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FIGHTING SENIOR POVERTY THROUGH LAW

Free Webinar: Using California's Home Safe Program to Get and Keep Older Adults Housed

Webinar Transcript

February 21, 2023

Patti Prunhuber: Good morning and welcome. We're going to wait one more minute to let some more folks join us and then we'll get started.

Good morning and welcome to this morning's webinar, using California's Home Safe Program to get and keep older Californians housed. My name is Patty Prunhuber. My pronouns are she/her. I am the Director of Housing Advocacy at Justice in Aging. I'm joined by my colleague Vivian Mbaku, who is our director of Elder... Excuse me, director of Equity and Elder Justice, also at Justice in Aging. Home Safe is a statewide program that provides housing services and resources for Adult Protective Services or APS eligible clients who need to stabilize their current housing, find alternative safe housing, or get help to become housed. Home Safe is one of four housing programs overseen by the California Department of Social Services and administered by the counties. And the goal of all of these programs is to promote equal access to safe and affordable housing for all Californians. Recognizing that many APS clients complex needs were impacted by the fact that their housing inability or homelessness was affecting their ability to find safety. In 2021, the California legislature made significant changes to the program, expanding eligibility and providing significant new funding. Today, we'll examine those program changes to better understand this important tool to use in getting and keeping older adults housed. Next slide.

A few housekeeping items. Oh, I'm so sorry. There we go. Here's some housekeeping we'd asked, you are all going to be on mute. You can use the Q&A function for substantive questions and for any technical concerns that you have. Here's a link in case you're having problems getting onto the webinar. You can send an email to trainings@justiceandaging.org. We are going to be recording this webinar and the recording will be available on our resource library page and Justice in Aging's Vimeo page at the conclusion of this presentation. The PowerPoint slides will be available in the chat shortly and will also be posted on our resource page. If you would like to enable closed captioning, just select the CC from the Zoom control panel and you will have that available.

And now can we go back up to Justice in Aging? Many of you know us already. We are a national organization and we use the power of law to fight senior poverty by securing access to affordable healthcare, economic security, housing, and the courts for older adults with limited resources. And we have focused and continue to focus our efforts on fighting for people who have been marginalized and excluded from justice, such as women, people of color, LGBTQ plus individuals, and people with limited English proficiency. Next slide.

Justice in Aging is committed to advancing equity in all of our work. And in order to do that, we must advance equity for low-income older adults in economic security, healthcare, housing, and elder justice initiatives. We must also address the enduring harms and inequities caused by systemic racism and other forms of discrimination that uniquely impact low-income older adults in marginalized communities. And finally, our internal commitment is to recruit, support and retain a diverse staffing board. Next slide.

So our goal in this Home Safe training in this next hour is to learn about Home Safe's expanded eligibility and the scope of housing related benefits and a little bit more about how the collaborations are supposed to happen at the county level to ensure housing stability, to explore how Home Safe can support clients in obtaining and maintaining stable housing and the use of that flexible funding. And then as people who are working with older adults to help you learn how to maximize Home Safe's, housing related benefits to stabilize your client's housing situations. And now I'm going to turn it over to Vivianne.

Vivianne Mbaku:

Thank you Patti. And today we're going to start off with a poll. So if we could launch the first poll and this first poll, oops. Oh my goodness. The question is: How familiar are you with the Home Safe Program in your county? And the options are, I'm here to learn about it, I've heard about it but haven't worked directly with the program or, I've heard about it and have referred clients to the Home Safe Program. And we will give it a few more seconds, and then let's end the poll now. So it looks like we're kind of split. So lots of people here to learn about it about 51%, about 28% have heard about the program but haven't worked directly with it, and 21% have heard about the program and referred clients to the program. And then our next poll question is: How many clients have you referred to the Home Safe Program? So let's launch that second poll. The first option is none, the second option is 1-3, and the third option is 4 or more clients.

