

National Strategy Session On Sustaining Services #1

NANCY SMITH: Everyone, my name is Nancy Smith, and I am with the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims at the Vera Institute of Justice. And we are here together today in recognition of a number of things. First, in recognizing the extraordinary impact that COVID-19 pandemic is having on survivors of crime, their access to victim services, to hospitals, police, courts, and many other vital systems of support.

We also recognize the new and unprecedented set of challenges facing organizations that serve survivors. And finally, we recognize that we are strong and we are resilient. We are creative and we are innovative. And we wanted to create this time for us really to come together, to tap into our collective creativity, and to solve these unprecedented challenges together.

Today's meeting, as Charity mentioned, is the first in a series of events that we are hosting this week. We will be recording this and taking notes at this and all of our events, and we will make this information available to everyone later in the week.

During today's session, we hope to do a number of things. First is to share what we know. The second is to surface the challenges

and issues that are facing us, and the third is to provide any guidance that we have available today.

At the start, we do want to acknowledge that we will likely raise more questions than answers, and we are committed to finding the answers to the questions we leave unanswered today. We have someone tracking all of your questions, and we have a process in place to have your questions answered by a team of experts that we've brought together around this issue. And we will feed those answers back to you as quickly as possible.

In terms of our call today, we do have quite a number of people on the call, so we are adding some structure to the discussion just to ensure that everyone can participate and that we get to many of the questions that you have. I am happy to be joined on this call by a number of my colleagues in the field.

We have Toby Shellroth and Deb DeBare from the National Network to End Domestic Violence, Lisa Flemming from Rose Brooks, which is an agency serving survivors of domestic violence in Kansas City. We have Kris Bein from the Resource Sharing Project, which supports state sexual assault coalitions and other agencies as they work to support survivors and end sexual assault. And we have Meg Garvin from the National Crime Victim Law Institute.

We will start by having each of our panelists provide brief opening remarks, and then we will open the discussion up and have an opportunity to hear from you. You can use the Q&A box at the bottom of the screen to pose your question. When you pose your question, we would also appreciate if you could include where you are located and the type of program that you work in.

It will help us as we begin to respond to your questions and also to think afterwards in terms of developing frequent-- and send back to the field. In addition, I want to acknowledge that we are happy to have representatives from the US Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime and the Office on Violence Against Women on this call.

They are here to learn and listen and also to track your questions to incorporate in future guidance and also the response that the Department of Justice is putting together. In the interest of time, we are going to begin and turn things over to our panelists. And I'd like to turn things over to you, Toby, if you wouldn't mind getting us started. And you are unmuted now.

TOBY SHELLROTH: Right, excellent. Thank you. I love technology. Thank you all so much for joining together today to focus during this time that is so difficult and so challenging to all of us. I am with the Safety Net Project at the National Network to End Domestic Violence, and my colleagues Deb DeBare and Erica Olsen are also on the call today.

NNEDV is happy to provide assistance to all of you with your questions during this time. We have a team that focuses on transitional housing. We have a team that focuses on support to coalitions as they support their local programs. And the Safety Net team focuses on technology and issues around domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

We also have resources for economic justice issues, which are going to become increasingly important as the situation unfolds. And so, really, please contact us. Don't hesitate, and we will connect you with someone if we aren't able to answer your question.

I want to say just a couple of words in opening about using technology in these times, both to provide services and also as we look at doing remote work. Because the recommendations are to increase social distancing, we want survivors to not feel distanced or isolated from each other.

And technology may be one way that we can help to support people, particularly survivors, so that they don't feel as alone, as isolated. For a couple of years now, in some cases many years, we've looked at options for using technology to provide services. And the technology has improved. It's become more secure and more private.

And there are options now that local programs and state-level organizations can use to reach out to survivors and to be there when survivors reach out to us. Those include web chat, which is where you might have a browser window where you can have a conversation back and forth. It would feel like instant messaging. It's something similar that a lot of us have used.

That's something where you can put a link on a website, and the survivor can open that conversation with an advocate. And advocates can kind of check out the conversation and have that conversation with a survivor. Some of those platforms also accept text messages that come in, and so are able to reply back from a computer to a text message that comes in from a survivor's phone. So those are both options.

