Family Financial Empowerment Webinar

March 25, 2015

Operator

Good day and welcome to the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families' Financial Empowerment conference call. Today's call is being recorded, and at this time I would like to turn the conference over to Ms. Stephanie Vester**.** Please go ahead.

Stephanie Vester

Thank you so much and welcome, everyone. Thank you for joining us today for the Resource Center Webinar on the topic of Family Financial Empowerment. My name is Stephanie Vester, and I will be helping with the logistics for this webinar today along with my colleague, Allen Bediako**.** Before we get to the much-anticipated content for today's webinar, we are going to go through just a few logistical items.

The webinar today will be an hour and a half, ending at 3:30 p.m. Eastern time. Audio for the webinar will be broadcast through your computer, so please make sure your speakers and volume are turned on. If you, for some reason, have any technical issues, problems seeing something or hearing something, you can send us a message in the 'Q&A' box in your screen or call the number appearing on the slide, 1-866-916-4672, and we will be sure to help you. Again, please make sure your computer speakers are turned on to hear the presentation.

After the presentations today, we will have an online Q&A session. We encourage you to type in any questions you think of at any time while presenters are presenting by typing them in the 'Q&A' pod located on the bottom right-hand corner of your screen and hitting 'Enter.' We'll collect what is submitted and then address those during the Q&A session at the end as time permits. If your question is for a specific presenter, please reference that when typing in your question if possible.

Throughout the webinar, presenters may reference materials or links relevant to their presentations. You can browse web links by clicking on any of the links in the 'Web Links' pod in the top right-hand corner of your screen and clicking 'Browse,' and you can download materials by selecting files in the 'Files' pod on the right-hand portion of your screen and clicking Download Files.

There is a chat pod that you can use to chat with participants or presenters throughout the webinar, and we will be including several polling questions throughout the webinar that we encourage you to participate in.

We are very excited for the content that will be shared on today's webinar, and we have a full agenda that will include brief introductions, a discussion on how healthy relationships and family financial stability connect for strong family strategies; examples from the Resource Center on healthy relationship skills and family financial stability; an overview of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit; and last but not least, a discussion of family financial empowerment in action from the Hawkeye Area Community Action Program. Following the presentations, as I mentioned, we will have an online Q&A session.

And now, our presenters for the webinar today without further ado:

- Robyn Cenizal, Director for the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families;
- Benjamin Miller, a Principal at ICF International who leads ICF support to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's development and rollout of *Your Money, Your Goals*, and to the Department of Health and Human Services' Assets for Independence Program and other asset-building programming;
- Patty Avery, who is a Program Specialist in the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Office of Financial Empowerment, and serves as a Program Manager for the *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit and training programs for a range of intermediaries who serve low-income consumers;
- Denise DeVaan, a Senior Consultant with ICF International who participated in the design of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit, managed the field test, and provides technical assistance support to the 10 national rollout partners;
- And lastly, David Hagen, who is a Data and Outcome Analyst for the Hawkeye Area Community Action Program in Iowa.

So now I will go ahead and turn it over to Robyn Cenizal to get us started and set the context for our discussion today.

Robyn Cenizal

Thanks Stephanie, and thank you for all for joining us this afternoon for today's webinar. I want to take just a few minutes of your time and tell you about the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families.

Our mission is connecting healthy marriage education skills and safety net services as an integrated approach to strengthening families. And when we talk about marriage education, it's important to realize that healthy marriage and healthy relationship education isn't just for married couples. It's for individuals, couples, families, any individual who is interested in learning skills to make better choices in future relationships or figure out maybe some of the things that went wrong in previous relationships. So we don't want you to think about just married couples when we think about healthy relationship education.

The Resource Center accomplishes this mission through the offerings that we have. Our outreach -- which includes conferences -- are Twitter (so be sure to follow us), and our monthly newsletter, which you can sign up for on our website if you're not already on our Listserv. The monthly newsletter includes tips and tools that you can use for yourself and for the families that you serve, so we encourage you to take advantage of that.

We also provide stakeholder-specific products. You'll find many of the resources that we've developed on the Resource Center website are very specific to different populations, such as culturally-appropriate material for Native American families, for working with African-American families, Latino families and so forth. But we also have products that are specific to working in the TANF environment -- child support, child welfare -- and so forth and so on, so I hope that you'll visit our website if you haven't already and take advantage of some of those resources.

We also provide training and technical assistance, which include our Integration Institutes which have been held in 19 states so far, and we're going to hear from David who actually participated in our Iowa Integration Institute. Additional technical assistance can be offered through our website. If you go to the Training and Technical Assistance page, there is a form that you can fill out and request technical assistance to support you in integrating healthy relationship education skills into the services that you provide families. We do have a very robust website, including a lot of web content, but also a search feature in our library allows you to easily access and research through a thousand research-based resources.

Our Virtual Training Center is very popular. We have six courses online now, and if you complete the course and then complete the test that happens at the end of the course, if you complete with 80 percent accuracy, [we] will actually send you a certificate which can be good for CEUs if you work in a field that requires CEUs. The system will also store that information so that you can come back later and reprint the certificate should you need to, but the links to the Resource Center and to the Virtual Training Center are included in the box to the right of your presentation that says “Web Links,” so be sure to take advantage of that.

We also have our Media Gallery which includes videos and podcasts. We realize that people like to receive information differently, so we've provided a variety of ways to access the information. Additionally, we have our Archived Webinars. So for example, today's webinar will be archived within the next two or three weeks. It will be available on our website. So after today's webinar, if you think of people who missed it that needed to see it, please feel free to direct them to the website so they can take advantage of it.

The other point about our resources is they are all free and they are all available to service providers and their families. Anyone can access the website.

The skills that we're going to talk about in terms of healthy marriage and relationship education skills are these core components: the interpersonal skills such as communication and conflict resolution, as well as critical skills, parenting, and financial education. The interpersonal skills are critical because these are skills that transfer from the family, to the schools, to the workplace, and to the community. The skills that are related to parenting and financial management, these are important because they not only improve family functioning, but they also reduce stress. Issues related to parenting and issues related to financing are the top two issues that negatively impact families. And when there's stress at home, that stress can go to the workplace and interfere with workplace productivity. So it's very important that we learn these skills in a way that helps to improve our functioning and reduce those stressors. These skills can also be integrated individually or collectively as part of a comprehensive program.

So that brings us to making a case for integration. Integrated services are good for clients with complex needs. Now most of us have complex needs, but folks are more likely to take advantage of additional resources that are being offered in an environment where they're already accessing services, or it's a trusted environment like a community center or some other place that they are already involved in. So we think that that's an important point. And today's presentation is going to focus on one of the skills that I mentioned, the financial management skill, and it's going to showcase a new resource for you. We're also going to hear from David Hagen, who's going to tell us how his organization has integrated the financial education component into the work that they do.

When we talk about integration, we like to focus at the Resource Center on the idea that there are opportunities for integration across all the spectrum of social services that families access. When you look at this graphic and you see all of the different touch points for families, if we can find different strategies to integrate positive messaging around healthy relationships and information about these skills within these different systems, we can kind of holistically serve these families and change the culture.

Currently, people tend to think more about professional development than they do about, "How do I get these skills that I need to be a better parent, a better spouse, or a better partner?" And that's really the idea of what we're trying to do at the Resource Center. It's to change that culture and make it just as important for people to access the skills they need to be better within their family, and to create a more positive, healthy environment that promotes positive outcomes for children. But that's the whole point of integration, and so without further ado, I'm going to turn you over to Ben Miller so that he can tell you all about this new resource. Ben?