And let's close that poll now. Okay, so these results overwhelmingly 75% have not referred any clients to the Home Safe Program, 14% 1-3, and 4 or more 11%. So that just kind of gives us a base of who's in the audience today to learn about the Home Safe Program and their experience with the Home Safe Program. So now to start, we're going to talk about what is Home Safe, just kind of as an overview. And I would like to make sure that everyone knows this presentation is really for anyone who's interested in the Home Safe Program, regardless of if you've worked with clients with the program, referred clients, we want to give people a really good base of information about the program. So the Home Safe Program, like Patty mentioned at the beginning of the presentation, is an APS program designed to support the safety and housing stability of APS clients who are experiencing homelessness or at risk for homelessness.

So Home Safe supports seniors and dependent adults who are served by or in the intake process for Adult Protective Services and who are experiencing or at

risk of homelessness. Now, APS or Adult Protective Services is an government agency in California that is available in all counties and then also with some Native American tribes. And APS is designed to help older adults who are 60 plus and that is a new lowering of the age requirement, and dependent adults who are between the ages of 18 and 59 when they are unable to meet their own needs or are victims of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Now APS is relatively new to the homeless services field, but with this rapid increase of homelessness amongst their clients, the Home Safe Program and other programs are really working to support APS clients who are experiencing homelessness or at risk for homelessness.

Now, as I said, it's administered by the counties, but the California Department of Social Services does provide oversight for each APS agency throughout the state and Adult Protective Services in many counties will subcontract with housing or other community based organizations within their community to assist them with the housing and other supports that are provided through the Home Safe Program. So it's good to understand that while you may have clients that are working with APS to receive Home Safe services, they may also be working with other community-based organizations in your area and that is in conjunction with APS to serve them under the Home Safe Program.

So when we talk about the Home Safe Program and working with older adult clients who are possibly connecting with APS to get housing assistance, it's always important to discuss some elder justice implications. Now there are many implications of a client working with Adult Protective Services. Most commonly we like to remind people that clients who are a part of marginalized communities, communities of color, may have very well placed fears and concerns about engaging with any type of social services program. And those fears may be based in our country's history of racial discrimination, past bad experiences that they've had with social services agencies. So it's really important as an advocate to keep this in mind when you are speaking with a client about potential help that they might get from a program like Home Safe that they will have to engage with this government agency, Adult Protective Services and they may have concerns about that and they may have questions about that.

In addition, Adult Protective Services has a well-established connection with law enforcement and this is because they are often investigating what turns out to be criminal activity, especially when you're dealing with potentially elder abuse and possibly financial exploitation. And so it's good for your clients to understand that Adult Protective Services social workers do have requirements. They may be required to report certain things that they see to law enforcement that is not a guarantee that there will be an arrest, or even prosecution, or even investigation, but there may be requirements that they have within their work and they don't really have control over that. So it's good to talk to clients about what's actually going on in their situation and any concerns that they might have.

Also, a discussion of risk and benefits of self-reporting to APS. So clients will be generally self-referring to APS for the home for Home Safe help. So it's important to make sure that the client is aware of this. If you are an attorney, especially a legal services attorney, you should be speaking with your supervisors about any ethical issues that may be posed with reporting to APS. Generally attorneys have this ethical duty of confidentiality that would generally preclude them from doing that, but if you have questions, you should be speaking with your supervisors about any ethical implications that might arise. But in general, culturally competent and trauma informed skills are a must for any advocate who's helping an older adult, but especially in a situation where they are possibly helping them get help through Adult Protective Services or any other social services agency. And it's also important to remember that in assisting a client who may be connecting to receive some kind of housing supports from Adult Protective Services, you might also have to do some extended advocacy to ensure that the older adults access to their community and community supports is preserved.

So what that really looks like is using your abilities and your talents as an advocate to make sure that the older adult and their needs are heard. Make sure that people understand that they have a connection to their community, how that can influence where they're permanently housed, how that can influence the type of temporary housing that they're offered, making sure that it's accessible for them, making sure that all of their needs are met, things like that. So making sure that you are providing that really full wraparound, culturally competent and trauma informed advocacy will ensure that the client is able to get the best help that they can.