In addition, there's things like what we're doing now, having a video call. It's a great option for being able to bring in an ASL interpreter to a conversation, an interpreter for an additional language if it's different than what the advocate is using to communicate.

A caution they're, that tools like this, Zoom, are great for our conversations within our organizations. But when it comes to communicating with survivors, you'd want to choose a different tool that has better protections for privacy, and safety, and confidentiality. There are tools that exist for that, where you can just share a link with a survivor and meet up virtually in

cyberspace together just for that moment to have that conversation.

And when you close it, there's no trace left. There's not a user login or an app that a survivor has to download, which might be an added technology barrier for them. And so that's a good option for video. And we want to really emphasize our key principles and our core values during this time, and not just throw them out because we're in a crisis.

So we want to stay rooted in being supportive, countering isolation, making our services accessible, at the same time, emphasizing privacy and safety, and meeting our confidentiality obligations, because those don't go away just because there's a crisis. I want to encourage you to think when you're considering hotline advocacy to remember that the national hotlines are still there and also offer text and chat services.

In the long term, local programs might want to add that kind of capability. But if they have limited resources, we would suggest focusing on ongoing advocacy, that opportunity to continue to meet with survivors that you have an ongoing relationship with, and also potentially online support groups, using something like a video or voice meeting space.

And whenever you make any of these decisions, we encourage people to implement now what needs to be done to meet the

crisis, and then to reassess as this passes, when it does, to step back and make more intentional decisions about your engagement with digital services at that point. We're here to answer questions.

We have resources on our website-- which I'll put in the chat, [textsafety.org](https://www.textsafety.org)-- specific to COVID-19, but also broadly about digital services. And as I said, NNEDV is here for a much broader array of questions as well, so thank you.

NANCY SMITH: Thank you, Toby. We do have a few follow-up questions for you, but I'm going to hold those until each of the panelists have an opportunity to share their opening remarks, and then we'll return to those questions, if that's OK with you. Great. Deb, would you like to go next? I have unmuted your line.

DEB DEBARE: Sure, thanks. Hi, everyone. So I'm Deb DeBare with the capacity team at the National Network to End Domestic Violence. And the main things that I wanted to share, just to let you know that the staff at NNEDV, particularly in the capacity team, are available to provide some technical assistance, and training, and support, and information to all of the coalitions that are around the country. And the coalitions then have access to carry on those messages, and training, and support to their local programs in the community.

So it's this nice, fairly well-organized system of being able to get information out and spread information back. And we work in partnership as often as we can with RSP, which you'll be hearing from Kris in a moment to work with the coalitions that are dual coalitions, meaning that they provide services and focuses to organizations serving victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, and working the sexual assault community as well.

So the types of training and technical assistance that we can provide is as varied as the communities that are out there. And so whether it's ranging from issues to tied directly to best practices for services, or more administrative issues about effectively working with one's board of directors, or management issues with staff, it runs the whole gamut. But we want to make sure you're aware where there is a resource and happy to help in the future together in whatever ways we can.

NANCY SMITH: This is Nancy. Thank you, Deb. We'll be hearing more from you, I think, during some of the Q&A. Lisa, would you like to go next?

LISA FLEMMING: Sure. So when thinking about the challenges that we were faced, I think that we had to make an acknowledgment that we really are in unprecedented events using strategies that we may never have used before in order to be able to mitigate risk. We recognize that it's changing the lens by which we provide our services on a day-to-day basis,

concurrently drawing upon the things that we've always done in doing this work.

I think the most important thing is advocates partnering with survivors to identify, strategize, creatively think through, problem solve what are going to be the best options. Rose Brooks Center is a domestic violence program that has a hundred beds of congregate living with an on-site shelter for companion animals.

It is the opposite of social distancing when we think about most domestic violence programs. We are like you, that we have families and individuals sharing small rooms. There's never enough. And so that was kind of our starting point of, how did we go about practicing social distancing as a way to be able to mitigate risk?

How do we sustain our continuity of care with the recognition that we would have to probably do it in a different way? And we also wanted to ensure that our own workforce was not going to be economically disadvantaged, that they were not going to have any type of hardship.