Benjamin Miller

Great. Thank you, Robyn, and thanks for having me today, everyone. I wanted to start off by inviting everybody to reflect for just a moment on how money and finances are connected to the outcomes that you're working with families to achieve. Reflect on if your program is supporting healthy marriage education, responsible fatherhood, employment, even housing and micro-enterprise.

I'm guessing that among all of us, you can think of a number of examples where finances either present a challenge to attaining the outcomes that people are seeking, or present a threat to the sustainability of outcomes that you're working with families on. It's really, to reinforce points that Robyn was making, the thinking behind financial capability integration. Money is so interconnected with all of the other aspects of our lives that it makes a lot of sense to integrate support on finances and support on money management into this, where we provide families on other issues. That's the theme of today's presentation.

By integration, we mean weaving support on financial empowerment and financial capability into the other activities, other programming you offer to families. It doesn't necessarily have to be programming you offer yourself. As we'll see, referrals and partnerships are an important way to provide financial capability support to the families that you work with. We'll hear in a moment from Patty and Denise about *Your Money, Your Goals*, which is one really important resource for integrating financial capability into your work. And in just a moment I'll also introduce a forthcoming resource that will help you do a lot of planning related to integrating financial capability into what you do.

To address the question, “Why integrate financial empowerment?” one reason is that it builds on the existing relationships that you’ve got with families. The work that you do with families builds that relationship of trust, which is really critical to addressing an issue like personal finances, something that is challenging to open up about. Another important reason is that the more services we can provide to families at one location, at one stop, the better. Addressing finances with families in the context of your existing programming does that.

And finally, as we’ve talked about and as Robyn talked about, money and finances are interconnected with other aspects of our lives, and the more we can take a holistic approach to serving families, the better we’ll be able to support those families.

The resource that I wanted to introduce before we turn to *Your Money, Your Goals* is called the *Integration Planning Guide*, and it’s going to be released probably in a matter of days or weeks by the ASSET Initiative Partnership (AIP). AIP is an initiative of the Administration for Children and Families, and AIP is designed to help programs integrate financial empowerment into what they do. The *Integration Planning Guide* will be an interactive tool that you can use to really walk through your programming and figure out where [it makes] sense, where can you really make the biggest difference in terms of partnering, or incorporating referrals into your workflows, or developing your own programming around financial empowerment.

It’s not limited to financial education, so managing credit and debt, supporting people that are saving, helping people with tax preparation, and taking advantage of their earned income tax credit, these are all among the strategies that this forthcoming guide will address and give programming ideas on. So keep your eyes on your inbox. Soon, in a matter of weeks or days, this guide will be released, and we wanted to call your attention to that and make sure that you’re aware of it and looking for it.

As I mentioned, it takes this refer/partner/do-it-yourself approach, giving you three different alternatives in terms of integrating financial empowerment programming into what you do. These aren’t mutually exclusive, so you can use some combination of these approaches to achieve that integration.

So without further ado, I’ll introduce Denise DeVaan, and Denise, do you want to talk about *Your Money, Your Goals*?

Denise DeVaan

Thank you so much, Ben, and we are delighted to join each of you, and of course to join Robyn and Ben and David, on this really important topic. I’m Denise DeVaan and I’m with ICF International, and our team supports Patty Avery from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and her colleagues in the creation and execution of the *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit.

As was mentioned at the beginning of the call, we refer you to the download documents afterwards. There’s one in particular that’s a two-page summary, and it goes over the 14 modules and all the tools in this toolkit in just two pages. Today, we’re not going to cover all 14 modules, but we are instead going to focus on a few of them: the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau assessment process, both for people who work with families and for families themselves; savings; income and resources; paying bills, cash flow.

We'll go through these and you'll be able to experience some concepts and some tools that you could take right away to share with families or with each other, and that'll be a teaser to what else is available to you.

But without further ado, I want to introduce you to Patty Avery. We're so delighted she can join us from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Patty is the architect of this great tool kit, and as the architect, came from the field and really had a feel for it. She's a former banker. She's worked with homeless families. She's experienced a lot of families that you also work with and so Patty, could we just say hello from you, and will you please introduce us to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit, and the resources that are available?

Patty Avery

Great. Thank you so much, Denise, and I've had a little technological glitch and I won't be able to advance my slides, so if you could advance them, thank you. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has created the *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit. This is a screenshot of the page at our website where you can download, as well as everything you would need to train staff to use the information and tools with the people that you serve. We have an implementation guide, train-the-trainer videos, and the training slides that you or someone in your organization could use to equip staff are available both in English and Spanish. We also have a document that helps you create a local referral guide so that, just as Ben talked about in the integration model, referral is key. If you choose to focus on strengthening your referral streams and understanding who the best local partners are for you to refer people to for deeper services and financial empowerment, this guide will help you do that.

We also have some follow-up resources that you might choose to use if you were to offer a training in your organization to staff. There's a pre-training survey and a post-training survey that you can use as well as a follow-up survey that you could choose to use several months later to determine how they're using the toolkit, and then refine your approach to sharing that information with staff.

So we built *Your Money, Your Goals* in a process. We began with the field scan that looked and identified what was happening in the field with training front-line social services staff. We took that information and worked with Ben and Denise and the team to build a pilot version of the toolkit. We trained 26 organizations in 21 states and DC to hold these local trainings, and those organizations reached 1,400 front-line staff in a period of four months. And six months later when we followed up with them, we found that 84 percent were discussing finances with their clients, and that 72 percent were using *Your Money, Your Goals* in some way with their clients. Nearly 70 percent were making those local referrals. Their feedback informed our revision of the toolkit, which we then released to the public last summer.

Since last summer, we've been working with these 10 national partners, as you can see a wide range of partners from Community Action to [USDA] Cooperative Extension, Catholic Charities. In Los Angeles County, we're working with the Department of Consumer Affairs and they are training the Department of Public Social Services TANF case managers. Then we are working with the National Association of Community

Health Centers (NACHC). They are training their AmeriCorps volunteers. We're working [with] HHS's ACF's Office of Regional Operations. All 10 regions are holding trainings and perhaps some of you have already been engaged and reached out regarding participating in one of those trainings. We're working with the Sault Saint Marie Tribe of the Chippewa Indians, and they're going to provide us very valuable feedback on how we can best adapt the toolkit for use in a tribal context. We're working with the State of Minnesota's Financial Literacy Work Group that's made up of 10 state agencies, each of which is approaching use of the toolkit in its own way. And in Minnesota, we're also working with the state credit union network and the cooperative extension. The United Way Worldwide has identified a group of participants from across the country and the District of Columbia's Department of Human Services. So you can see, these organizations, not only do they give us geographic reach coast to coast, but they have introduced the toolkit in a wide range of settings, everything from TANF in Los Angeles to health centers' patients through the NACHC.

So now we'd like to just give you a little understanding about the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) -- and I always tell people it's quite a mouthful -- but the CFPB was created after the financial crisis by Congress to make sure that financial markets -- that these products that are created and delivered public in the United States, work for consumers. What that means is that we want to ensure that any product that people use to live their financial lives to transact, to purchase things, to save -- checking accounts, prepaid cards, mortgages, payday loans, check cashing services -- all of these products fall under our purview.

And I would encourage you, if you'll go to our website, there's information, and tomorrow we'll be holding a hearing in Richmond, Virginia, that you can actually listen to live-streamed. And the hearing regards payday loans and our proposed approach to payday loans.