Patti Prunhuber: Vivianne, you have a question that I wondered if you could address?

Vivianne Mbaku: Yes.

Patti Prunhuber: It's: What Adult Protective Services qualifying self-neglect looks like in older adults who are at risk of homelessness or currently unhoused? Can you help explain a little bit more about the self-neglect eligibility criterion?

Vivianne Mbaku: Yeah, and so we'll, let me reverse back. So we'll talk a little bit more about the other criteria later. But what that really can look like is someone who's not able to care for care for themselves properly, possibly because they are living on the street, not able to feed themselves properly, don't have access to and take care of their ADLs, their activities of daily living. That might be something that could be considered self-neglect and make someone eligible for the Home Safe Program and assistance through Adult Protective Services in their county.

Patti Prunhuber: Thank you.

Vivianne Mbaku: Okay, so in this next section we're going to go into some more specific details about the Home Safe Program

And we're going to start with home safe eligibility. So as we discussed, this program is really aimed at APS clients who are at risk of homelessness or are experiencing homelessness. So an individual is eligible for Home Safe, we didn't include this, but in California because this is a California state program, they're an APS client or in the process of intake with APS and APS clients are older adults. So people who are 60 plus or dependent adults with disabilities between the ages of 18 to 59. And their homeless or at risk of homelessness as a result of elder or dependent abuse, neglect, self-neglect like I just mentioned, or financial exploitation. And they voluntarily agree to participate in Adult Protective Services. So these are the three criteria that are required and we will go a little bit more into depth with these, but I did want to mention if people are thinking, wait, I thought that APS clients need to be 65 or older. Wasn't it different? This was recently changed, so it is now 60 years plus.

Patti Prunhuber: I'm going to talk a little bit in more detail about those expansions that happened as of July 1st, 2021 in the Home Safe Program. As Vivian mentioned, the age for eligibility for Adult Protective Services was lowered to age 60 plus because people were finding that the APS programs age limit was really not appropriate to when individuals did need assistance and protective services. And this is a really important one and it relates very directly to Home Safe's housing services persons in APS intake or the investigation process can receive immediate homeless prevention services. And there was a concern that you had to actually have been approved for Adult Protective Services and that could take 30, 60, 90 days and by then the housing situation had deteriorated or an eviction had not been stopped. So the housing that maybe could have been preserved was lost. For that reason, there's this idea of immediate assistance, it's contained in the statute and I've listed below the Welfare and Institutions code sections 15770(b), (c), talk about this expanded eligibility.

And in the All County Welfare Director's Letter that is you have a link in the chat, it makes clear that even if the person is ultimately found ineligible for APS after the investigation, it doesn't create any problem that you paid for their rent or did some immediate homeless prevention service that's permitted. There is an expanded definition of what it means to be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. And I know there was a question asked regarding whether you had to have an eviction notice and we'll cover this more later, but the answer is absolutely not. There are many ways of determining that a person is at risk of homelessness and you do not necessarily need a notice to quit or an eviction notice. The program put an increased focus on serving older unhoused adults and recognizing that for older adults living on the street is particularly dangerous and therefore the concept of self-neglect for people who are living on the streets would mean that they would be eligible for services. And then there's an expanded list of core service requirements which emphasize collaborations with your coordinated entry system of your homeless service provider in your county with area agencies on aging and other community-based organization with homeless service providers with behavioral health and

a lot of emphasis on housing first and on evidence-based practices and multi-service partnerships. Next page.

So let's start with the Homeless Prevention Assistance. There are people who can get a range of benefits, but the really important thing to know is this is not an exhaustive list. The counties have very flexible funding. They can use it for rental arrears and paying rent going forward, or a portion of the rent, or mortgage payments. It's available to homeowners as well to get somebody into housing. It could pay for housing application fees, move-in costs, security deposits, transportation of your belongings, first and last month's rent. If somebody needed basic furniture, it could cover that. There's really no limit. The question came up at one point whether it could provide very short term personal care services for a person who had need for help with their activities of daily living until in-home supportive services was approved. And the answer was yes. There's really no limitation on what the money can be spent on so long as it is used to either prevent homelessness for an individual who's at risk or to get somebody housed.