So as a leadership team working with our staff and working with residents, we took a little bit different approach than focusing our efforts on quarantine, which certainly that may be an eventual part of the process. But we had to look at our shelter setting and

thinking about, this is a congruent setting. And how do we go about creating social distancing with that?

So some of the main things that we've done is to look at, what are the alternatives to a shelter placement? And so we've partnered with residents to identify alternatives to shelter. Certainly, we are for those survivors who have extreme dangers. They score high on high lethality risk. We're continuing to provide emergency shelter services for them.

But we're wanting to look at, how do we be able to place more survivors out in the community while being able to continue to provide services, advocacy, safety planning, access to other community resources, therapeutic resources that would not be shelter-based? We've used accommodation of different strategies, including being able to truly implement rapid rehousing, a housing-first model, of using our own agency resources to immediately pay for expenses that will move a person from emergency shelter setting into permanent housing.

We have looked at hotel placements, placing persons in extended stay placements where it's safe to be able to do that, where it's safe to be able to have residents temporarily move in with family and friends, all with the plan that they would come back into shelter after the 21-day period that our mayor asked people to do in our state of emergency.

So far, our shelter director, and managers, and our case managers, and our Paws Place manager has-- just, it's been the most rapid deployment and mobilization and demonstrations of care coordination to individually meet with shelter residents, assessing what their needs might be. We started we prioritize those residents who have compromised immune systems, those who had other health conditions that would put them at high risk, those families that might be harder to place in alternative placement, those who would have danger risk.

And so we've just been going through, working with 40 different households, 10 dogs to be able to get placements. Some are continuing to stay here at shelter and some are placed out in the community. Certainly one of our greatest concerns was not having it publicly known that we would be having shelter residents outside of shelter.

And so we're balancing out safety issues, and health risk issues, and mitigating those health risks while being able to maintain confidentiality, and safety, and all of those things. So this is going to be a process that's ongoing. Some of the things that we wanted to make sure, too, as we've been doing this is thinking about not only people's physical safety and health risk is thinking about people's emotional safety, both survivors and our own workforce.

And so each household, each family, each child meeting with advocates, case managers, therapists to make sure that they have a plan for their physical safety, but also their emotional safety, and extending that to our staff as well. And so some other projects-- and I'd be remiss if I did not bring up being able to talk about mitigating the risk of our own trauma exposure as a workforce and using this time to be able to have our own plans.

That means our work from home time gives us a chance to be able to read trauma stewardship for the first time or maybe another time-- that this is going to be an important time that we do care for the caretaker. Some of the other things that we've looked at as NNEDV talked about is using different forms of technology in order to be able to remain in contact.

So each of our different departments from our hospital advocacy, our housing program, our therapy program, our Paws Place program of working with vet families, have put into place those plans are working directly with survivors, both residential and non-residential, to be able to figure out what's going to be the best communication plan to be able to stay connected? Those have been some of the main things.

We're taking this on a day-to-day basis, and each day looking at what's working well, what's not working so well, and being real adaptive, which is a hallmark of domestic violence advocacy, to be able to change course if something is not working. And we

think that through this, I think we'll be able to come up with some pretty substantial lessons learned.

I'm looking forward to be able to partner with our National Technical Assistance providers, other domestic violence programs, and certainly our domestic violence funders, and funders, our local funders to be able to talk about, how can we quickly mobilize to be able to provide the supports that we can sustain our world?

I know that one of the most important things for us has been able to have that emergency client assistance so that I can automatically be able to pay for hotels and extended stay, and to be able to get people into the permanent housing where they can truly practice social distancing.

NANCY SMITH: Thank you so much.

LISA FLEMMING: Thank you.

NANCY SMITH: So we're going to take just a quick pause to switch interpreters. Wonderful. I am going to turn things over now to Kris. And just a friendly reminder and to pace your dialogue for the captionist as well as for the interpretation process.

KRIS BEIN: Hi, everyone. Nancy, can I just check in? It looks on my screen like the interpreter's internet is a little blurry or something. Do we need to check on that?

NANCY SMITH: I was just sending a text about that.

KRIS BEIN: OK.

OK. Nancy, are we ready to go?

NANCY SMITH: Just one second, Kris. You can go ahead, Kris.