We have a function on our website [where] we take complaints from consumers on a wide ranch of topics. Right now, debt collection is the highest source of complaints. So if you're working with families who have run into problems with a product or a service, it can be anything from trying to get their credit report fixed -- if they've spotted an error and companies [are] not responding to fixing it, they can call us. If it's mortgage servicing or their mortgage, any of those topics, they can call us and we can investigate. When they submit a complaint to us and we reach out, for example, to a bank or to a credit bureau, the institution has 15 days to respond to our inquiry. So people are getting answers, and we've taken over 570,000 complaints since we opened our doors.

At our website, you can look up "Ask CFPB." That's under the Get Assistance tab. At Ask CFPB, you'll find a thousand FAQs, and they're grouped by topic, but you can also search for the information that you're looking for. At our Spanish portal, which is available when you reach this page in the upper right-hand corner, there's a series of languages and you'll see "Española." If you click on that, it will take you to the Spanish portal. At that portal, we have about 400 of these translated in to Spanish. The other languages will take you to very basic information on the Bureau and particularly information on remittances.

I'd next like to talk about what financial empowerment is. I'm from the Office of Financial Empowerment. This is a financial empowerment toolkit, and we thought it was essential to really outline and identify for you what we believe financial empowerment is and how it differs from financial education, financial literacy, financial capability or capacity, the terms that you hear all the time. For us, financial education, the classes that we often hold or the things we ask people to read, that creates people who are financially literate. It results in financial literacy. But that's not enough to navigate the market. They need the ability to put that information to work. For us, that means the skills, they need the practical skills to put it to work, and they need access. They need access to products. They need access to services. Those services might include some basic financial counseling or coaching, or simply access to some hands-on tools that they can use. Some of the types of tools that you'll see, Denise demonstrated [in] our toolkit. We believe that combination of that basic understanding of financial literacy and the ability to put it to work results in financial empowerment.

We built this toolkit because we believed that front-line staff in social services organizations -- because of the access that they have to low-income consumers day-in and day-out, the people that they serve, and through their service, through helping them secure benefits, helping them deal with the crises they face in their lives -- in many cases they build trust with that individual or that family. We believe that that combination of access and trust can result in the creation of some very unique opportunities for providing financial empowerment in the way that Ben described -- that it's integrated, it's woven into what they do every day. So this is our perspective. This is why we built it, and we can tell you that the reports that we're getting from the field, not only from our field test, but from our national partners --and Denise is in touch with many of them -- the stories that are coming back to us every week are extraordinary, the way that people are responding to having access to this information and these tools.

The one other thing I'd like to say about it -- the other reason we built this toolkit was because we identified that these front-line staff were often reluctant to have these conversations, not only because of the cultural taboos around talking about money, but because they just didn't feel confident themselves in their knowledge and their own financial management skills. So when they participate in the training, obviously we're building their own sense of financial empowerment. Our hope and our belief was that that would result in them feeling more competent in having these conversations, and that's what we're seeing play out. So with that, I will toss it back to Denise.

Denise DeVaan

Thank you so much, Patty. Wonderful overview. Thank you for being with us. A couple of points just to let everybody know, Patty referenced a referral guide that's on the website. You all are very, very adept at having referrals for all the various areas you work on that Robyn mentioned, of course, at the beginning. We mean referral to safe and accredited credit and debt counselors, and to safe legal aid attorneys and to banks that are willing and able to create second chance accounts for people that can't bank. That's what we mean by referral. In the referral guide on the website that Patty talked about, there are national locators so that we've already gone through and sleuthed and found the best resources, and you just simply click in a zip code, etc., and you'll be able to come up with the available resources that are in your area for the individuals and families you work with.

The organization of the *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit is not just for low-income families. Many of the families or individuals you work with may not be low-income, but they may not have the financial literacy or the confidence to take action. They may know that a credit report is critical, but they're scared or don't know how to pull it in a safe way where they're not bombarded with all the things to buy and getting themselves into a sad and scary scamming situation. Or they may not really know about how to go about reducing their debt in a way that they can manage or cash flow, all these things. So the *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit is broken down in a couple different ways. First, there are introductory modules. There is an assessment for people who work in the field to find out, "What am I good at? What do I know, and what are the areas of knowledge that I want to get and the work that I want to do in my own life?" If I'm low on credit and I'm low on debt, it'll take me right to those modules.

There's also a conversation about how to bring up the money conversation in a way that is experienced positively, and each of you know how much conflict is caused when there are different values or different approaches, or different priorities in the life stage that people have -- If they have children or don't have children, education or not, all the ways their families celebrated holidays or not, and you know the rest. So the emotional and cultural differences on financial is a really great module that we encourage people to look at. These are the introductory modules.

The heart of the content is about setting financial goals. It's one thing for a mother or a family member to say, "I want a better life for my kids than I ever had." That's great, but if it doesn't turn into something pretty concrete, that aspiration doesn't become real. Savings for unexpected and especially emergencies, managing income and debt, paying bills, managing cash flow, debt, improving credit reports and scores, evaluating the different service providers and products. You know, some things are right for some and absolutely wrong for others. And then, how does one protect oneself? So that's how it's broken down. We encourage people not to use it as a curriculum, but to pick out the tools that you would find most helpful in your work with individuals or families at the right time and the right place and the right topic.

Now we're going to ask a poll question because we want to hear from you. And if I could please ask Allen to load that poll question so that everybody can respond, here's the question: "Does your program routinely address the following topics: savings, cash flow, paying bills, banking, protecting identity, debt?" Please respond, and we will be able to let everybody know what the results are.

"Does your program routinely address the following topics with clients: savings, cash flow, paying bills, banking, protecting identity, debt, credit?" -- All right. I think we've, we're getting a response here.

And then, "Which of the topics are most critical to the clients that you deal with: savings, cash flow, paying bills, banking, protecting identity, debt?" -- All right. So we're seeing paying bills and debt and cash flow are critical. I'm so glad we're covering those today. And we see that paying bills and cash flow and savings are addressed, but not as much as -- there's others. So we can see the response from you and it's what I thought it might be, and I think we're absolutely on target today. So thank you so much for participating. We can take the polls away. I'm going to use this information now, so thank you.

The first thing I want to ask you to do is to look at this particular [Client Assessment Questions] tool. This is an assessment tool that you, the front-line staffer who works directly with people, might say, "Goals are not important to financial planning." "A cash flow budget helps you track whether you'll have enough cash to cover your bills ..." "Credit," [question] number six, "is when you owe someone money." And as you take this assessment, there are other parts where it will point to an area that you may want to learn more about. We really encourage people to take this assessment.

There's also an assessment for -- it's called "Client," but [is] for a family person or for an individual, anybody you work with. Lots of times this particular assessment is not written, but it may be verbally asked. You are very smart in how you work with people, and you may just quietly come up in the conversation [with] number four: "Do you have a regular and reliable source of income?" Number two: "Are you in danger of losing your home?" Number three: "Have you set money aside for the unexpected?" etc.

There's another area about setting goals. "I want to buy a television set. It's going to cost four hundred dollars." "I want to pay down my credit card debt. I want to pay down a thousand dollars a year." And we take that and translate it into the amount that's needed, the number of weeks to reach the goal, and breaking it down into steps, then [apply] all this into the spending side of the cash flow of the budget, because this is the reducing-debt side. Then there's, of course, a simple little action plan that you could use and change and create to meet your needs.

And then we talk a lot about saving for the unexpected and for emergencies. So we say, "What is savings?" Well, savings is really setting aside money today from your income or any kind of cash that comes into your life for use tomorrow. And so the idea here is you'll hear on public radio a lot, "Don't drink a latte." And that's fine, but that's not really savings. That's just not spending. Savings would be to take the money from that latte or to take the money from something else that would be spent during the week, and literally finding a safe place to put it so it's there for the needs that are coming.