And then there's language in the certification that every county director signs that that says that counties should maximize direct financial assistance so that clients get the greatest amount of support possible. So that \$92.5 million a year of additional funding that came in 2021, '22, and again this year in '22-'23 is available to pay for a range of services including case management. But the emphasis is really supposed to be on direct financial assistance. And then housing navigation that could be helping people find alternative housing or negotiating with landlords for to get the person accepted as a tenant. And it could also be getting people signed up on various lists for senior housing or other assisted living housing and then home repairs or accessibility modifications. These can be done so that somebody can stay in their own home and it can be for a person who owns their home or it can be for a tenant. There's no prohibition on having accessibility modifications paid for on a place that the person is a tenant in.

And then longer term housing stabilization is also authorized so that you could have connecting to in-home supportive services or other home health services. Connecting to in order to stabilize somebody in their current home, or to relocate to new housing, or other permanent supportive housing. So preventative services are varied and they can include any preventative measure that will save a tendency or help individuals regain stability in their current housing or move and achieve stability in a new housing location. Here are some additional homeless prevention services, intensive case management and often it's the Adult Protective Services worker working with a homeless service provider and perhaps a behavioral health service to make sure that the individual is getting the services and case management that they need. And there's language in the All County Welfare Director's Letter saying that this intensive case management should be motivational and trauma informed based on best evidence and evidence-based practice. But you cannot be dismissed

from Home Safe for not participating in case management. It's a support, it's not a mandatory requirement.

Landlord, tenant intervention. And that includes connecting clients with your local legal aid or legal services program for eviction representation or prevention, for tenant education to repair credit so that you can then apply for new housing, cleaning and de-hoarding assistance. And often there's a need to combine some company that will come through and do a decluttering or de-hoarding with the client in a trauma informed appropriate, culturally competent way. And that there also needs to be ongoing behavioral health support that can be set up to help the client maintain a place that complies with health and safety. Cleaning services, hazard removal. And then as we mentioned, connection to healthcare whether it's IHSS, or one of the waiver programs, or other health and personal care. And I know many of you work at the intersection of aging, and healthcare, and figuring out how to wrap those services with the housing so that somebody can maintain their current housing or move to suitable housing in the community. Next slide.

So who is at risk of homelessness? The question has been asked actually in the chat. Do you need to have a notice to quit or a notice to vacate? The answer is absolutely not. There is very good language in the all county welfare director's letter that is in your chat and it says that amendments to the welfare statute to section 15770(c)3 clarify that individuals who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence may include individuals who have not yet received an eviction notice, grantees, and that's the Home Safe Program county employees should be attentive to all forms of housing instability that place an individual at high risk of homelessness in addition to eviction or foreclosure. For more information on risk factors that may indicate that someone is at high risk of becoming homeless, refer to attachment 2 of the October 15, All County Welfare Director's Letter. And that link to that All County Welfare Director's Letter is in the chat.

If you have time to read the whole thing after this training, it's really a very forward-looking document and has a lot of very helpful instruction about how counties are supposed to operate their home safe program to really benefit clients who are at risk of housing instability. And the directors sign a certification upon receiving their county funding that says they agree to abide by this all county welfare director's letter. It is not nearly guidance, it is controlling law for this program. So you might want to look at other risk factors. Rent burden is one, the general rule is that if people are paying more than 50% of their income for rent and utilities, they are severely rent burdened and they are by definition very housing precarious. Other risk factors include recent institutionalization if they recently got out of jail or prison, or a nursing facility, or a hospital or loss of household support.

This could be a spouse, or parent, or person they were living with is has left the home or has died and they no longer have the support both financially and

perhaps in terms of their care needs. Any unsafe living situation in many of these adult protective service cases come in as because they are in a situation where they're at risk of abuse or neglect or some other financial exploitation where they're currently living. And what it says in the All County Welfare Director's Letter is that you can't afford new permanent housing on your own and you lack family resources. And family resources is it's really important to not assume that because somebody has a daughter in Merced or a son in some maybe even that community, if they're not coming forward to support the individual's housing needs, then they lack family resources. Next slide

Vivianne Mbaku: Patti. I did want to pull up a question that is related to what you're talking about right now.