KRIS BEIN: OK. Hi. My name is Kris Beim. I work with the Resource Sharing Project. We provide support to state and territory sexual assault coalitions as well as a few other projects to provide support to the field. And there were a few thoughts that I had kind of coming into this call, and it's been so helpful for me already to hear from my colleagues and peers.

But as I've been kind of thinking about COVID-19 over the last few days-- and really, it's been all I've been working on for the last few days-- I've been thinking a lot about the things that don't change and the things that have always been true about this world.

The first and foremost is that there are so many good people in this world that are seeking to help and support one another. And I find the more we can put our attention into those places of help

and goodness, the more goodness and help will grow. It is also true that we invented anti-sexual violence work and anti-domestic violence work.

That was not a movement that came to being out of the wishes of institutions and large societal structures. Our work came into being because survivors demanded that it be so. This work has always been about creative solutions, and this work has always been about responding to things that should not happen.

And I think that gives us a lot of strength, and resilience, and power in this current moment, that no matter what your part of the field is, we work in a field that is about stopping things that aren't supposed to happen. And we work in a field that is about creating solutions out of nothing. This is what we do. So I have a lot of hope and faith in us.

The other piece that I've been thinking a lot about is our organizational health and our organizational capacity. I have boundless faith in advocates to meet survivors where they are and to come up with creative solutions. And I also know that advocates, SANE nurses, police officers, child advocates, none of us can do our best work if we don't have good organizational support.

I'd love to talk about this more as we continue the conversation, but there's a few things that I just wanted to highlight at this

moment. I think the number one thing is human beings are terrible at change. We're just bad at it as a part of our species. So I think one of the key things that we can all do is to communicate way more than you think you need to.

I think this is a great time to have short staff meetings, like, every other day. I think this is a great time to be sending emails to your colleagues every day just to check in, to be texting with people, especially if you supervise others. You cannot over-communicate right now. You just can't. So please talk, talk, talk to those nearest and closest to you. I think that's one of the most important things.

And I think the other thing that I really wanted to lift up as I think about organizational change and think about just trauma as a general concept is stressed out brains are pretty terrible at holding on to information. And so again, you cannot overcommunicate right now. And we also just need to give one another a little bit of grace when somebody asks you the same question for the third time. They're stressed out and tired.

And so just as we work on all of this together, I think there's a lot of specific things that my office is working on in terms of organizational supports for local programs. I know a lot of specific things that we're investigating related to policy, but also client services for sexual assault survivors. But I just always want to

bring it back to talk to each other a lot. Wash your hands. Eat a sandwich, and give each other a little bit of grace.

NANCY SMITH: Thank you, Kris. Can-- Meg, are you able to join? Oh, there we go. Let me unmute you. Can you hear me?

MEG GARVIN: And are we good going ahead with the interpreter? I know you must be tired. OK. So my name is Meg Garvin. I am with the National Crime Victim Law Institute. That's NCVLI. We work with legal service providers across the country who provide survivors with myriad legal services.

Our internal focus is mostly on the rights enforcement of the criminal case, but we have a number of projects funded by OVC that are about civil legal services as well. So first, thank you to everyone who has spoken before me. And also, just thank you to Vera for hosting this. And a thank you to everyone who is sharing resources electronically. Having those readily available has been really useful.

And one of the things that I know we're trying to make sure we do is that we share as many things in one place as possible-- so, like, Google documents if we know there's one place to go to for services or for referrals, that helps. So on our end, I will be honest. Everything is so up in the air with the courts right now that I don't have concrete things to share.

What I can share is that we are looking on the civil side, at the reality that most civil proceedings in the country are being put on hold, with the exception that protective orders in most courts seem to be moving forward through alternative mechanisms, meaning one court location might be available or one law enforcement office might be the receiving agency.

So we're trying to get on top of what does that mean for proceedings that were midway through as well as proceedings that were just about to start. So the civil side is being suspended more rapidly than the criminal side. On the criminal side, most courts are issuing orders right now at either the state level or the county levels, as well as the federal, to not convene grand juries.

And if a trial has not yet started, to not start it, because jeopardy attaches once a trial starts, which means we'd have a double jeopardy issue, of course. And so while that in some ways means we in both these moments of civil and criminal mean justice could be perceived as simply being delayed, in fact, it presents a lot of challenges.

