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**OVC**  
**Webinar Transcript**

**Shelter and Housing Options**  
**for Human Trafficking Victims**

**September 18, 2014**





**OVCTTAC**



## Shelter and Housing Options for Human Trafficking Victims

September 18, 2014  
3:15 – 4:15 PM EST

**Presenters:**

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## It's more than shelter: Eliminating housing barriers for survivors.

Nicole Cisne Durbin – *SafePath* Survivor Resources of Family Resources

### **It is More Than Shelter: Eliminating Housing Barriers for Survivors**

Nicole Cisne Durbin: This is Nicole. Thank you so much for joining our Webinar today. I am really excited to speak to all of you. And bear with me as I try and navigate technology as well.

## Objectives

1. What challenges exist in obtaining shelter and housing for those in need and how do you address them?
2. How can you get creative about addressing housing options for human trafficking victims? What kind of non-traditional partnerships do you need to develop?
3. What are some of the different considerations in responding to victims in rural, suburban and urban settings?



### **Objectives**

Nicole Cisne Durbin: So, first of all, I am going to try to answer all these questions for you, but keep in mind I am going to be answering them from the perspective of what we are doing here in Iowa, and hopefully I will get all of them answered. But we are in a program that is in transition due to regionalization in Iowa, and I just want to remind everyone that while I know most of you focus mainly or 100 percent on providing services to human trafficking survivors, we provide sheltering and housing services to victims of all violent crime.

## SafePath Survivor Resources Program Overview

### Sheltering and Housing Services

- 6 counties (5 in IA and 1 in IL)
- 54 bed Emergency Shelter for victims of violent crimes in Davenport
- Services Coordinators
- Shelter Advocates
- Youth Advocate
- Rapid Re-Housing Program
- Hotel/Motel Vouchering System
- Mobile Housing Advocate

### Comprehensive Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse Services (non-shelter)

- 6 counties (5 in IA and 1 in IL)
- DA and SA Advocates
- Medical and legal advocacy, training, prevention, community engagement and collaboration, awareness raising, etc.
- Mobile Advocacy
- Master's Level Therapists
- Volunteer Program
- 24 Hour Crisis Lines

### SafePath Survivor Resources Program Overview

Nicole Cisne Durbin: So, all right, so just to give you guys an overview of – of my program of Family Resources, again we are a department called SafePath Survivor Resources. We provide sheltering and housing services to six counties, five of them are in Iowa and one is in Illinois. We have a 54-bed emergency shelter for victims of violent crime. It is located in Davenport, Iowa, but it is dually funded by both Illinois and Iowa. We are with a larger umbrella agency that has probably in total about 250 employees and my department has about 47. We do Rapid Re-Housing as one of our services. We have a hotel/motel vouchering system. We have a mobile housing advocate within our sheltering and housing services. And then two other programs that we provide that are non-shelter based are our Comprehensive Domestic Abuse Services and our Comprehensive Sexual Abuse Services.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: Our sheltering and housing services, like I said, provide services to all victims of violent crime. And that is where we are providing sheltering and housing services to human trafficking survivors. But within our sexual assault services and domestic abuse comprehensive services, outside of shelters, they mainly focus on sex trafficking victims because those services are so specifically funded, whereas in our sheltering and housing services we can provide services to all victims of human trafficking, again, all victims of a violent crime.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: And when I first started looking into how to provide these services, I really felt that this would naturally fit under our sexual abuse program. But the more I, I was learning about it, the more I really noticed that this is very similar to the dynamics that we see in domestic violence relationships, with power and control, threats, coercion, etc.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: And another thing to note, our larger parent agency provides a lot of different services including foster care families, juvenile welfare services. So because we're part of an umbrella agency that does a lot of other services, it allows us to reach out within systems and other agencies a little easier than maybe a program that was not a part of a larger umbrella agency.

## Challenges in obtaining shelter and housing....

### ▶ Urban

- Large number of individuals requesting shelter/sheltering/housing
- Long waiting lists for public housing
- Affordable housing options
- Employment
- Securing proper documentation and/or paperwork

### ▶ Rural

- Transportation
- Lack of affordable housing options such as rental units in rural communities
- Long distances to nearest bricks and mortar shelter
- Employment
- Confidentiality within small communities
- Securing proper documentation and/or paperwork

### **Challenges in Obtaining Shelter and Housing**

Nicole Cisne Durbin: All right, so hopefully this is going to tie back into our objectives. Challenges in obtaining sheltering and housing. I think you probably already all have many challenges, but I am going to speak specifically to what we have experienced or, in general, we are experiencing in Iowa, and then also speak to urban and rural.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: So, you know, in urban, of course, we have a large number of individuals requesting shelter. We typically have more options for them. We have a long waiting list for public housing. In fact, I, in preparation for this, was asked about public housing and, quite frankly, we have an 8-year waiting list so we do not even really use it. It is too long, right? People need housing very quickly. Affordable housing can be definitely a challenge, employment, securing proper documentation.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: And then in the rural areas transportation is one of our biggest challenges, of course, especially when you're serving a wide geographic area. Lack of affordable housing, or we talked today in our networking meeting in Iowa about industries coming in and taking up all of the housing. And, because they are coming into new construction, or what have you, and then it drives up the price of housing.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: Long distances to the nearest bricks and mortar shelter is definitely a challenge, and for those of you who do not know about regionalization in Iowa, that was really a challenge and continues to be a challenge for folks, which is why we have had to shift to a different model providing sheltering and housing services. Confidentiality within small communities, employment. I see that someone is typing in the box that criminal history is another challenge. Absolutely. And, again, securing proper documentation.

# Housing First

- ▶ It is an approach that falls under the Maslow's Hierarchy model; house people quickly (meeting basic physiological needs) and then follow through with providing services as needed.