Patti Prunhuber: Yes.

Vivianne Mbaku: So one person asked, they said, "In LA County I was informed that Home Safe was for renters only. Is that accurate?" And so I think that kind of relates to what you were just talking about, about family resources.

Patti Prunhuber: It is not accurate it both in terms of help to avert a foreclosure and help to modify a home so that it can be accessible and the person can stay there. It is fair to look at the cost of the mortgage or the amount that's owed and say that this is not a viable place for this person going forward. They don't have the current resources or the ability to get those resources that would allow them to stay there, but it's still possible to pay enough to keep them there temporarily until a place has been found where they can relocate.

Vivianne Mbaku: Thank you.

Patti Prunhuber: Okay, so who is homeless? This is very similar to the definition that is used in the federal government McKinney-Vento Act as well as many of our state programs. And it is a person who lacks a fixed or regular nighttime residence. So a person who is couch-surfing, who has been allowed to stay somewhere for a night or two but has no tendency or right to stay. A person who is in a shelter, a hotel or motel, or other temporary accommodation, any place that's not designed for sleeping. So that includes sleeping in your car or a vehicle, sleeping in a temporary shelter, or in an encampment.

And next slide. So what are some problems that we frequently see in the Home Safe Program? I'm going to preface this by saying we also see some really great results of keeping older adults housed and safe in ways that the program was meant to accomplish. And we see really creative multidisciplinary partnerships that are bringing together service providers who are very used to working with people with disabilities and older adults, with homeless service providers and with the county APS program and coming up with some very creative solutions so that people are being placed in permanent supportive housing and they're getting the healthcare that they need wrapped around. And so I don't want to

suggest that there aren't some great success stories. There are, and feel free to put in the chat if you have some that you'd like to lift up. But we do see some persistent problems and one of them is if the Adult Protective Service client needs help with their activities of daily living or have other disabilities that make housing them either in their current home or in an alternative community based housing more difficult that they are often seen as not good candidates for homeless prevention services.

And that may mean that they are then being referred only to Boarding Cares known as the residential care for the elderly. And these can be good housing solutions in the continuum of care for certain individuals. But we want to make sure that in thinking about the housing options for these APS clients, we first recognize that many of them do have physical and other disabilities that make it so that they need supports. And then the second thing is that in the All County Welfare Director's Letter, they make clear that in thinking about housing solutions, we should be advancing community living consistent with the principles of the Supreme Court decision in Olmsted, which says that, "An individual should get the services and supports that they need in order to have the most integrated housing possible under this their circumstances." So knowing that we have supports to help people with ADLs, or other disabilities, or to get home modifications, these should not be reasons why people become institutionalized.

Another problem that we've seen is that there is no written denial or approval notice and often people don't know where they are in the process. They were either referred or self-referred to Adult Protective Service and maybe weeks or even months have gone by and there's no answer. And this relates to the next problem, which is then you have a representative who has gotten an authorization and with your authorization signed by your client, you try to talk to the APS worker about whether the case has been accepted, whether they have been referred to Home Safe, which is a separate step that needs to take place. And the APS worker might say that they are prevented from talking to you even if you have a signed release because of the strict rules of confidentiality around Adult Protective Services. But as long as your client is competent to sign an authorization, they are able to have you obtain information on their behalf. And then back to number two, in addition to not getting a timely decision, there's a whole scope of benefits that you might get and you don't know whether you've gotten some, or none, or all of them. And then the right to appeal that determination. Next slide.