If a protective order is about to expire, figuring out how to get it continued automatically as opposed to having to go back in. Ensuring that downstream, we don't have an argument that because of these delays, defendant's speedy trial rights mean they can't be held to account for their crimes. There's a handful of pretty intense legal issues.

What we are trying to get courts to do is include in their orders comments about downstream impacts of their decisions today. So, for instance, if they're going to continue a proceeding to say, that delay counts against them, not against the system so that defendants could still be held to account.

I hope most folks have seen that most courts have suspended eviction proceedings, or at least there's a domino starting down that path, a pretty significant moment. We are hoping that bankruptcy proceedings will also be continued down so that if that's impacting survivors--

Parole proceedings and appellate proceedings seem to be proceeding through online mechanisms instead. So parole proceedings are going to telephonic and/or to some-- hopefully, we'll be talking to NNEDV about good mechanisms for how they could do not just telephonic. And appellate proceedings, they are moving to continuing to accept pleadings, but deciding what to happen on oral argument.

I will say that NCII is going to be partnering with NNEDV to try to get the word out about what technology legal service providers should be using, so thank you to you guys for that. And we're also partnering with Pro Bono Net to talk about the specifics of legal service provisions and what component they might be able to serve or provide.

So I know there's going to be a handful of these calls, and I'm hoping that I can on the next call provide maybe some links to some additional information that's more concrete than this. I just wanted to flag the things we're keeping our eyes on.

And if you have questions or as you become aware of new court orders, if you could readily share those, because we're also trying to show one court what another court has done, because courts tend to like the comfort of their colleagues. So once one court does it well, we can persuade another court to do it well, too.

The biggest legal concern for us right now is that many systems are moving to what's called site in lieu, which is site in lieu of address-- sorry, of arrest. I was loving the sign language, and I apologize. So a site in lieu of arrest means that they issue essentially a ticket instead of arresting someone.

And while most of those court orders are about misdemeanors, many interpersonal crimes are first perceived as misdemeanors and many domestic violence moments are still qualified as misdemeanors. So we're trying to ensure that a site in lieu is not putting folks at risk.

And then the last thing I'll note is we're also trying to ensure that if there are releases happening from jails, which is something that's starting to happen because of a concern, the rightful concern, over the folks we have incarcerated right now being at

high risk, that if releases start to happen, that notification happens so we can do some safety planning.

So, again, I apologize for not having specifics. These are the things we're keeping our eye on. And my hope is that we can share some additional information on the next one. Thanks, Nancy.

NANCY SMITH: This is Nancy. Thanks, Meg. We are going to switch interpreters again and see if we have better luck with our connection.

This is Nancy. I think we may be turning back to Rachel. A wonderful demonstration of our flexibility, which is what we need right now.

I would like to thank all the panelists for those remarks. I think they have raised many critical issues that everyone is facing. And at the same time, we have only scratched the surface of the issues that programs are facing.

We do have some questions, and we want to create an opportunity to get more of your questions. So, again, if you have a question, please type it in to the Q&A box. Again, we have time remaining to answer questions. We also want to track your question so that we can follow up and provide answers afterwards.

So the first question that we have, Toby, I believe you mentioned during your opening remarks that as we're thinking about moving to mobile advocacy, we need to make sure that the platform that we're using really provides and centers confidentiality and is secure. And one of the questions that came up from the audience is, what video platforms are good options?

TOBY SHELLROTH: That is a great question, and we're happy to share some resources on that. I will put some of those resources into the chat box, because they have many words and many letters. In fact, I'll do that right now, and then I will say them out loud also.

And accidentally, I sent it to the panelists instead of the attendees. Rookie error.

[LAUGHTER]

OK. The three companies that I just put into the chat, I would like to say in general at Safety Net, we don't endorse companies. But given these times and the urgency of programs wanting to use tools to connect with survivors, we want to provide just pointers towards companies that seem to have good privacy features and some decent accessibility features to be able to connect with survivors.

So the first resource is called Resource Connect. And they provide web chat and text. So this would be something where an advocate can open up their computer and see a list of survivors who want to talk with them via text or chat, and they can check out one of those conversations, and then have a conversation with that survivor.