## Housing First

Nicole Cisne Durbin: So within our sheltering and housing services, we have shifted to a Housing First philosophy or model, and really what that is is it is an approach that really ties in to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model. So, you know, a lot of people cannot focus on those other levels within the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs without first having your basic needs met. And one of those basic needs is shelter. So what we have seen when we made this shift is if people are housed and they know where they are going to be living, it is a lot easier to provide a lot of the other services to wrap around them and keep them self-sufficient. So if someone is within our sheltering and housing services, the whole goal of that program and working with that individual is to address any barriers or challenges they may have in order to help them obtain safe and affordable housing. Once they are housed, the domestic abuse comprehensive services or the sexual abuse comprehensive services could potentially then go in and literally go to their homes to provide those wraparound comprehensive services, especially with ongoing case management, they could be providing therapy, and other support services to ensure that they are continuing to be self-sufficient, and also to help reduce recidivism.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: We could also have our mobile housing advocates within our shelter program go out and do that work if most of their barriers that they are still experiencing or challenges to being self-sufficient pertain to housing. But sometimes it is a question of who is the right advocate to go out and work with them based on the needs of the client, which we have to be flexible and continue to assess that.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: We had folks from other states come in and talk to Iowa when we were deciding to shift and regionalize services and make that change. And I was sitting in the room and listening to how some pockets of other individuals were really doing this Housing First model, and doing it really well, and I really thought it was brilliant. Right? I loved it. And other directors who are more seasoned than I am were very concerned and did not think it would work. But it has worked. It has worked for us. It's been an incredible shift; staff are very happy with it. They can see results. And we have statistical results too. By shifting to this model, we have reduced our length of stay in our emergency shelter from 90 days to 33 days. Therefore, we are able to serve

more clients. And our recidivism rate is at 5 percent. So 95 percent of the people that have come through our shelter in FY '14 have stayed in housing and have not returned to our shelter. And we served 477 clients last year. And of the ones that did return in that 5 percent, they only came back once. So we were not seeing this chronic recidivism where people were just coming back in the shelter a couple of weeks or sometimes maybe a month after they have been out.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: We are trying to get better data on other ways to track housing stability after a longer period of time, but we are still working on how to do that. And really, it is mainly about how to ensure that we can get a hold of the clients after they have been out of the shelter or discharged from our services for quite a while.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: So for human trafficking survivors, though, their challenges or barriers to housing just might take longer to overcome, and we recognize that. They may need a longer shelter stay, and that is okay. You know, our shelter stay is based on the barriers that our clients are facing. They may need a longer stay until we can transition them into permanent housing or maybe permanent supportive housing. Most of the human trafficking survivors that we have worked with have actually needed more help just relocating back to where they originally came from, or back to where they feel that they have safe and solid support systems. And that is just because of the nature of human trafficking. You all know that, that they get trafficked all over the country, and so wherever they may end up seeking help may not be where they want to be in the long run. So when we are working with them, we are really going to be addressing the barriers and challenges to housing once they return there. So anything we can do to assist them to be ready when they go back, to go into safe and permanent housing, that is what we will do. And then, like I said, most of the costs that we are incurring to help with them are costs associated with relocating them.

## Their Challenges are Our Challenges

- ▶ Assess what level of sheltering is necessary based on lethality, barriers, and risks
  - Do they need to come a long distance to a physical shelter?
  - Do they have other people they feel are safe they can stay with short term?
- ▶ Develop a Landlord network
- ▶ Develop relationships with non-traditional partners
- ▶ Confidentiality - Can sometimes be more of our issue than theirs....



### Their Challenges are Our Challenges

Nicole Cisne Durbin: All right, so, their challenges are our challenges, of course. You know, I mentioned case management earlier and I find myself reiterating that to our staff quite a bit. It is

all about good case management. So in order to really utilize our Housing First model, we want to assess the level of sheltering that is necessary based on lethality, barriers, and risks so that we are providing the right services. So we are doing that assessment up front before they even enter the shelter so that we know what type of services that they are going to need. Do they need to come to... Do they need to come a long distance to a physical shelter? Do they have other individuals who they feel safe that they can stay with short term, and then we can send someone out to them to really assess their needs and understand what it is that they are going to need in order to be self-sufficient and stay safe? And notice that I am saying, "Do they have other people that they feel safe with?" I know when we are talking about human trafficking survivors that in our movement in general, we say we want to do what the victim and survivor wants us to do. But often times they may tell us who they think is safe and we are, in the back of our minds, we are like, "Oh, I do not know if that person is very safe or not," but, you know, we are just going to continue to rely upon they are the experts in their lives and they know what is best for them. So we really reiterate who they think is safe.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: Like I said, public housing is a barrier sometimes. For us, we just bypass it altogether and we really work with landlords, private landlords, because public housing just is not an option with such a long waiting list. But I will talk about that more in a minute.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: And then we use a lot of non-traditional partners as well. It is very important to have our non-traditional partners, and I feel like the more I have been working with quote/unquote "non-traditional partners," they have become traditional partners. So at some point I do not know if they are non-traditional anymore. But, you know, our traditional ones would be like law enforcement, medical people, folks that are probably dealing with – with our clients on a regular basis. But we will talk a little bit about non-traditional partners in a minute

Nicole Cisne Durbin: And then confidentiality. I think – I think often, and we have had a lot of discussion around confidentiality in our world right now, especially when we are trying to figure out creative ways to keep in contact with our clients and we are discussing about how we can use Facebook for that. But, you know, the issue of confidentiality comes up quite often, and sometimes I think that we make confidentiality more of our – a barrier and a challenge, more so than it is, and we make it our own barrier. You know, we are not releasing confidential information to anybody about our clients, but yet we are nervous to have some type of contact on a public forum that everyone knows is public because it could be breaking someone's confidentiality if somebody identified us. So we are really having a lot of conversations about that and, by all means, we never want to break anyone's confidentiality. But we also do not want to impede the client from seeking services and, and doing something or interacting with somebody and thinking that that is also breaking confidentiality, because, you know, they cannot really break their own confidence. So, again, we often complicate that issue, I think.

## Non-Traditional Partners Poll

- ▶ Who are some non-traditional partners you can think of in your service area who would be important to develop relationships with?