Then we ask people, "What are the kinds of unexpected expenses that come up that really wreak havoc with someone's budget?" Well, it's car repairs. It's unexpected medical costs. It's unexpected emergencies -- something goes down in the house with the plumbing. And we really ask people, "What could be covered with $500 or a $1000?"

Not three to six months. That's too big, too far, too overwhelming. $500 to a $1000. What are all the things that could get covered? And if you had $500 to $1,000 set aside in a safe place, could you deal with the emergencies? And the answer is yes. So we talk a lot about the emergency fund or the rainy day. We talk about really trying to build that so that it is available, it is accessible. The rainy day can come every day for a while, and we need to keep replenishing the emergency fund so it's there and available.

We use this example: if a car really needs new spark plugs and they cost $350 -- just bear with me for a minute, on the left-hand side -- if I had emergency savings, I could spend $350 and it wouldn't cost me anything extra except that I've got to keep replenishing it, either with the Earned Income Tax Credit or something I set aside every week or every paycheck or every month. So that's the left column or the emergency savings column. But if I put that $350 on a credit card which a lot of people do, and it's got nearly 22 percent annual percentage rate and I make the payments, and let's say I pay $50 a month before that's paid off, in the very end I would have added $28.11 to the initial cost of $350 because I had to use a credit card instead of the emergency savings.

And let's say I went to get a payday loan in the neighborhood or in the community. I get $350. It costs $15 for every $100 borrowed. That comes out to about 400 percent in terms of an APR. Well, I've got to pay back the $350, plus I've got to pay back the $52.50, plus I've got to get that done in a couple weeks, and if I add other weeks, it could cost $367.50 in fees, that is, if I pay it off in the amount of time available. But if I have to keep rolling it over, one bad additional cost adds on to the other. So we use this example and people really love it, and you may consider using it with anybody you work with.

So we really want to find money that we can save. We either increase income or we decrease our spending or we turn money into additional savings and actually, create savings. We have to find the money to save. We know people throughout the country that are kind of brainstorming together and are joined together in a garage sale so that they can create emergency savings together. There are a lot of strategies like that. If someone wants to make it a priority,

The Earned Income Tax Credit is available to people who qualify. We encourage you to go to the IRS. Many of you already know about this, but that is a great way to seed an emergency account or to pay an unexpected debt and also to have some fun with the family, too.

So where do you find a safe place for money, and where do you find a safe place for savings? The whole toolkit goes over pros and cons, benefits and loss, of what people choose to do. The CFPB doesn't say, "Do this." They say, "If you want to put it under your mattress, what are the pros and cons? If you want to go into the Bank-On situation and get a savings account, what are the pros and cons?" So it kind of helps, you know, a card -- putting it all into some kind of a debt, pre-paid, or other debit card: what are the pros and cons?

The next topic I want to cover briefly is about managing income and benefits. This particular toolkit recognizes regular income from a job; irregular income that may come, let's say, at the holiday time with a second job; the seasonal income for many people who work in the construction industry or -- the Native Americans in my state, fall is the seasonal harvesting, kind of a one-time occurrence. There's a conversation on wage benefits.

Then this [Income Tracker] is a tool that we encourage you to take, change, and use. As you know, three months of the year have got five weeks in them instead of four. We like to print this off so that there's one of these for every month, including the months that have five weeks. And people simply track down: my job, I get paid the second and the fourth week of the month, and I put it in the second and fourth week. But many, they'll be paid the first week one month and the second week another month, etc., and you start to line it all up.

And here's something that you're going to see that's very different. The bias at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is, put all the resources together. Put the cash that comes in from a job or a second job, the cash that might come in from sewing or unemployment, also the food, SNAP, TANF, SSI, child support, gifts, tax refunds, put it all in. The tax refund comes in April or maybe it'll come in January. A gift may come at the holiday time. Get it all in, because if we can look at all the resources, we know what we've got, even if, for example, the food benefit doesn't pay cash.

So then, once we get the income side down, as much as we are able to really track it, of course -- and I want to just say that we don't have the time today, but some people are visual, and this chart drives them crazy. So all they do is they take a 12-month calendar, and in the 12-month calendar they put down when the income comes in or any source comes in and when things need to go out. And visually, they're ready to go. I want to just point this out.

Quickly, then, we move into "How do we pay bills?" That deals with the spending side. We always do an exercise here that we're not going to have time to do today, but I want you just to think about this for a minute. The idea here is around needs, and the idea is around wants; and the idea is around obligations. So I want you to take a deep breath with me and pretend that you're in a room or sitting across the table from a colleague or a friend. If I say to you, "You've got to pay your rent and your utilities," would you say that's a need, or a want, or an obligation? And you've got an answer. Baby food. Is that a need, a want, or an obligation? Cell phone with a data plan. A need, a want, or an obligation? Bottled water. Is that a need, a want, or an obligation? Child support payments. Is that a need, a want, or an obligation? Pizza night out once a week with the kids. A need, a want, an obligation? Student loans. A need, a want, an obligation? And what about paying health insurance premiums, even for the first time? A need, a want, or an obligation?

And once we determine our needs, and our obligations, and our wants; that really informs the priorities around [the] spending tracker. So savings, we would really encourage some kind of emergency savings. Paying debts, housing, utilities, groceries, debt payments, on and on.

Again, I mentioned too, using a bill calendar is a great way to visually lay out what comes in and what goes out. A lot of people keep it in the kitchen along with everything else that's in the kitchen.

Then there's a tool in cutting expenses, because we don't have enough resources for sometimes our needs. Sometimes we can't cover our basic needs. Sometimes we have to bring in public benefits or additional medication resources that come in. So there's a whole tool on how to deal with television or the internet or the phone or the cell plan -- all the different ways in which expenses could be cut to create the cash, to create the resources for the needs and the obligations, and maybe a few wants. I hope that makes sense.

There's an idea in here about prioritizing bills. Many of our families have debt collector calls, and Patty spoke to that in the beginning. This is really important for the CFPB. When you go about paying your bills, number one, protect your income. If you have a car that you need to get to work, stay current on that car payment and the insurance. Please, protect your shelter, whether you rent or have a mortgage. You know, if you lose that, wow. That affects everything else. Protect your assets. Pay your health insurance, your homeowners, your auto, those kinds of things. Pay your obligations, your child support, your taxes -- the IRS will never forgive that -- and student loans. And then get to the other stuff. So this is a great tool to use with families.

Then finally, managing cash flow. The CFPB says that the cash flow budget is very different than a monthly budget. And I want to just show this concept to you, and I'm not asking you to read every line, okay? Here's the concept. With a cash flow budget, all the resources come in, both cash and non-cash. And we begin the week with what was left the week before. So in this scenario, this family starts the week with $37. And at the end of the week, they end with $142. That's pretty cool. They ended up in the black and not in the red. So they start the week with what was left, and they end the week with what is left. And they begin the second week with what was left from the first week, and then on and on it goes. And again, this can be done in a calendar if people feel uncomfortable with these charts.