The other two resources, CYPH, C-Y-P-H and GRUVEO, G-R-U-V-E-O, are both providers who can offer chat, video, or voice. And those are the providers like I mentioned earlier, where you can give a link to a survivor, and then meet up together in cyberspace.

And so they don't have to download anything. They don't have to set up an account. They can just meet together with you. And, for example, you could bring in an ASL interpreter with that same link as well, so you can all use the video together.

I do want to say a word that often as programs and other folks are looking for these tools, you'll see a lot of marketing around HIPAA, H-I-P-A-A compliance. That is for health care field, and it is really a law and set of regulations that are designed to regulate how personal information is shared, shared between health care providers and insurers.

Basically, that whole system is to talk about how it's shared. When we look at VAWA, V-A-W-A, VOCA, V-O-C-A, and FVPSA, F-

V-P-S-A, those three federal laws are much more protective of survivor privacy and call on us to have much stronger confidentiality practices than HIPAA.

So if you see a tool that says that it is HIPAA, H-I-P-A-A compliant, that does not mean that it meets the standards of the federal laws attached to our funding. And we really helped to put those in place because we wanted to protect survivors' privacy and their safety in using tools of technology, whether that's how we store our information or how we communicate with survivors.

NANCY SMITH: This is Nancy. Thank you, Toby. And I know that NNEDV has a tremendous amount of resources on your website, so we will also be sharing those links to the attendees so that they can learn more about these videoconferencing platforms.

Next, we have several questions that I'd like to direct to you, Meg. The first is, are you aware of jurisdictions moving to allow survivors to obtain orders of protection and restraining orders online?

MEG GARVIN: So actually, I was just receiving some emails about that. As of now, we're not aware of folks having done that. There are conversations. There are several jurisdictions that even prior to this allowed for the initial, the temporary protective order to be done remotely, which has been a recognition that a survivor's going into the courthouse is not always the best option anyhow.

And so we're trying to point to those as, this has already happened in certain jurisdictions. The contested moment, the permanent protective order, that's always been more challenging. So right now, our understanding is there are conversations going on about moving more to online, but we haven't seen it happen yet. If folks are aware, that would be great.

I did literally just get a pop-up on my screen right before I came back on talking about the other hurdle here as many jurisdictions have a notary requirement for certain filings. So several jurisdictions are trying to move towards particularly for protective orders getting a self-affidavit option rather than an external notary.

NANCY SMITH: Thanks, Meg. Can you stay with your video for another question? We just heard from Toby about several video conferencing platforms. A question came in. Would conversations that occur on these platforms be discoverable?

MEG GARVIN: So I would tag to Toby just a little bit. Toby, and her team, and the entire NNEDV team helped us work with our legal clinics to set up systems properly. So, for instance, the South Carolina Victim Assistance Network that does legal services uses GRUVEO in its intended way, and those are privileged when they're talking.

And therefore, a privileged conversation is not discoverable. And so as long as you're using the most protective communication devices and you're protecting your communication in other ways-- for instance, not doing it in public-- you can still hold privileged conversations which then would not be discoverable. So there's ways to do it, but you still have to make consideration for all of the other aspects of it.

NANCY SMITH: Wonderful. Thanks, Meg. We have another question about approaches to offering online services to survivors of domestic violence, including group services that are safe and confidential. This, many of you may be interested in responding to this question. If there's anyone specific, if you want to raise your literal hand, because I can see each of you, and I could see who to direct that to.

Lisa. OK, Toby. Why don't we go to-- or Lisa, I'm wondering if you have any, if Rose Brooks has done some thinking or already offered maybe online groups?

LISA FLEMMING: We have not, not at this time.

NANCY SMITH: OK. Toby, I'm going to unmute you, then. Go ahead.

TOBY SHELLROTH: Hi. So for video or voice groups, the two resources that Charity just shared in the chat, CYPH, C-Y-P-H and

GRUVEO, G-R-U-V-E-O, both have options for using those for online group space. Again, you could schedule or just share the link. People can show up at the same time and communicate with each other.

What becomes more challenging is if you want to have what's called asynchronous, or just not at the same time communications. If you want to have folks be able to post and to read other people's posts whenever they want to, you have a much sort of steeper hill of privacy and confidentiality to cover because those sites often connect to an email account, and that's a question of whether receiving an email or using an email to log in would be safe or private for a survivor.