So here are some quick advocacy tips and feel free to put some in the chat if you have some others. But it's often very helpful to ask to meet with your county Adult Protective Service and Home Safe administrators and the subcontracting organizations that are actually providing the Home Safe Services. Having that meeting, recognizing that each county's program is being run a little differently, in some the APS worker is doing all of it, in others they have subcontracted out to housing organizations. It's good to meet all the different partners so that

there's coordination and then a person that you can bring problems to. You may have a county that has adopted its own Home Safe policies, written policies and if you do, you can certainly request those Home Safe policies.

Again, I'm going to put in a plug for reading and becoming familiar with that October 15th, 2021 All County Welfare Director Letter guidance. And that guidance has multiple attachments that relate to the kinds of evidence-based practices that should be used and what kind of data collection should happen and also how these programs will be evaluated. And then you can ask for your county certification, which is something that each county's director signs in order to get the funding that they have been allocated. And it says the number of people they're expected to serve in the homeless prevention component and also in the homelessness component. And then there's, because they are collecting data, you can track whether people are able to access this program and whether they're getting the services that they need. Next slide. I'm going to turn it over to Vivianne.

Vivianne Mbaku: Thank you Patti. So I just want to acknowledge the amount of questions that we have in the Q&A box. Keep them coming and we will hit on as many as we can. So we wanted to do a hypothetical to kind of just elucidate some ideas about the ways that the Home Safe Program could help potential client, and then also some potential hiccups that might come up that might need further advocacy from either a worker or an legal aid attorney who's helping a client. So in this hypothetical, we have Sam, a 75-year-old client. Sam has not received an eviction notice yet, but his landlord told him that he sold the house and he has 90 days to move out. Sam's only income is SSI. Sam's daughter lives an hour away, but she says she can't take him in. Sam also uses a walker and has some cognitive issues from a head injury 10 years ago, but he's been capable of taking care of himself with five hours of IHSS a week. He is on the list for senior housing, but the wait is two to three years and APS Home Safe has assessed SAM and recommended a boarding care facility or RCFE. So if you could put into the chat some of the potential issues, red flags that you're seeing and some potential advocacy pathways that you see with this hypothetical with Sam.

I think that just to start off, definitely Sam would be eligible for the Home Safe Program because he's at risk of homelessness even though he hasn't received an eviction notice. He does know that he's going to have to be out of the home in 90 days. And I think some of the complications would be that he does have some ambulatory issues and some cognitive issues. We don't know how bad the cognitive issues are, but he's been able to take care of himself with just a few hours of IHSS. So that indicates that he probably would be able to live independently somewhere else with that IHSS moving forward. Patti, I don't know if you had any comments while we're waiting for some comments to come in.

Patti Prunhuber: Oh, we've got lots of comments. So I'll start out with some there's a question about whether an RCFE would accommodate his needs with ADLs and would he

get IHSS at an RCFE to use a lot of acronyms. And I think one thing that's important to know is that the first thing is that he has said that he really doesn't want to go there. So I think that's important and IHSS does not come into residential care for the elderly because it's considered to already provide 24 hour care and supervision, but there are certain assisted living waivers that provide additional medical support or care support with ADLs. So that is possible. There is also another question about whether Home Safe can be used for a person who is facing eviction from an RCFE because they are unable to pay. And I'm going to ask that everyone put their questions in the Q&A. So I'm not looking at the chat and the Q&A.

Vivianne Mbaku: I do see a really great comment from someone saying, "No written notice to terminate the tenancy, refer to legal services for assistance." That is a great one as well because without that, depending on where Sam lives, we don't know if the unit is a legal unit, he could be eligible for some relocation money. So yeah, that's a really good point as well.

Patti Prunhuber: Here's a question. Is the homeless prevention assistance time limited and does it have a maximum dollar amount? The answer could vary by county. The state program, CDSS does not put any limit on the amount of time or the dollar amount. Counties are permitted to prioritize the needs of their APS clients, but I read that as more deciding who is most at risk and not necessarily saying what the maximum dollar amount is. I have heard that some counties say no more than six months of rent, but there's nothing in the statute to suggest that.