So this is the Ortega family, and this family comes together and they have two children under five. They've never signed up for health insurance before. They have differences in how they approach holidays. They have differences in how they come together in terms of how they want to spend their money. We're not going to get into that. What this particular example shows you is --and he works in a hotel job for just above minimum wage, so he gets his hotel money coming in, the second week we'll see that. She brings in some sewing cash. They get a loan from a friend. They have food stamps, and they end with $864. Then they had taken out the debt loan which you see above. They got some savings they're going to do every week -- paying rent, utilities, food, transportation, cell, and entertainment. And they end up in the red on the first week. They end up in the red. That should be red on the top of the second week, so they're in a negative $8 situation. But, he gets paid from his job. She brings in sewing. And then when they do all their different expenses, they're in the black again at $273. So they start the third week in the black, $273. She brings in a little bit more from sewing, and then they paid all their expenses. They set something aside for savings. They pay their food. Now they've got a first co-pay for a doctor's appointment that they're not used to. They've got an out-of-pocket dental, and they've got still transportation for bus and entertainment, and they're in the red again at the end of that week. And then we move into the fourth week where they start in the red at the top, a negative $74. He gets paid again, a few more dollars come in, and then they decide they've got to pay that loan back. Their relationship is in trouble. They put a little bit more away for savings, more food, out-of-pocket medicine that's not covered, co-pay for a doctor's appointment, and then at the end, they're in the black. And so they start the next week in the black.

So this cash flow example is a very popular tool, and we say that you've either got to increase your cash [or] decrease your spending, but the idea here is to match the timing of resources wherever possible. Then we just say that that's basically what needs to be done. Matching of the timing of the resources, the income, the benefits, and the timing of the spending and the bills. Timing matters. And a lot of these bills can be paid in different. Sometimes the rent can be paid twice a month. Sometimes there's a public benefit that will free up cash. We don't have time to go into that, but it is very popular.

So what could you do next? And I'm just exactly on time. I'm so glad about that. What could you do next? Well, number one, you could download the whole toolkit, and you could read it for yourself and for your loved ones and for your friends and anybody connected to you. To really bring this information more robustly into your work, you could explore modules and tools that are most relevant to your work with individuals and families and in your programs. You could be brave --I think it is a brave thing to do, frankly, and I want to just acknowledge that -- and you could take the financial empowerment self-assessment. Just do it and see which areas you feel comfortable in, and do it alone. Don't do it with anybody else and don't share it with anybody else. This would be just for you.

The other thing you could do is you could do it as a group, with your teammates', etc., and learn together. Some have instituted peer-to-peer learning and study or gotten themselves educated, because the toolkit is written in sixth-grade reading ability, plain English. It's very easy to understand: lots of white space, and only the critical information is there. So there may be some areas you know a lot in, but there's others that you don't know. How to really protect your identity. What are some of the consumer laws that protect you now? And you could consider getting trained or to facilitate trainings in your own workplace and use the videos on the website.

So we are delighted to be able to share this new resource. We're so proud of it, and it is my pleasure now to turn our webinar over to a dear colleague from the great state of Iowa who has used this toolkit. And David, I want to turn this over to you.

David Hagen

Well thank you, Denise, for the wonderful introduction. Thanks, everybody, for being here. We had snow this week, so I don't know about the rest of you, but for spring it kind of threw us off guard.

So what I want to talk to you today about, Financial Empowerment: Responding to Community Needs, we are one of a thousand Community Action agencies in the nation -- and talk about building capacities in programs. So I'm going to jump right into this.

Conversation topics. Who is HACAP, Hawkeye Area Community Action Program? We started working with the Annie E. Casey Foundation a while ago and they use the term "bundling," but when I say service bundling, that really is integration, what Ben had talked about earlier today, service integration. "Light touch" programs, some of you may know different terminology for different places, “light” and “deep” touch. Light is we just see people on a limited or routine basis. -- maybe it’s once a year, maybe it’s a few months -- versus kind of a deep touch, which is a very intensive case management kind of program. We have very few programs in our portfolio that are what I would see in an intensive case management program where you bring somebody in and you’re seeing them every week and helping them set up goals. That’s not where we are. We have programs where we see people in a much more limited capacity.

So I’m going to talk about, how do I bring that in, how do I bring in that integration in that kind of environment? And also, very importantly to that is preparing the field staff, because if they’ve come from this light touch environment, some of them aren’t even used to talking and meeting with people on a regular basis, especially when it comes to something that they’ll consider as very personal, their personal finances. At least for Iowa or the rural states we serve, there’s a whole lot of people that say, “Hey, that’s my business, not yours.” And we have that, and how do we work with that?

Talk about two examples that we’re starting throughout the South. We’ve just started the training process, people in the *Your Money, Your Goals*, and I’ll be talking about that. But the bigger picture that I really want to get into is, why would I want to consider financial empowerment as a solution to a family or a community-level need? Community Action is about bringing local solutions to identified local needs, and I want you to think about that as the bigger piece. Why is that important? And I think this addresses not only the family, but some of the things going on in our communities, and I hope to have a chance to illustrate that as we go.

So my first poll question ... “What do you know about Community Action?” “I work for Community Action agencies,” “My employer partners with Community Action,” “I know about the local” -- I can’t see them all here. I’m looking off of the -- “I know about Community Actions, but I don’t know about their details,” and I think the bottom line is -- Allen, if you can read the other piece down there, that would be great.

Allen Bediako

Sure. “I work for a community agency,” “My employer partners with CAA,” “I know about local CAA, but don’t have interaction with them,” “I volunteer with a local CAA,” and “There is a local CAA where I live.” Really. Question --

David Hagen

-- It looks like. Coming in, it looks like either “I have workers” or “I have a people partner that is close to 50 percent.” That’s pretty exciting. Let’s just go ahead and move on forward so some of this maybe… oh, there’s my responses right there. Okay, so “Nobody volunteers.” But hey, that’s really good to know from the agency-wide, because we are one of the 10 rollout partners of the Community Action Partnership, so they’ll actually be able to come back to this and say, “Hey, people know about us. This is a positive thing.”

I’m going to move into my next slide. Community Action is a network really about changing people’s lives and trying to get them hope -- dedicated the entire community. Sometimes we get drilled down and we’re only helping people in poverty, but we really believe that we build health through communities for everybody in there by addressing the needs of those most in need, but that's not just necessarily family, but also community. I won't say anymore on this. You guys probably know about that.

We've been around for just about 50 years -- HACAP started actually in 1965 -- but this is [the] Economic Opportunity Act that was signed in '64. That's what started Community Action and Head Start and a variety of other things. But the key I want to focus on is the mobilized resources, public or private, the elimination of poverty, which is the War on Poverty, or more importantly the causes of poverty, and then maximum feasible participation, which is about getting everybody involved.

Johnson talked about this in '64, the War on Poverty, and something just to think about is back then, even in '64, they were talking about how we're not about making people dependent on programs. We're not about setting up entitlement projects, but this an effort to allow people to develop and use their own capacities. And I think this ties in so well with this financial empowerment.

So when I bring this together as a Community Action Network, inadequate financial literacy empowerment, I would say, is a cause of poverty -- both on the very strict definition for "economic poverty," where I'm talking about area median income, if you're getting funding from HUD or the VA -- or I'm talking about the Federal Poverty Threshold or Line, 100-percent poverty.

"Relationship poverty" certainly is what we've talked about when we get into healthy marriage and healthy partnerships. And then "asset poverty," which I think is a term that we really need to lift up -- it's having the resources or assets where if you lost all of your income today, would you have enough to sustain yourself for six months? Now, I guess most of America doesn't have that, but certainly a tie-in, and financial empowerment really allows people -- Denise laid out a few of the tools -- [to] really develop and use their capacities. We're trying to move people to make their own choices where they can look at those pros and those con's and say, "Hey, this is where we want to go."