### Non-Traditional Partners Poll

Nicole Cisne Durbin: All right, so I am really curious about who you think are non-traditional partners that you are working with. And if you could type in the Chat box and let me know who are some good non-traditional partners that you are either working with or you think would probably be a really good partnership to have in your community.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: All right, so I am seeing apartment owners, landlords, alternative healing clinics, ethnic immigrant rights organizations. Awesome. Well I am getting some ideas from you guys. This is great. Yeah, I mean we have to think outside the box, and what really is important about thinking outside of the box is the more non-traditional partners, the more people you educate in your community and include in your work, the more the community is educated about the issue in general. So the more they know about human trafficking, the more they are educated and can assist and refer people, and know how to react to people when they disclose.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: Some folks in the rural areas, I am wondering if you are working with your farmers, your FFA (Future Farmers of America) folks, your 4-H folks. I know that in rural Iowa we are working with a lot of those individuals. Great relationships. And with human trafficking we know that there is a lot of immigrant farm workers. So what I recommend to folks is that you find your opinion holders in your local small communities where there is – the farming community, or the local hangout. I grew up in a farming community, I know there is a local hangout where everybody goes early in the morning to have coffee. I want to know where that is at and who those opinion holders are there. And if you can get one champion within that small, close-knit group of folks to help you and to understand the work that you are doing, then they will be your champion and help you engage the other folks and just educate them.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: I think some of our other non-traditional folks that we are working with, purely out of need for – our hotel/motel vouchering system is our hotel/motel personnel. Right? So we are not only working with them to shelter individuals, typically not sex trafficking individuals, but when our shelter is full we use the hotel/motel vouchering system, or in our rural areas where we do not have a bricks and mortar very close, we use that. But they have been great

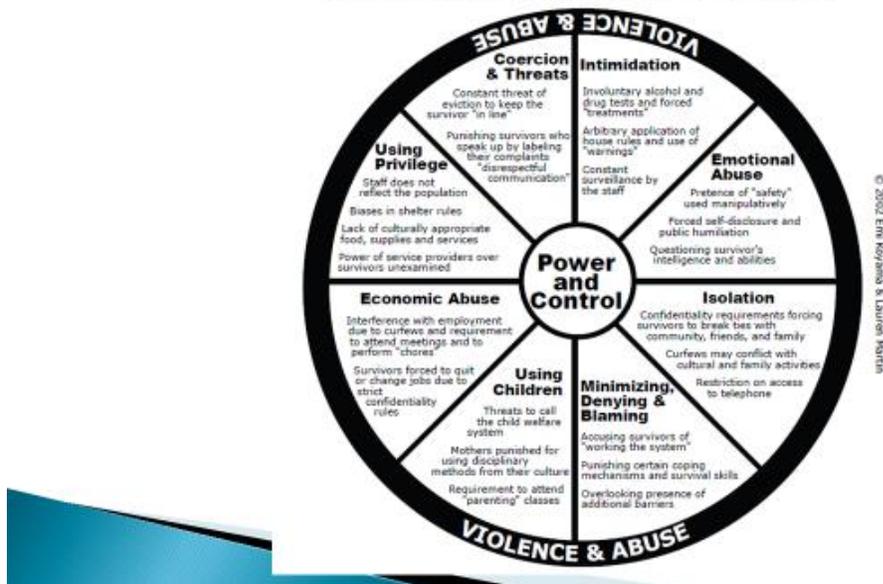
partners, not only are we educating them about, you know, we need to place clients here, but we are educating them about what could potentially be going on in their hotel. And it is not just front – front desk staff, it is the cleaning crew, you know, anybody that would be working there to understand and to be on the lookout. And you have to remember that these folks turnover often in the hotel/motel industry, so get in there and educate them as frequently as you can. Maybe you are just coming in and touching base once a month if they have a staff meeting. I do not know. But remember that they will have frequent, frequent turnover.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: And again, these are all going to be unique to your own community and geographical area, as well as the cultural and ethnic diversity that you have. Faith-based communities are amazing partners, and I do not know that we engage with them enough in our neck of the woods. We are really trying to do that. Truck stop personnel, we are very near the world's largest truck stop on I-80, so we try and educate them and work with them on a regular basis. Major sporting event venues we know is a hot spot for sex trafficking so we want to educate anybody that we can and bring them onboard as partners. I also really encourage folks to network with HR directors, and that is really about understanding and educating HR directors when our clients need employment. And some of them will volunteer to help us do mock interviews. But having a network of HR directors to help us find jobs for our clients is a really good thing.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: Foster families is another avenue that we are working on for quote/unquote “non-traditional partners,” and I will speak to this later, but it is really about the minor – the minor victims of human trafficking that we encounter and we cannot technically place them in our shelter because they are, you know, we have the state involved and you have to be an adult to be in our shelter. The kids can come to our shelter if they are with a parent, but not as just a minor along.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: Mall personnel is another good one. We know a lot of recruiting goes on at malls, so if they are able to understand and keep their eyes open, then it is also another layer of community education that you have going on.

## Abusive Power and Control within the Domestic Violence Shelter



## Abusive Power and Control Within the Domestic Violence Shelter

Nicole Cisne Durbin: All right, so I wanted to include this. Again, I was talking with the folks at OVC (Office for Victims of Crime) about what it was that we needed to address and things that we have been looking at. But if you have a human trafficking survivor in your shelter, what do you do? That was the question posed to us that we were struggling with when we were first identifying all this. And I think human trafficking survivors, like I said, have very similar dynamics to domestic violence. And if they have had all their power and control stripped away from them, we as advocates always want to empower them, so we try and do that. But I have found myself in rooms and across the nation, actually, in conversations with shelter providers who have some crazy rules and very little flexibility. I mean while it is well-intentioned and it is group living and you have to have some order, we often have well-intentioned policies, rules, what have you, that are actually putting up more barriers for our clients and putting us in a position of power over survivors. So I really like this power and control wheel about shelters because it helps us remind ourselves not to put ourselves in that position of power because especially with human trafficking survivors, if we're putting ourselves in that power and control position, inadvertently then, or, you know, again well-intentioned, we may end up pushing that survivor back to their trafficker or an abusive relationship.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: So, like I said, I have been in a lot of thought-provoking conversations and I find myself always trying to ask certain questions when we have rules, and they are usually, "Who do these rules or policies benefit? Is it clients or staff? And who does our mission say we will serve? Survivors or staff?" I mean, we are here to serve survivors, and when it comes to safety we are usually asking ourselves, "Whose safety are we really looking out for? Should it be both?" I mean, of course, we want our staff to feel safe, but oftentimes we have rules in place to keep – that are just specific to staff and, and, like I said, put up barriers for our clients, and there are creative ways to get around that and not put yourself in that power over, over our clients.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: So I would just, if you have a shelter and you are working with human trafficking survivors, I would just really encourage you to be very flexible about your policies and rules. And use this tool and have some conversation with your staff. Ask 'are we doing any of

this?' you know, again, no one is doing it on purpose. But well-meaning policies and rules and procedures could end up doing more harm and putting up barriers for your clients. So let us be flexible.