It would depend on what kind of group it was and where survivors were in their journey. And then there are also hurdles around impersonation, who has account access. Sometimes, an app that has to be downloaded. So having a real time online support group, which I said earlier video and voice, it could also be web chat with many people at once.

Those are options that are easier to do from a privacy and safety point of view that kind of place where you're posting messages-- like social media, private pages-- when the big providers are not private and safe enough to meet our users. And so that's a bigger challenge.

NANCY SMITH: This is Nancy. Thank you. I also want to say with each of these platforms, it's important that we keep in mind the accessibility of them for people with disabilities and deaf people. And we at Vera are also working with an NNEDV to rapidly assess the accessibility in many different ways of these different platforms.

And we hope to be releasing some information about that so you can keep that in consideration as you're thinking about the platforms to move to. We are also getting a number of questions about thinking about this, whether our staff and our employees can get paid, especially if programs experience greater disruptions as a result of orders by health department, state government, federal government, et cetera.

Kris, I'm wondering if you would like to share. This is probably our last question that we have time for, but if you'd like to talk a little bit about that.

KRIS BEIN: Yeah. Nancy, thank you so much. You all, I've just got to be really blunt and say I'm really afraid of folks not having the right policies in place to make sure that their staff get paid in this. So there's a few things that we know as kind of good indications or good directions to follow, and I also think the situation is still kind of unfolding.

First is you absolutely need to work with your boards of directors or whoever sets your personnel policy really quickly on getting personnel policies on remote work and on administrative leave or extended PTO, paid time off. Many funders will defer to programs on whatever their administrative policies are.

I would also say please be in touch with state organizations or if it's your position, with your state funders, state ballot administrators, about allowable costs to make sure that even if you have administrative leave in your policy, to make sure also that that is considered an allowable cost by your funders.

Nancy, does this make sense? It's all complicated stuff, so I want to make sure that I'm explaining it as well as it can possibly be explained.

NANCY SMITH: Yes, this is Nancy. I really appreciate that we are lifting up ensuring that we have the proper policies and the infrastructure in place to be able to receive payment. And I think that this is something that we can also send more information about, as it is a very complicated topic.

KRIS BEIN: Yeah. I think is also a great idea to check in with your agency insurance companies about just any questions, thoughts they have about your work, and making sure it can all be done. And if you have staff that are able to work remotely-- and let's

say all of you have been in-office employees, and now you're going to work remotely-- one, you need a policy about that.

Two, you should be communicating all the time. And three, I just learned today, so this is still kind of new and evolving. I think it will be best if you submit a GAN-- if you have federal awards in particular, to submit a GAN saying that you would like to shift certain employees to remote work. Again, these are all measures that will help greatly in kind of smoothing your claims process with various funders.

None of this is a guarantee. I'm not speaking on behalf of any federal or state funder. But these are some of the trends and indications that we're seeing, so check your personnel policies. Please update those. Talk to people all the time. And I think it's a good idea to submit GANs if you need to send staff to work remotely.

NANCY SMITH: This is Nancy. Kris, thank you. And a GAN, for those of you--

KRIS BEIN: Oh, sorry.

NANCY SMITH: --a grant adjustment notification. And it is a formal process by which you make certain notifications and requests to state and federal funders. So it is six o'clock, at least on the Eastern time zone than I am in. So we unfortunately will

be closing this session. As we suspected, we had more questions than we had time for.

But, again, I want to reiterate our commitment to answering your questions, to providing you with the array of resources that we referenced during the call. So we will be following up with all of you, both with a recording of this call, and then also with some frequently asked questions.

I would like to thank everyone for making the time and space to be on this call. We know that this is an incredibly upending time, and we are all being pulled in many different directions. So thank you to everyone for being on the call. I'd like to especially thank our panelists for taking the time to be with us and to share the resources that you and your organizations have.

And I hope that everyone stays connected during this time. Especially during a time of physical distancing, I think it is critical, given the challenges that we are facing, that we stay connected to one another. So thank you to everyone for participating in this, and we may see you in our future strategy sessions throughout the week.