So why *Your Money, Your Goals*? Truly, because it's people-centered and the toolkit -- there's forty-some different tools in it, allows you to individualize it to each client coming in. So once you build that rapport, once you get over those cultural barriers, and they start to say, "Hey, I can trust this person," you can now assist them and identify what it is they really want to work on first and help them to chart their own progress, because it is their money, it is their goals. I can also tailor it to specific programs, so hopefully it will all light up shortly.

'Really like this because it fosters competency in my line staff. That's something we did our first training, and we did a follow-up training, which I'll get into, but the first one is, trying to get this thing done and today, and it's a lot of material and thoughts about that [sic]. And the second one is people going back saying, "We need some role-play. We need some chances to practice this." So the second time around, we did that, and that was very positive. My staff went from people that are just used to talking to people on the phone and hanging up, very hesitant to meet somebody in person, and now they're, "Hey, I think I can do this." That's because of the friendly approach that this tool guide is, and it's very positive. And I think the same thing on clients, we'll see.

But we first talked about this last year to some clients: "What do you think about this?" The first response I got from a low-income person said, "Are you going to take my cigarettes away?" I think there's this fear from a lot of programs, that if we come from this paternalistic, top-down, "I know what's right for you, this is what you need to do," people get afraid of that. To be able to change that conversation is, "This isn't about taking your cigarettes away; this is about you making the choice of how you want to spend your entertainment dollars" -- that's a very, very different kind of conversation and very empowering conversation.

So poverty line -- it started in the '60s when Community Action started. [Back] then, 30 percent of the budget of a household is on food. Doesn't include child care, health costs, transportation costs, but it's important because all the kinds of programs that we serve have an eligibility factor. So Head Start is 100 percent poverty or less. Energy Assistance or LIHEAP is 150 percent or less. WIC is 185. Free lunch for the schools is 130 percent in the State of Iowa. Reduced lunch is 185, and then the list just kind of goes on. So it becomes a fight, an administrative component of everything that we do, and it exists in Community Action and probably in some of your state services, if you guys think about where you are.

Now, leading to my next poll question: "What percent of poverty does the federal minimum wage of $7.25 represent, assuming a household of three and one full-time equivalent?" So the families we serve, about two-thirds are single parents. The single parent's working a full-time job and has two kids. What does that represent?

All right, we'll give it a few more seconds. How are people doing? We got 10, 20 … pretty good representation here. So base assumption, 125 percent of poverty, 30 percent, and the next, I'm seeing about 30 for about 75 percent of poverty and you want to roll what the answer is for me? Okay.

Seventy-five percent for a household of three is what the federal minimum wage of $7.25 is. The 95 percent was if you are a household of two. The 125 percent would be if you're a household of one. So using the register, and it comes out -- you can Google this if you want to find information, it comes out in January every year -- it looks at your gross income and your household size. So if I have a household of one, 100 percent of poverty is $11,700, and if I have a household of three, that's $20,000. Now typically, it's very hard for us to conceptualize that. So when we talk about that, we move it to the full-time equivalent for a dollar an hour. So $9.66 would put you right at 100 percent of poverty if you had a household of three. Obviously if you had two working people you can drop that down, but for conversation, where a lot of our households are single-parent with two -- or the average in the state of Iowa is a household of three, 2.5 to be exact -- that's a pretty good conversation point.

Living wage is a piece that maybe some people know. Two hundred percent of poverty, 250 percent depending on who you talk to, that is meant to be the income you need to cover your basic needs – food, shelter, transportation, not eating out typically. So you look where we are. If we really want sustained households, they need to be making that $19.30 an hour, maybe $20 an hour. And if you think about the number of jobs in your community that your starting job is there [sic], you'll see that there's a big gap in our current -- this is Iowa data, so -- there's a gap between where people start making money and where it is where they can actually start making and saving money for assets, if you think about that asset poverty.

So, a little bit more about HACAP. We cover six counties. There's about 400,000 people in that service area, and we serve a little over 55,000, so we serve about one in eight people in that area. The typical poverty rate is between nine and 15 percent by county. Some of us know Cedar Rapids because that's the biggest city in our area -- the flood in 2008 -- and I think what really stands out with us is since 2009, we have been 22, 25 percent in service numbers for low-income folks, over our flood year numbers. The other thing to think about is 56 percent of these folks are employed or maybe underemployed. Sixty-six percent are children -- and where we really are is we're really moving towards trying to move folks in on skills and community building, which can be a challenge.

Our core programs -- we're going to roll, and the financial empowerment tool has made it as easy as we can build that for. Housing stabilization -- which is energy assistance. WAP is weatherization. We do some Rural Rehab, where we have local funds to go out and do a lot of repairs [for] seniors who are living out in the rural areas and they don't have the money anymore to maintain their property --whole different kind of an issue. Head Start, Early Head Start, homeless housing, both for veterans and for families, maternal and child health, Feeding America Food Bank, Rural Senior Services -- so we have a portfolio of services where you have those 55,000, and they don't all have the same needs. They come in at different places, different times, but very, very vast kind of thing.

So this slide here, I think I want to drill down to what really, when we started looking at it -- maybe it doesn't come out very loud [sic] -- but this is data from the Iowa Policy Project. They're a non-profit, loosely based at the University of Iowa. What you're seeing here, that red line is what they find is the break-even point for a household to have stable income. And you see this blue line above that, and then you're seeing loss of public funds, loss of child care subsidy, and the first big drop you see is loss of LIHEAP and then loss of food support or food assistance. The bottom piece is a dollar an hour, if it's not coming out clear, so that's about at $12 an hour, and then you see this start inclining up again. You see loss of the Earned Income Tax Credit. But then you don't, until you get to about above $22 to $23 an hour, $24 an hour, start seeing a family where they're going to have stable income to cover their basic pieces.

I leave the site there. This is for a single parent with two children, one in preschool, one school age. The Iowa Policy Project does this by county, and they have about 60 different household types, different sizes, ages, and demographics. When we see this, that's a community problem that we have a lot of people who are in this kind of thing. There are some people who call this the "cliff effect," for those who follow some of the literature in sociology, but we see this as real, and the Policy Project, they did data in '08 and '12, and they're going to continue this every four years. We see this as a real thing that we need to address, and we see the solution to that is financial empowerment.

So part of our community action is we assess needs and then we review our programs. And what we saw, and the first example I'm going to get through here shortly -- this is our Planning Cycle Guide of planning, integration, evaluation -- but I want to go through this real quick. We did some initial budget counseling and review. You see some of our numbers, 650 people in 239 households working with flood-affected families. We still get floods every year and the state has some money. And again, looking at my demographics, you see 66 percent are below federal poverty, 51 percent of households have children, and 57 percent have employment income. Basic budgeting is all this was. And then credit repair where we have some other community partners.

But getting into how we roll out our pieces for *Your Money, Your Goals*, and thinking about that review process -- A couple of years ago, the local utilities came to us and said, “You know, every year, we assist you in your assessment resolution program, helping people get reconnected if they lost their utilities, and three months later they’re back in crisis.” And they’re saying, “This isn’t working.” And so when we started looking at things, this is the backdrop to think about. This is our LIHEAP, our Low Income Heating Assistance Program, DOE-funded. The people that are eligible, they’re at 150 percent of poverty or less. Typically we serve about 7,000 households a year, and Iowa has what’s called Utility Energy Moratorium. So between November first and April first, if you have serious arrears in utilities, you cannot be disconnected. It’s a state law, because it’s considered a safety issue. And in cold climates where you may have sub-zero temperatures, if you don’t have heat in your house, that can be a life-threatening situation, especially for seniors and especially for young children. So we have a law in the state of Iowa that says, if you’re not paying your bills or you get behind for whatever reason or the utility cost spikes and you can’t afford that, you can’t be disconnected. But when April 1st comes along, we’ll get a slew of these all-of-a-sudden disconnect notices, and then people typically have about two weeks that they either have to either get that arrears paid or they’re going to get disconnected.