## Service Prioritization

- ▶ The Services Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT) is an evidence informed tool for assessing the needs of homeless individuals and families and for deciding the appropriate level of intervention to resolve each individual's or family's homelessness.
- ▶ VI-SPDAT and Family VI-SPDAT



### Service Prioritization

Nicole Cisne Durbin: So we want to make sure when we are working with survivors that we are prioritizing what services that they need. So we use what is called a SPDAT, and that is the Services Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool. We actually use the Vulnerability Index SPDAT, the VI-SPDAT. There is a single and a family version of that. And what that is is once folks enter into our services, we have two people that are trained to sit down and use this tool with them. And it identifies their barriers, and at that point, or it assesses their barriers and then it is going to give you a really good idea of where the client needs to receive services or how long they need to receive services, and what level are they going to need. That allows us at that point as soon as they enter into our shelters, or our sheltering services, to identify a transition date. We used to call it an out date, and clients kind of, I mean they did but they did not really know when their out date was coming. So this is a way to alleviate some of that stress and anxiety by using this tool as soon as they come in. We do it, we assess it, and we say, you know, based on your challenges and your resources or your barriers, we anticipate that this will be your transition date. And that is always flexible.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: This tool is great. I encourage you to look into it. It is definitely research-based, there is evidence out there, they have tested it in many settings, it has been through many extensive reviews and they have updated it a few times. So it's gone through the ringer to make sure it's a good tool. Orgcode.com is a place that you can look at to get more information on it.

# Consistency

- ▶ The SPDAT addresses the barriers the clients face and helps to identify their needs.
- ▶ Staff can consistently identify a quick transition OR the appropriate referrals to Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) programs or Transitional Housing (TH) programs.
- ▶ Most of the clients fall into the Rapid Re Housing scoring.
- ▶ In Davenport from January 1 to August 5<sup>th</sup> there have been 464 SPDAT's completed by all of the shelter programs in the area.
- ▶ *SafePath* has completed 79 SPDAT's in this time frame.



## Consistency

Nicole Cisne Durbin: A little more about the SPDAT. What I also like about this tool is that our entire community is using it, so we have some consistency going on. Like I said, it addresses those barriers, it is a consistent way to identify a quick transition or maybe we are referring them to permanent supportive housing or transitional housing, and we tend to see that most of our clients fall into a Rapid Re-Housing category, which is good for us that we can then tap into some resources we have to rapidly re-house them and wrap those comprehensive services around them.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: So in Davenport, in our homeless and domestic violence community, there have been 464 SPDAT's completed by all of the shelter programs in the area. And we have completed 79 of those SPDAT's in that time frame. And, like I said, we only have two staff that do the SPDAT's for consistency and quality control sake.

## Does it work?

- ▶ SPDAT using clients had an 88% housing stability rate vs. 63% rate for non-SPDAT users
- ▶ Housing stability rates were highest where there were high investments in training.
- ▶ Other factors that were common (though not universal) in SPDAT-using communities with higher housing stability rates included:
  - standard review during team meetings
  - minimal staff turnover
  - dedicated intake specialists/assessors

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### Does it Work?

Nicole Cisne Durbin: So, you know, I have talked about this service tool or this tool before, and people asked me, “Does it really work?” And, yeah, it does. Not only has it worked for us, but the research proves that it works, 88 percent of the clients had a – excuse me, SPDAT-using clients had an 88 percent housing stability rate versus 63 percent for the non-SPDAT users.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: The housing stability rates were highest where folks took the time and invested in the training. There is online training that you can have your staff do to make sure that they are using the tool correctly.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: Other factors that were really common, though not universal, in the SPDAT-using communities who had a really high housing stability rate were: standard review during team meetings, minimal staff turnover – I think minimal staff turnover helps with any program efficiency – and then, like we have, a dedicated intake specialist and assessor.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: Okay, I am reading one of the questions. Yeah, I mean not all the housing... So the question is that this tool would assume that all of the housing options are available, so that when you do have a result, you can make an appropriate placement. And they are not always available. That is correct. So we have to get creative and, again, be flexible sometimes. And housing is hard, but that is where we – if we do not have permanent supportive housing or transitional housing available, that is where we have really pulled and, and worked with our landlords, which I am going to talk about here now.

## Who you should know...Landlords

- ▶ On Time Rent
- ▶ Stable Renters
- ▶ Good Neighbors
- ▶ Property Care
- ▶ Cold calls
- ▶ Direct mail
- ▶ Network meetings
- ▶ Host a landlord event
- ▶ Word of mouth referrals, testimonial from a current landlord that has used the program