There's also a question about a wait list. Can you be put on a wait list due to staffing issues? And while this is something that we've heard about happening particularly in LA County, there's a couple things I'd like to say about that. One, is that prioritizing that if they are running out of staff capacity as opposed to money, they should be prioritizing who's most at risk of homelessness or in unsafe living situation. And that also when they are suspending the program for 30 or more days, they have an obligation to report that to CDSS and what measures they're going to take to make sure that people don't fall through the cracks.

Vivianne Mbaku: I did want to hit on one other question. Someone asked, "How are dependent adults defined under APS?" And so a dependent adult is someone who's between 18 and 59 that has certain mental or physical disabilities that keep him or her from being able to do normal activities or protect him or herself. So that's just the APS definition of a dependent adult. Obviously that's kind of up for interpretation depending on what's what the situation is. But that is what APS is going by.

Patti Prunhuber: We have a question about, would this apply to people living in a skilled nursing facility? Certainly adult protective services would apply if somebody is facing abuse or neglect in a facility, but unless it's that they need to leave the nursing

facility and then are at risk of homelessness, that would be the way in which they could possibly become eligible. But I think it's an unusual situation.

Vivianne Mbaku: I do want to correct you, Patti. I believe the ombudsman applies when someone is in a facility and APS is for people who are not in.

Patti Prunhuber: Okay. Thank you. I stand corrected. There are a lot of questions about being at capacity and I think I want to emphasize that at least in Los Angeles County it is not that they have run out of money, it is a staffing issue. And I believe I answered the rest of that before. I want to pass a question to you Vivianne. We have voluntary participation and APS is an eligibility criterion, but once you consent, can you voluntarily withdraw, or are you stuck in the system?

Vivianne Mbaku: My understanding is that you can voluntarily withdraw. There's nothing about the program that's locking people in and unable to not participate anymore if they don't want to participate. And I think that also relates to, I think there was another question about helping someone who is maybe in the program but is not able into in programs who is not able to participate, provide the information needed that just sounds like someone who maybe is not ready and just needs a more supports and services outside to get them to the point that they're able to participate in a program like this.

Patti Prunhuber: Right. There were several questions about the definition of homelessness and it is the federal definition from the McKinney-Vento Act and it's also contained in our state statute. And so the questions about how do you identify the sofa-surfing homeless? If they are being asked to leave, and they don't have a place to stay, then they are at risk and they don't have a tendency so they have no right to stay. And it's true that they may avoid not intentionally, but they may not be counted in the point in time count. You don't have to be counted in the point in time count in order to be homeless. I think everyone recognizes that the point in time count misses many people who are more or less invisible because they are staying in an overcrowded situation on a very temporary basis or some other accommodations that don't bring them up to the pit count. Let's see. And there's a question about whether people who are undocumented qualify for the Home Safe Program. There is no citizenship requirement for, and I'm going to turn to you, Vivianne, for Adult Protective Services or for Home Safe.

Vivianne Mbaku: No, there isn't.

Patti Prunhuber: Where it will come up is that there may be limited housing options if the person has to move. There are certain federal subsidized housing that undocumented older adults would not qualify for. There's a question of whether a family member or friend can help a client with this self-referral process. If not, can they speak with someone who has power of attorney for the client?

Vivianne Mbaku: So I'll speak to that one. That gets complicated because one, a power of attorney is not just a general form. It would have to... A power of attorney

should have something very specific in the document that gives control to another person. So for example, someone may have a power of attorney that allows a family member to assist someone with a checking account or a banking account. It wouldn't, a power of attorney would not be something general that says, "John Doe can speak for me in all matters in my life." So I would say that the APS worker, if someone says, "I have a power of attorney, therefore I can speak for this person." They're probably going to ask to see the power of attorney. And it's really up to APS whether or not they believe that that allows them to talk to the person or not. And I would say generally they are not going to accept that, they're going to want to talk to the individual and get information from the actual individual over some other third party. And that really is best practice as well for an advocate working with an older adult or dependent adult, regardless of if someone has cognitive issues or not, it's really best practice to talk to that person themselves and you can assess their cognitive abilities, and what's going on with them yourself instead of talking to a third party about their issues.