So we serve about 7,000 a year, about 1,200 are in crisis come April, and what we found is in looking at this past year review, there’s a segment of this group that paid their utilities from April to October, and then when the moratorium kicks in, they stop paying their utilities, not just for one month, but for five months. And the argument is, “Well, this was our chance to buy boots and shoes and a little more money for food,” because if you’re looking at that chart, if you’re living below 200 percent poverty, if you’re living at 150 percent poverty or 125, there’s not a lot there to budget to cover all your ends. So you’re seeing families that are saying, “I have too much month at the end of my money.”

All of us came together and we started realizing to get people out of poverty, to get them to a position where they’re financially stable as a household, they not only need more money, but they need a better way to utilize their money. They need those skills where they can come forward and say, “Hey, I’m making a difference.” And that’s where we brought in *Your Money, Your Goals*. The whole strategy really makes sense in this kind of piece.

So here’s where we are. A year ago, we had the utilities upset because 30 percent of these people are falling back off the wagon and saying, “Hey, what’s going on?” We have people that have literally been empowered, I would say, by the system to not pay their bills for five months and we think that’s bad behavior. That’s not an empowering way of things. And we said, “We’ve got to help them. We’ve got to move the needle,” if it will.

So here's where we are. Here's our intervention strategy. We're training our line staff. They see the value. They see a lot. There was some resistance. For one of them it's personal, and that's the nice thing about the *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit is those five modules where it talks about how to approach it, the cultural differences, and then getting people the practice -- really allow people that normally would say, "I'm not comfortable talking about this," because they really initially sat down and they're not necessarily talking about it. One of my best counselors that has come out of this is still going to say, "Hey, when it comes to credit, I'm not comfortable talking about my own credit, because I'm not in the right spot I want to be in. I'm not going to share about that." But we have somebody else on the team who will take that referral. So it's exciting to see them talking together as a team and starting to look at who has strengths for bill tracking and who understands credit, and it's changed the needle on how our team of people want to focus as they start saying, "Hey, we can do this," because I think in the past, they kind of thought, no. They kind of put it at arm's length.

We started with a 30-minute one-on-one session, and those started this week. We've got a partnership, a 2-1-1 to help the scheduling. We're doing, for the first time ever, up front -- if people want that crisis intervention, they have to come in for a session. And we want to do basic budgeting at first. There's a toolkit assessment piece for clients, and the third question on there is, "Are you at risk of a disconnect? Yes, no, I don't know." And the answer, if they say yes, is call 2-1-1 or call your local agency that deals with crisis assistance, which is us. So that's a piece that we're not using in this, for example. We're directing [sic] immediately with budget, emergency funding, bill tracking, and depending on where things are, then a follow-up session to measure success, because we want to get a good, solid outcome. And then to introduce additional tools -- I think I've hit that pretty well.

Our second piece that we're integrating into -- we as a Feeding America, we have Operation BackPack, which is supplying weekend food for children that are at risk of hunger. In 2011, we had nine schools on board. We're currently at 50 and are moving toward 70. The amazing thing about this program is once you get school buy-in and we get a community partner, because it's really about empowering the schools to take this on, it's just kind of like a wildfire. It's just growing. It's a program truly driven by community partnership, where we get schools involved, we get volunteers involved, and we're working with populations that -- they get meals, typically breakfast and lunch at school -- they might miss an evening because there's no food at home -- but then on the weekends they're at risk of hunger. And at least for our area, the data says that one in four children on any given night has a chance of not getting a meal, a chance of going hungry. And we think, as Iowa is a big food producer, man, that's really kind of a paradox, if you will. That shouldn't be happening. I imagine in different parts of the country it's different, but we saw this as a real need.

So how we're bundling this process now, we have these 1,500 kids that have signed on. We got them into some energy assistance. We moved toward the Housing Stabilization Project. So we used to be thinking about, this is a BackPack program, and this is LIHEAP. We're now trying to integrate those services together or bundle around the families that want it so they're getting their energy assistance and they're getting the financial empowerment. One of our local extensions does "Buying more for Less: How to Get More for Your Dollar and Eat Healthier," and we're bringing those things together.

Still, it's a task, so ask me in a year how it worked. It requires school counselor buy-in, and for some, they saw it right away as a value, and others said, "This is more work for us." And that's a process. We started that last February, and that was a six-month conversation with schools. The community stakeholders that are volunteers that provide a lot of donations -- because just about everything in our BackPack Program is driven by community dollars as opposed to other things that are grant-driven -- they all liked it. They all want to be helping people empower, and people like to see people take initiative and take control of their life. They see this intervention strategy as, instead of just kind of a handout once or during the school year, it's really a way to help them out of that situation and stabilize. Because if we think about, there's not enough money. We have to help them utilize their money more efficiently. And a lot of these folks, [they are] really good at understanding the social service network in their area and when to get LIHEAP, when to go back for crisis, and which food banks are open in which month and where. This is just the next piece to start bringing things together, and we think working with the schools is very, very important. I saw one of the questions earlier. There's a reverend that asked about, "Is this getting in at the schools?" Hopefully I can tell you yes, this is how we're doing it. So that's where I am.

Building capacity in review -- 'really takes buy-in from program directors. We brought this picture together over a year ago about integration. It really helped with the people that were on those programs first and then down to their staff, because they have to see the big picture. We, at least in Community Action agency, we talk about funding silos. We have Head Start in one spot. We have energy assistance in another. We might have health assistance and WIC in another. Every one of those, if you think back to that slide, has a different percent poverty eligibility, and with that, there's all different kinds of grant compliance pieces, and we get grant managers in each of those and they get so drilled down on their particular grant and the requirements and the reports that are due. It's total labor-intensive for a lot of those things that people get drilled into their silos, and so we had to take time to build the bigger picture: how each one of our bigger programs and how our community partners start to become bigger, so this is the bigger piece.

And when we start looking at how finances -- one of the presenters talked about earlier, (I think it was Ben), how finance kind of integrates in everything we do -- and we start talking with the Head Start people, we start talking with the people in transitional housing, and everybody starts saying, "Yeah, we need to have these financial skills." That was our process. We start redefining success for the families and seeing them at that family level, where they are to move toward stabilization, which is a different piece than if we're coming from Head Start, where I'm trying to get children ready for school and look at their development. But it takes that bigger picture and then the buy-in from community partners. At the Community Action agency, and probably others, it really takes that next tie-in to get the community volunteers, the admin and the staff, and that's been working, but that takes time. You just can't do that overnight. Those things were all done close to a year or six months in advance. We're just getting people trained now for the field staff piece. I think maybe Head Start's next, but we'll see. But I think that's where I am.

So thanks. I went too fast, didn't I? So that's what I have to present. I'm excited about this if you can't tell by my voice, and I'll open it up for questions.

Stephanie Vester

Great, thank you so much, David. So just a reminder to everyone, you can ask a question by typing it in the Q&A box that's located on the right-hand corner of your screen, and we will go ahead and take the first question that has come in. This question I think would be for Patty or Denise: "Has there already been an outcome study with the *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit? Is there a plan for that?"