Core Business Concerns and Needs

Landlord Recruitment

### Who You Should Know...Landlords

Nicole Cisne Durbin: We developed a really great landlord network out of necessity for our Rapid Re-Housing program that we started 3 years ago. And after we started working with landlords, it was kind of like an aha moment. Like why have not we been doing this before? Housing has always been a need for our clients but it took us a special grant to really help us focus in on building that network. So, we've been really successful with that and you have a housing first handout that if you have not gotten, you will get it. And so some of the things that I am going to say here are on that handout, so please do not scribble furiously notes. It is on the handout.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: So in order to have a really good landlord relationship or a landlord network, we have to understand that at the root of it they are a business. Right? So we have to understand their core business concerns and needs. And those are: on-time rent, stable renters, good neighbors, and property care.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: On-time rent is something that you can help landlords understand. You can do that for them. That is a huge advantage to working with your program. Program case managers can do the budgeting with the clients, they can explain to them the importance of paying rent on time, and if you are the one actually paying the rent, you can tell them that you will get your rent check on time, you will get that cut and it will be in your hands. And you can help the client understand personal strategies to building good credit while you are talking to them about ensuring that on-time rent is a good thing.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: When you are talking about stable renters, this is another advantage for the landlord to work with your program. Your program can help fill vacancies and reduce advertising costs. Case managers can partner with clients to provide long-term tenancy by offering tenancy training, including training of basic knowledge of terms of the lease. We have had clients that just did not know their tenant rights. We have had landlords that did not know clients' rights. So it can go both ways, and it is education all around for everybody.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: Having good neighbors is another advantage for a landlord. They... You can provide your clients with the tools to be good neighbors by adding training and, again, having your case managers provide support and consistency for them.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: And then property care is another advantage, like I said, for a landlord to work with you because you are going to create incentives and establish potentially contingency funds in case something does happen. Even offer a 2-month security deposit if that is what it takes for a landlord to start working with you and for it to be successful, offer that up, and then work with your client to ensure that you guys can get your deposit back.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: And then be aware that the core components and concerns will help build a program with incentives that will assist and cultivate strong landlord relationships.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: What was really, in finding your landlords and recruiting them, the first thing on here is cold calls. And we did a lot of that, we did a lot of cold calling based on rental signs, publications, internet listings. Other ideas that I have seen and pulled information from are direct mailings. We have never done a direct mailing. We do do the networking meetings, hosting a landlord event is really good, and then word-of-mouth referrals and testimonials from other landlords who have used the program. And that is really what it was for us that helped us be successful. We found a champion landlord who actually happened to be the president of the Landlord Association in Davenport, and he has just been amazing and has really helped us break into the landlord network within Davenport.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: So, I am getting some questions and I'm not sure if you want me to wait until the end to answer some of these or if you want me to answer them now. Okay, I am being told it's up to me.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: So one of the questions are: When you are working with landlords, do you pay rent directly to the landlords and the client pays you? It just depends. Actually, the client would never pay us. We would – we always pay rent directly to the landlord, and the amount of that can vary based on the programming they are in. So if they are in Rapid Re-Housing, we may be paying the first month's rent in full and the deposit or whatever it takes to get them into the rental unit. And then we would, after that, gradually move the amount down. So if the first month's rent is \$600, we pay that. The next month's rent we might pay \$500 of the \$600, and so on and so forth. But it is really going to be based on the client's income and level of need. We started off our Rapid Re-Housing program having everyone will get this amount at each month and on down, and then we realized that we could help more clients if we varied it to meet each client's needs.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: One question I am getting is: What about clients who are recently released from juvenile hall and now 18 with no job, or those with mental health issues? Sure. If they are 18 with no job, then clearly employment is a barrier that we are going to help them address. And we do have a lot of clients who have criminal backgrounds, criminal history. Again, we are working with our landlords to educate them about them. A lot of them will waive background checks so that – background and credit checks actually, because we are honest with them and tell them that that stuff will come up, and we are working with them and we want to help them to ensure they are successful. Mental health issues, of course, it depends on the level of mental health issues. They may be more appropriate for permanent supportive housing in our community. I am not sure if that is an option for others, but if they have some severe mental health issues, then we are going to work with our local mental health provider within our agency.

We actually have a counseling therapy services department so we are lucky in that respect that we can pull from those individuals and expertise.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: And the other question I am getting is: Does that method count towards building client credit? You know, that is a great question and I do not know if I am the best person to answer that because I am not a credit guru, but I cannot imagine that it would not because the client is – the client is occupying the rental unit and the rent is being paid on time. So that unit is not in our name, it is in the client's name. We just may be the one cutting the checks initially and helping the client do good budget management and understand how – how they are going to eventually pay that rent. And we never want to set somebody up to fail. Right? We are not going to put them in a unit that in 2 months they cannot afford. And we grapple with and have a lot of discussion about poor people, people who are in poverty, can be stably house. We are not going to necessarily resolve the issue of poverty, but we can help poor people stay stably house. It can be done.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: All right. And then, okay, so someone else is trying to also answer someone's question. Thank you. Thank you for doing that. And I see that you are talking about a rental agreement, and we do have our landlords sign rental agreements with our clients, and have our clients also sign things to ensure that everybody is really on the same page.



**What worked for us?**

- ▶ Cold calls
- ▶ Education
- ▶ One key landlord can be the gatekeeper to other landlords
- ▶ Landlord Association Meetings
- ▶ Develop and nurture the relationships
- ▶ Be consistent with payments
- ▶ Landlord agreement form
- ▶ Know the laws and tenant rights
- ▶ 6 landlords in our network have been "burned" by clients and only 2 of those 6 stopped working with us
- ▶ Good Case Management

### **What Worked for Us?**

Nicole Cisne Durbin: So I kind of talked about some of this. This is the next slide, so you guys are really smart and psychic and jumped ahead of me. These are just some other things that have really worked for us. And at the root of it, it is just really good, good case management, and having advocates that are really resourceful and understanding all the resources in the community. So, you know, we are talking about mental health issues, we are talking about credit, we are talking about landlords. You know a good case manager, a good advocate is going to know about all those resources. I have advocates that are amazing at not immediately thinking about our funds to help clients with rental assistance or housing stability, but they really

understand and know all the other financial options that are out there to assist with housing or, you know, maybe first month's rent or deposit or utility assistance. You know, these are all things that can be barriers for clients getting safe and stable housing. And, again, they are really going to focus on the ones in our sheltering and housing services that pertain to housing barriers.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: I talked about one key landlord being the gatekeeper to the other landlords. It is so true. Our Landlord Association meetings have been super helpful and we just formed an Advisory Council, and our key landlord has agreed to sit on that Advisory Council. So I only anticipate that this will be even more helpful as we move forward.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: I am running out of time, so I am going to try and get through the rest of the slides. But the other barriers that we try and address or that we ensure that we are working on with our clients are employment, and I talked about the HR directors. But know your major employers, have good relationships with them. Clearly, people cannot stay housed if they cannot pay their bills. And if they do not have some type of financial assistance outside of employment, then they are going to need to be employed. Know your laws. Know your tenant rights. They are going to vary based on states, and educate your landlords on it.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: We have six landlords in our network who have been burned by clients, meaning they just did not pay their rent or something happened, and two of those six stopped working with us. But the other four were burned and stayed around. So we are doing something right.