Patti Prunhuber: And I want to mention that many people have put in the Q&A that Sam, his SSI will not support his care at an RCFE, but if he's matched with the assisted living waiver program or with PACE, that would be a way to provide him with enough income to either be at a boarding care or possibly in the community. Let's see. I think that is... Somebody mentions that the wait list for senior housing is closer to 5 to 10 years. How do we deal with the fact that people aren't going to be able to wait that long? And I guess I would just say that many, many affordable housing units are in the pipeline. We hope to see more in the next couple of years. But you're right, there are 100 eligible low income clients who need affordable housing in California for every 23 available affordable units. So we have a huge shortage and as we get more in the pipeline, that will be helpful, but obviously Sam can't wait for that. Let's see.

Vivianne Mbaku: I did see another question that I think is good to clarify. Someone said, "I was under the impression that Home Safe eligibility is different from APS senior eligibility, Home Safe being a person is 50 or older and APS being 60 or older." So that is incorrect. So Home Safe is eligibility, you need to be an APS client and to be an APS client in terms of age, you need to either be an older adult 60 plus or a dependent adult 18 to 59. So there's not different age requirements just for Home Safe. There's the age requirement that is related to APS eligibility.

Patti Prunhuber: And we just got a question of if you are working with a Home Safe client and you have a landlord who refuses to complete the tax paperwork so that the rental assistance can be paid directly to the landlord, are you able to pay that rental assistance directly to the client? And I have two answers for that question. The first is that that is source of income discrimination, which is illegal under California law. Landlords are not permitted to refuse to accept Section 8 or local rental assistance in this case, Home Safe funding. And so if you have the person living in the premises, you might want to refer that case to Legal Services for a discrimination complaint or one of your local fair housing organizations.

And the final place you can refer that is to the Civil Rights Division of Housing and Community Development, the state agency. But as a practical matter, you want to make sure the person either can move in or can stay and doesn't lose their housing. There is nothing in the CDSS guidance that would prevent the local Home Safe program from paying the money directly to the client. You'd want to be very careful about that because you want to make sure the money gets to the landlord.

Vivianne Mbaku:

So we only have a few more minutes, so we want to get to these last few slides. So this last slide is the CDSS Home Safe Resource page. I know someone asked what CDSS stands for, it's California Department of Social Services and this is their website. And this is, I believe the link has been put in the chat a few times. This is where you can find information on the Home Safe Program. But also, if you look to the right, the first bullet point that says "County Points of Contact." If you click on this on the CDSS Home Safe website, this is actually a Word document that has all of the points of contact for Home Safe for every county in the state of California. So if you have been wondering this entire time, who do I need to contact? I need to get more information about what's going on with Home Safe in my county because I haven't heard anything.

Or if you want to provide an opportunity to connect with the administrators of Home Safe in your county so that you can have better lines of communication about clients and relay any issues you're having, that's where you should go. So that all that information is up-to-date as of, I believe the end of last year, December of 2022. And this is also where you can find ACWLs that are related to Home Safe and other program updates and information. And then also just general information about eligibility for the program. So that can be really helpful and that's a good place to start if you are looking to get more information for your clients about the Home Safe Program. And then also questions about referrals. I know there's questions about the application, the application process, what does it look like? That's really going to depend county to county. So contacting your county representative is going to be the place to get more information and to be able to figure out what is the process, and how you can help your clients get through that process.

So thank you so much for attending this training. Here is all of our contact information. We would love to hear from you if you have good things to talk about with your Home Safe Program, ways that you've been able to use this program to advocate for clients. We're really interested in hearing more information from advocates about how they're navigating the Home Safe Program all throughout the state. It doesn't matter if you're in our urban county or rural county or possibly with the tribe, we want to hear about how the Home Safe program is working for your older adult clients. And when you download the slides, all of these links work. So you'll have a link to the Welfare and Institutions Code, the All County Letters, the list of the APS contacts that we've linked here, and all the other links that we have available through the chat as

well. So thank you so much for attending this training today and we look forward to hearing from you guys.