Denise DeVaan

This is Denise, and thank you so much for the question. I want to answer the question and Ben I'm going to ask you to help me, too. During the pilot phase, there were -- First of all, there was a feedback survey loop that happened at the time of the training. At the beginning of the training, people were asked what their confidence level was in being able to deal with money topics. At the end of the training, there was a survey that asked how their confidence was, again, and then what suggestions they'd have, and that was not an outcome study, but it was a feedback loop. But then, after the third and six months, the questions were asked -- I think Patty went over those in her presentation -- are you still using the tools and are you making referrals, etc.? Right now, in the rollout phase, there is no outcome study in the formal way we would think about that, but there are thousands of surveys that are coming in from around the country that are going to -- It's more of a formative study about how to strengthen the toolkit for the various audiences that it's been created for. So it's more formative than it is outcome-based. Ben, you might have some other thoughts here.

Benjamin Miller

No, Denise, I totally agree with that and you referred to the field test and how the field test gathered some information about the extent to which case managers were using the materials and feeling confident, and it was very encouraging. Six months later, 84 percent of case managers were discussing finances with their clients. 72 percent were using *Your Money, Your Goals* with clients, and 69 percent were referring clients to external financial empowerment resources.

Stephanie Vester

Great, thank you. And our next question -- we have a couple questions that came in for you, David. The first one is in regard to the utility assistance and whether propane is included like the electric is.

David Hagen

In the state of Iowa, propane's a little different because people have a tank. In essence, we have to run that a little bit differently. For a crisis payment, we actually have to assist in the payment first, and we'll have to do the rest afterwards, because what happens is, if the tank isn't full, the vendor doesn't have to come out and fill it. And so it changes the nature of things, whereas for electrical, natural gas, the utility will actually have to come out and switch that off on the house, but that usually takes a process. For propane, when it's empty, it's empty, and so people have to get that done in advance. We do some pre-payments for emergency in the fall, but in essence, the propane is a slightly different process. And we can talk offline if you want to know more. That's all.

Stephanie Vester

Great. And we had one other question for you, David, and this was, "How can schools sign up for the Operation BackPack program?"

David Hagen

Okay, so if you're within the state of Iowa, the easiest thing probably to do is, Feeding America has food banks, and so, for example, we're one in the state of Iowa. There's eight of them in the state of Iowa. We have a six-county service area. If you go out to the Feeding America website, they should be able to identify who the food bank is for your area of the nation, and then you'll be able to find out if they have a BackPack program in operation. If they don't, they should be able to give you contact information to say, "I heard about this. Do you want to partner with me?" That's the short of that. If you're in our service area, [contact] Greg Goodell or contact me if you're listening and you're from our part. But it's truly driven by each different food bank. It's a national program by Feeding America, so I think you just google Feeding America, and it'll pop up.

Stephanie Vester

Great. Our next question is regarding the *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit. It's from someone who plans to work with a homeless shelter this summer and how they might be able to use some of the materials from the toolkit.

Denise DeVaan

That is a great question, and we had many sites use the toolkit with homeless individuals and families. There are a variety of ways in which the toolkit could be used. Number one, it could be used in an individual-working-with-an-individual format. Number two, it can be used in small groups. Although it's not really intended that way, it has been used that way. For example, many homeless persons and families have debt. They have credit issues. They've got tracking resources, both income and expenses, and resources that come in. Some are banked, some are not banked. A homeless person could be delivering pizza by night and sleeping in the car during the night. We know that a lot of homeless people have jobs and are working, which is really sad.

So if it was me, and as I listen to what's going on in the country, I would always start with where they are at. The question we often ask is, "What is it that you worry most about at night when it comes to finances?" Just an open-ended question: "What are you most worried about?" And let it come from them.

"Well, I'm really worried about my credit, because they can't rent anything because it's so bad. Nobody's going to let me rent if I have a job or I can't find anything affordable."

So, [ask in] that open Socratic way, "What are you worried about? What are your priorities? What do you most want to deal with?"

They'll say, "Well, I want to go [get] some safe rental or a place to live with somebody else."

That's the housing side. Okay now, "What do you have coming in? Do you have any money of any kind coming in?" And you and I both know, all of us know the way money comes in. So, without judging at all -- hopefully it's not illegal -- but if it's coming in from a job or any kind of cash and that kind of thing, just take out the tools that relate to income, the tools that relate to spending, the tools that relate to cash flow, and say, "Would you be willing to look at these? Here's an example of what other people have done. Would you be willing to look and see if anything could meet your needs? Because you are very smart about your money. Those of us who don't have a lot have to be smarter than a lot of people about our money. So you know what things cost and you know what's coming in, but have you been able to lay it out in such a way so that as we look at affordable housing or something that's got mental health services, and you could get on food stamps and SNAP right away? Could we map out where, in the week or in the month, your resources will come in and when they have to go out?"

And if people don't bank, "Where is a safe place for your money?" And is there a way to use the envelope system, let's say, to put money aside for the different priority expenses that they've got, starting of course with needs and obligations, and then of course, going to some wants.

But I think in those kind of individual one-on-ones [the goal] is to break it down -- what comes in, what has to go out, now -- and then in terms of where you want to go, what you most want for your life. What is that? You'd be surprised. People will say, "I want to get something for my kids." It's not to get a safe place to sleep. "I'll still sleep in my car, but I want something for my kids." They set the priorities about how their resources are going to be spent, and that becomes part of the spending plan. And that's how it is today, and it may be different tomorrow. I have worked in homeless shelters myself. I started my career in transitional and homeless work. Running into some of the mental health issues and some of the chemical-related issues is really tough, but everybody knows that it all comes down to money and resources. We can ask them to identify what is it they most want for their lives. Once they say that, "what I most want for my life or my family's life," then I can say, "What it would take to start in the next couple of weeks? How could [we] break down what [you] most want? What are the finances around that?"

I would start with income, spending, cash flow, and believe it or not, pulling the credit report, and debt. Those are the ones I tackle the most. If the credit report is bad or they've been in a lot of trouble, nobody's going to rent to them, and it's hard to get a job unless some of that stuff in the credit report is cleaned up. So it could be a series of small steps every week. I won't go on, but that's what I would do in the situations I've been in, and that's what others are doing in the country, stepping out of my own experience back to what people are doing. They're taking the tools and changing them -- income, spending, cash flow, credit and debt -- and they're tackling those topics after the person or the family has said what they most want for their future. Then the case worker or the supporter or the mentor or the partner says, "Okay. That's fabulous. Let's break it down. What could we do this week?" I hope that helps.

Stephanie Vester

Great. Thank you, Denise --

David Hagen

This is David, if I could interject. Since we run homeless programs, I think everything Denise has said is right on. The other piece is if they truly are moving into shelter from being on the street, you have to resolve that crisis first. You have to get them housed first, and then you can start working at this. They've got to be ready to have that conversation. So --

Denise DeVaan

Good point, David. Thank you.

David Hagen

-- I mean, depending on where you are. Because we have people in transitional housing, and once we stabilize that, we can bring this in, at least that's our goal. But that ties in exactly to everything that Denise has been saying: you've got to find them where they are and when they're ready. You've got to find that moment.

Stephanie Vester

Great. Okay, well, for the sake of time, I think we're going to go ahead and wrap-up. So thank you all so much for your expertise and willingness to share today, and as the webinar concludes, there will be a brief survey that pops up on your screen, so remember to provide your feedback as it helps us for planning for future webinars. Just a note that the recording and materials from this webinar should be posted to our website in the coming week, and if you have any additional questions, you can send them to info@HealthyMarriagesandFamilies.org. To check out more of our resources and information you can go to our website, which is located on the slide right now. So thank you again for joining, and thanks so much to our presenters today.

Operator:

Again, that does conclude today's conference call. Thank you all for your participation.