## Rapid Re-Housing

- ▶ Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) is a strategy to assist homeless women and families to access housing as quickly as possible and deliver services to help maintain a stable home.
- ▶ Key Components of Rapid Re-Housing:
  - Housing Identification
  - Rent/move in assistance
  - Case Management Services
    - Keep them in housing and linked to services



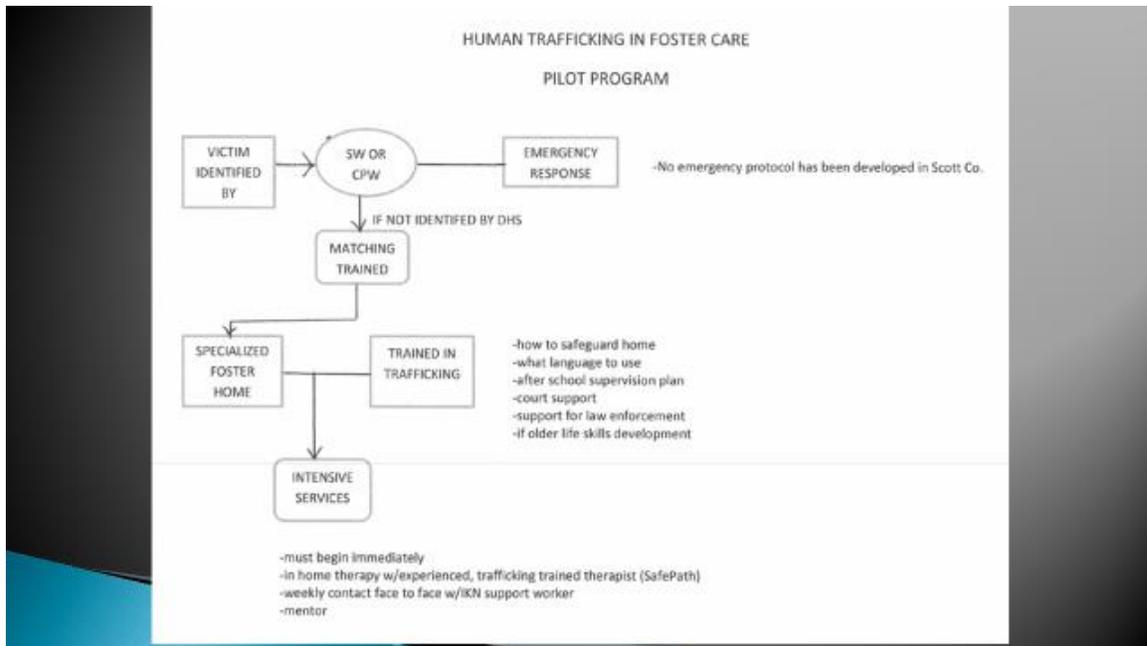
### Rapid Re-Housing

Nicole Cisne Durbin: All right, so Rapid Re-Housing. I do not know if you guys have heard of this term. Maybe, maybe not. And I do not know if some of you are doing Rapid Rehousing. But it is really just a strategy to assist homeless women and families, could be homeless men too. I just, again, pulled this from some information that I have done my research on. House them

quickly. That is really what it is. Rapidly re-house them, house them quickly, and then that will help – and then go in and provide services that will help them maintain a stable home.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: So those key components are just housing identification, what we have talked about, landlords, you know, other ways to house people. Rent and move in assistance, and then, again, good case management services.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: Before I jump into this, actually, I will go back real quick. For those of you who run a shelter, we were receiving money for our shelter operations costs, and we had the opportunity to actually apply for Rapid Re-Housing dollars. But that meant that we would get this chunk of dollars that would pay for our shelter operations costs. And it was a risk that we took and it was a good one and a smart one, and we were able to replace the ops costs with fundraised dollars and other funds. But if you have the opportunity to get Rapid Re-Housing dollars, it is a great, great thing to do. And if you do not, then there are people in your community doing it. Find out who they are. They can assist your clients as well.



### Human Trafficking in Foster Care: Pilot Program

Nicole Cisne Durbin: So I did mention that we're working with the foster care program within our agency. And this is what we're trying to do to address housing for minors. Again, we cannot put them in our shelters, so we are trying to propose a pilot program for specialized foster care parents to take in human trafficking survivors, specifically minor sex trafficking victims. So we are in the process of trying to run that up through the powers that be, as well as ensure that we have foster parents that are onboard and that they are going to be adequately trained and supported to provide that type of home for a – a survivor of sex trafficking. Instead of trying to build a shelter for all of the minor sex trafficking victims, we are going to try to utilize the systems we already have in place and go this route. So stay tuned for that.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: We are actually also working on some protocols for minors, and, and trying to get everybody educated and onboard on how to properly respond and not retraumatize these

kiddos. And, again, where are they – we know how to initially respond to them and provide that crisis counseling, and then how to provide ongoing case management and therapy. But where are we going to be going to provide that therapy if there is not a, you know, we do not have a minor shelter in our neck of the woods right now. So foster families are a huge asset to us.

## Tying it all together....

- ▶ Trauma
- ▶ Collaborations and relationships assist in developing a trauma informed community
- ▶ Trafficking survivors have experienced similar dynamics to domestic violence survivors
- ▶ Need to re–think shelter and its role in service delivery
- ▶ Be flexible and do not create more barriers
- ▶ Ask your clients what it is they need....



### Tying it All Together

Nicole Cisne Durbin: And then tying it all together. And I hope I am not running over time. But I just want to point out that trauma is at the root of all these issues. Right? Whether it is domestic violence, human trafficking, sexual assault. Trauma is at the root of all of it. And if you only provide human trafficking services and you are not working with your domestic abuse or sexual assault service providers, please reach out to them. They have been working with these people I am talking about for a long time and they can help you avoid re-creating the wheel and get the table with some of the individuals you may need to network with that they are already working with.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: As we said, trafficking survivors, I believe, have experienced very similar dynamics to domestic violence survivors. And we really challenge ourselves over here in Iowa to rethink the bricks and mortar shelter and its role in service delivery, and how that can evolve and look different.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: Please remember to be flexible and do not create more barriers for individuals. And then always ask your clients what it is that they need. I know that there is a lot of service providers out there that say we do this because that is what clients are telling us they need, but they cannot remember the last time they actually sat down and asked the client what it is that they needed. And when our transition started in Iowa, that is what we did. We sat down and asked them. And, hands down, clients said we need stable housing, we need to know where we're going in 90 days. And until we know that, it is hard to focus all this other stuff you guys are trying to help us with because we do not know where we are going to be. So, you know, it takes time to think about changing the way you are doing things, or maybe you are listening to me and you are

thinking, “I am doing all of that.” Cool. But if not, you know take a step back and think about how you can have a conversation with your staff and your clients and move forward. Okay, so there are three questions I am being told to wrap up, and then we will go to Billie, and those are...

## Contact Information & Questions

- ▶ Nicole Cisne Durbin
- ▶ [ncisne@famres.org](mailto:ncisne@famres.org)
- ▶ 563-468-2326
- ▶ [www.famres.org](http://www.famres.org)



### Contact Information and Questions

Alejandra Acevedo: All right, thank you. Go ahead Nicole. Thank you so much. So I am going to go ahead and – go ahead and read out the three questions that you have. The first one is: Do you know of any housing available for just the male population? And if not, is there a way to develop housing just like sober houses for a population that is recovering?

