget modifications need to be made? Sorry. Do any budget modifications made need to be submitted or just documented within the agency?

Chris Holloway: I would suggest that it's always good practice to go ahead and document them and submit them if you have the opportunity to do so. The waivers allow for you to make those decisions as need be on the ground without prior approval. But if you're in a situation where you have time and you have the ability to go ahead and submit those changes, I would take advantage of it. No need to keep yourself behind on your paperwork if in fact you have the opportunity to go ahead and have it submitted.

Debbie Powell: And that also lends itself to what I spoke to you about previously, about the requirement to document it, document how COVID has impacted your program, and that is one of the ways that it might've impacted. If you're making a budget revision because of the impact of COBIT 19, that will be included in your documentation for this other reporting requirement as well. So as Chris has said, documentation is key. Please document as much as you can. We understand that we don't want it to be burdensome during this time when you

are trying to juggle so many other things, especially your direct service responsibilities, but just know that some type of documentation is necessary and will be requested.

Chris Holloway: Thanks Debbie. I see by the clock we've reached the three o'clock hour. We have captured a lot of your questions, all of your questions. I hope we've responded to the most important ones, although I know that there are numerous questions in there that we'll need to go back and figure out specifically for each of you how best to respond. As was noted at the beginning of the presentation, we have recorded this, so please let your colleagues know that they can go back and listen to the session.

Chris Holloway: I hope it's been valuable. I hope that not only the ability to cover the FAQs and hear a little bit more insight into our thought process about the responses has allayed some of your concerns and anxieties, but that the presentation from our colleagues at Futures Without Violence and RHYTTAC were also taking in the spirit intended in that we hope that you walk away feeling like we've given you a resource and some information to help you do your job. I don't know, commissioner, if you're still on, if you'd like to make any closing remarks? Or Debbie, if you'd like to close us out?

Debbie Powell: Liz might be still on. So what I will say if Liz wants to close us out, in my closing remarks, that this does not have to be a one and done, this type of forum. Please let RHYTTAC know if this has been helpful to you and that you would appreciate us doing this maybe once a month. We don't want to be burdensome to you, but we want to make sure that we're supporting you. We don't want to be invisible. So please let us know that this forum was helpful and you would like to see others in the near future. Thank you for attending.

Chris Holloway: Thank you Debbie. And I think the commissioner has logged off. She may have had a conflict at three o'clock, so.

Debbie Powell: Okay.

Chris Holloway: Hopefully, we'll... Yeah.

Debbie Powell: Thanks Chris. Well, in the absence of the commissioner, as the deputy associate commissioner we want to thank you for your participation. We ask you to go to the RHYTTAC website. There are lots of resources there and lots of links to other programs including the family bonds prevention program and their resources. But I ask you to make our flexibilities your best friend, you know that document, it has a lot of the answers from the questions that were asked today. And so please take your time and read that document and read it more than once. So you can use all the flexibilities to support you in your programs during this very crucial time. And please let your FPOs know if you have questions, we have a communication protocol, which is reported to central office and your leadership. And we take those questions to the ACF and the Department of

Health and Human Services leadership. So your voices are being heard and I hope you see that in those flexibilities and waivers. So once again, good afternoon and thank you so much for joining.