Nicole Cisne Durbin: We actually do have some male only shelters in our area. One is with the Salvation Army, and one is faith-based. And what I will tell you about faith-based communities is, for whatever reason, we were not engaging them as much as we should be, and if you find the right faith-based organization you will have a great partnership, and they have people who want to help and the funds to help. So if you do not have that type of situation in your community, that would be a partner I would suggest reaching out to. And what was the second half of that question?

Alejandra Acevedo: The second half was: If not, is there a way to develop housing just like sober houses for recovering populations?

Nicole Cisne Durbin: I'm sure there is. I don't have a magic bullet answer for that one but I would want to know who has already developed those sober houses, what services were involved in getting that going. But I think it depends on what type of housing they need. If they need to be in a group support facility, then that is going to look different as opposed to a male survivor who just needs housing. And, again, do you have landlords who will work with you to rent to that individual? Sorry if I didn't make sense.

Alejandra Acevedo: No, that was a great answer. Thank you. The second question is: Have you ever had any problems with landlords you were working with in the sense that they were mentioning the clients experiencing – experience knowing they were survivors of a crime, or maybe even using it against them or telling someone else?

Nicole Cisne Durbin: I am not aware of them essentially breaking their confidentiality or saying anything like that. We have had landlords, like I said, that were burned and did not want to work with us anymore. But what we did when we first went to the Landlord Association meeting was we came just to talk about our services and try to break the ice, and we found ourselves answering so many questions that it was like we were giving a training. They were just really, really interested and wanted to help, and did not – it was like they did not know a lot of the rights that our clients had. And so just by educating them and engaging them, we automatically, you know, a) we got some allies, and b) we got some folks that were interested in helping and wanting to rent to our clients. You know, maybe they would be quick to evict somebody else who was not working with our program, but if they were close to doing that, they would call us and tell us what was going on, and we would try and intervene and assist to keep that client in that rental unit, or see if there is something going on that maybe they need to be moved somewhere else. Did that answer the question?

Alejandra Acevedo: Yeah, yeah. And then the last question, we have, I know we have been talking about all of the non-traditional partners, but someone asked if you could give an example where non-traditional partners were helping with housing. So maybe if you could go in a little bit more detail on how some of the non-traditional partners that have been mentioned throughout the Webinar, how you guys collaborated in getting housing for a survivor.

Nicole Cisne Durbin: Sure. Well, the non-traditional partners may not necessarily be assisting with the specifics of the housing piece, but they may be assisting with addressing the other barriers for survivors. Or they are assisting in helping educate the community, therefore creating a more trauma-informed care community about the needs of survivors. And to me, that is just building up a community of bystanders for when somebody, you know, inadvertently makes that comment in their group of peers, the coffee shop in the morning with all the farmers about something, that, you know, they will be able to combat that. Or when I was talking about rural communities, everybody knows everybody in a rural community, and the farmers definitely know everybody in a rural community. So a) they are either going to know somebody who has housing, or b) they are going to know of something that is amiss that maybe indicate some type of trafficking going on that somebody might want to look into more. Or maybe they had wondered if something was amiss but they could not really pinpoint it, and then when you provide them a little more education, they say, “You know, maybe I should call somebody.” So, you know, there is a lot of barriers for folks getting housing and bringing in as many non-traditional partners as possible is going to allow you to address all of those barriers, HR directors will help with employment, etc.

Alejandra Acevedo: All right, well, thank you so much, Nicole, for your presentation. It was a great one. If everyone...If anyone else has any further questions, Nicole's information is right there. If you want to go ahead and e-mail us at OVC TTAC, we will be more than happy to put you in contact with Nicole. Again, Nicole, thank you so much and we will go ahead now and move over to our presentation on the Tip of the Month, which is on VictimLaw. It is currently one of the resources that we provide here with OVC TTAC. And so I will go ahead and hand that off to Billie.



### **Tip of the Month: Overview of VictimLaw**

Billie Jo Matelevich-Hoang: Thank you so much for asking me to join you and talk a little bit about the Tip of the Month or VictimLaw. I think maybe after today, my Tip of the Month is to get a better business phone. But anyway. So before I talk about VictimLaw, I just want to ask you really quickly. Have any of you ever utilize the VictimLaw database or are you familiar with it? If you are, if you could just type yes into the Chat box, that would be great.

Billie Jo Matelevich-Hoang: And as you are doing that, I just want to tell you a little bit about our Legal Initiative. So one of the goals of OVC's Legal Assistance for Crime Victims Training and Technical Assistance Initiative is to ensure that victims receive the legal services they need to assist in the aftermath of their victimization. To help meet this goal, we at OVC TTAC offer training and technical services and resources to our legal community. And one example is through VictimLaw. And I see that some actually, maybe no one is really responding that they have used VictimLaw. I think I see yes, that one or two of you have.

Online database with over 23,000 federal, state, and tribal victims' rights related statutes, codes, regulations and constitutional amendments.

Accessing VictimLaw: [www.victimlaw.org](http://www.victimlaw.org)

Billie Jo Matelevich-Hoang: So my goal for today is just to tell you a little bit about VictimLaw and to give you a demonstration. So VictimLaw is an online database with over 23,000 federal, state, and tribal victims' rights related statutes, codes, regulations, and constitutional amendments. Currently, all states have some form of statutory or rule-based victim rights protections. Approximately 30 states have constitutional amendments, and the federal government has numerous – numerous statutes that guarantee rights for victims. And VictimLaw takes all that information and gathers it for you and it is a free resource that everybody can use.

### Search by:

- Topic
- Term
- Content
- Citation

### VictimLaw also includes:

- Information about the justice system
- A legal glossary
- Federal and State resources

Billie Jo Matelevich-Hoang: So at this point I am just going to share my screen with you and give you a quick demonstration on how you can do a search on VictimLaw. So now that you can see the screen, you will notice that when you go into VictimLaw and in order to access it, it is very

easy. It is [www.victimlaw.org](http://www.victimlaw.org). If you cannot remember that or you can always Google “VictimLaw” and it will come up. Or also, if you go to OVC TTAC’s website we have a banner on our page for VictimLaw.

Billie Jo Matelevich-Hoang: So once you are on our website, on the VictimLaw page, you will notice that there are two different sides. So on the right side is resources. So, say you are not really familiar with victims’ rights and you do not know about the different types of searches, you are a little unclear about justice systems in other jurisdictions, state, federal, tribal. You could click on any one of these links and it would give you access to that information.

Billie Jo Matelevich-Hoang: Also, say you want to refer victims to another state. If you go to “find additional resources,” we have tried to compile a list of all the service providers throughout the country that you could use at a resource. And, of course, you might come across legal terms that you are like I have no idea what that means, so we have a legal glossary for you.

Billie Jo Matelevich-Hoang: You will also see that we have, if you want to, you could create a username and password. You do not have to, but we find that some people do a lot of extensive searches. So say back in March, you were asked to research something on victims’ rights regarding restitution. Well, now it is almost October and you are asked to do it again. Well, if you have your username and password in, you know, VictimLaw will be able to track what your previous searches were.

Billie Jo Matelevich-Hoang: So that is what is available to you. And then over on the left and also on the bottom, all of these are clickable as well.

Billie Jo Matelevich-Hoang: You could search four ways. You could either search by topic, term, content, or citation. Citation is the easiest of all four, and I am not going to spend much time on that. Citation is you know what the statute is, you plug in the number, and the statute will be pulled for you.

Billie Jo Matelevich-Hoang: So in a topical search, if you click on “topical” – and we will try that again. You click on “topical” – I was on the page too long. In “topical” for VictimLaw, it is separated by topics according to rights, and what we – the reason it is set up this way is since every state has some sort of legislation and statute and the federal government has it, its bulked together in similar types of rights. Right to Compensation, Right to be Heard. So it is a cluster and you get to select which one you want to search in that topic. So say, for example, you are working with a federal – a federal client and you need to find out what are my victims’ rights in federal court regarding, say, their right to a speedy trial. So if that is your case, you want to go down and click on “Right to a Speedy Trial.” And then step two is it is going to pull up various options within that right. So, to be safe, I always just click both of them. I want to know everything I can about this, and then I am going to press “next.”

Billie Jo Matelevich-Hoang: The next thing is now you need to select your jurisdiction. You can select all of them, but it is going to be forever. So I usually do federal if that is who my client is. And you will notice when you do federal, it does not only grab all the general federal statutes, it will also grab the military statutes for you as well. You will also notice you have states and territories. If you hit “next,” then you get to say do you want statute or case law? If you want both, which is perfectly fine, you just have to go back and do it again. You cannot do both searches together because the search engines are extremely huge with over 23,000. So you want to do the statutes, hit “next.”

Billie Jo Matelevich-Hoang: And then you get to choose what type of victims that you are working with. So if you see – I know the majority of you work with human trafficking victims extensively, so maybe you just want to limit your search to that type of victimization. So if you click on that, and then go to “next,” you will see that it does a quick search summary for you. And then within a matter of seconds it will pull up the one federal law that has to do with the Right to a Speedy Trial. And if you click on that, it will give you the law.

Billie Jo Matelevich-Hoang: So that’s one way in terms of topical search and I know I’m almost out of time, I have like a second left. But say you don’t know if it’s a right of not. Sometimes I get questions from people that say, “I would really like to know about mandatory reporting law in my state. I want to know about confidential communications.” You could search that as well, and that is through a term search. So say, for example, I am an attorney licensed in Pennsylvania, and say I want to know: Do victim advocates have privilege or confidential communications in my state. So I got to VictimLaw, I go to term search, and I know I want to only do a specific state. Since I’m in Pennsylvania, I’m going to do that one. Click on state – now, if you did states and territories it would pull up all of the states and territories, and it would be a very extensive search. So after that I am going to do, once again, I just want to know all of the statutes and regulatory provisions on confidential communications, and then it is going to give me an opportunity to put in the word. And I can spell. And then once I am done with that, I will hit “search,” and it will bring up all the different statutes that have those two words in it. So the only thing I would say is if you are going to do a term search, try to be as narrow as possible because every word you put in, every single statute will come up regarding that. And if you will notice, what I am looking for here, and then we get to go through all of the different statutes to see what applies. Here “Confidential Communications” is exactly what I am looking for, and it talks about if you are a domestic violence counselor or advocate in the State of Pennsylvania, you would have confidential communications. And I do want to show you this. It will take you right to those – your buzz words that you put in for [unclear] VictimLaw.

Billie Jo Matelevich-Hoang: So those are two types of searches, and I know I am almost completely out of time. But the content search also, say you have no idea what to search for. If you want to do that, you could very simply go to “content,” put in your state, and then what will happen is our database will actually pull up every single statute we have within that state.

Billie Jo Matelevich-Hoang: So those are some of the ways that you could utilize this free resource. Say, maybe you have a question about a client, maybe you have a question about rights and services, and that is – these are some ways that you could do searches utilizing VictimLaw. And at this time, I am going to pass the screen back over to Soojin and Alejandra. And really quickly too – as you are using VictimLaw, if you ever have any questions and you are confused and you need technical assistance support, you could always e-mail me. I am always available to answer any questions that you might have on VictimLaw. And we also have recorded Webinars on our website for the Legal Initiative, including a few on human trafficking. So I encourage you to visit our web – our web page and view the archived Webinars. Thank you so much.

## Rights included in VictimLaw



- Right to Attend
- Right to Protection
- Right to Compensation
- Right to Restitution
- Right to Be Heard
- Right to Return of Property
- Right to Be Informed
- Right to A Speedy Trial
- Right to Enforcement

Alejandra Acevedo: Well, thank you so much, Billie. I am glad we could get through our audio issues. Again, thank you, Nicole, as well for your presentation. And thanks to everybody for joining us on our call today. When you end today's session, you will see a pop-up box to an evaluation form. Please take the time to fill out this evaluation so we can learn and improve on our monthly TA Webinars. And, for your information, next week, or excuse me, next month, our call will be on October 16<sup>th</sup>. Thank you so much and have a great end of the week and a great weekend.

## Technical Assistance



If you need technical assistance when using VictimLaw, please contact me at: [bmatelevich-hoang@ovcttac.org](mailto:bmatelevich-hoang@ovcttac.org)

Visit the Legal Assistance [webpage](#) to view archived Webinars (click on the training tab).

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