

2023.06.08\_Elder Justice hhsgov mix.mov

>> Eden Ruiz-Lopez: Good morning, and welcome to this meeting of the Elder Justice Coordinating Council. All members of the public are in-listen only mode. And if you have any questions, please send emails directly to [ejpubliccomments@acl.hhs.gov](mailto:ejpubliccomments@acl.hhs.gov). Unfortunately, we're not able to provide any direct technical support to members of the public viewing the livestream. But if you have any audio or visual problems today, we recommend exiting and reentering the livestream. Council members, you'll be queued for the 10-minute question and answer segment after each panel, and your microphones will be unmuted at the start of the Q&A segment. Please keep your questions brief, and we suggest you write them down as soon as you think of them so that we can efficiently get to every question.

I will now turn to Acting Assistant Secretary for Aging Alison Barkoff to convene the Elder Justice Coordinating Council meeting.

>> Alison Barkoff: Good morning. Thank you so much, Eden, and welcome, everyone, to the June 2023 convening of the Elder Justice Coordinating Council. My name is Alison Barkoff, and I am the administrator for Community Living's acting administrator, and assistant secretary for aging. I serve as the delegated chair of the Council, standing in for Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, who is the chair.

I want to begin by thanking members of the public for joining us today and telling you a bit about the Elder Justice Coordinating Council, which you'll hear today referred to as EJCC or as the Council. The Council was established by the Elder Justice Act, which was enacted into law in 2010. The Council is charged with coordinating activities related to elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation across the federal government.

The EJCC is composed of members spanning 17 federal departments, agencies, and other entities with responsibilities for addressing elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The purpose of the EJCC is to assure coordination across the federal government and specifically to meet twice a year and to make recommendations to the HHS secretary on the coordination of activities relating to elder abuse, neglect, exploitation, and other crimes against older adults across the federal government. The Council also provides Congress with a biannual report of activities, accomplishments, and recommendations for further action. These reports are posted to our website.

For this year's spring meeting, we have asked FEMA, one of our council members, to co-sponsor today's meeting with HHS. FEMA has helped coordinate our first panel to discuss emergency preparedness and the unique needs of older adults. This topic is, of course, important to FEMA, but it's also important to HHS and many of our fellow EJCC member agencies and departments. The executive branch leads many initiatives dedicated to minimizing the disproportionate impact that disaster events have on older adults, which will be highlighted in the first panel. The meeting today is an opportunity for all of us to advance the goal of ensuring older adults are prepared when a disaster strikes. During the emergency preparedness panel, you will hear more about the whole government approach to preparing for and responding to these events.

It's now my pleasure to introduce the special assistant to the president for Health Care, Jessica Schubel. Jessica has a long history of dedication to elder justice, and we are so delighted to have her join us this morning. Jessica, I'll turn it to you.

>> Jessica Schubel: Thank you so much, Allison, and good morning, everyone. It's a pleasure to speak with all of you on this critical topic of elder justice. I want you to know how important your work is not only to the president and vice president, but to the entire nation. I know that everyone attending this meeting is committed to preserving the dignity and rights of older adults, whether you are a part of a -- of the federal government or an advocate for older Americans, or with an organization that supports community living for older adults.

We are holding this meeting during LGBTQI+ Pride Month, a month where we celebrate the achievements of the community. It's a sad truth that LGBT -- excuse me, LGBTQI+ older adults disproportionately experience the effects of poverty and discrimination. They need our support. Thank you for continuing efforts to ensure that LGBTQI+ older adults have access to the quality services they need without fear of exclusion, bias, or marginalization. Thank you as well for recognizing their unique experiences and for continuously improving the ways we show respect for their contributions to our communities.

I know that all the federal partners that make up the Elder Justice Coordinating Council are dedicated to constant advancement of the principle that older adults have the right to live where they want to live, free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and other deplorable acts. Americans -- America's older adults have the right to age in place and to know that we support them in their decisions about where to live and how to live their lives. The federal government is committed to providing the resources needed to make sure elder justice is both recognized as an issue and addressed as a serious need.

Already, we have allocated \$346 million through the American Rescue Plan and the COVID-19 recovery bill to improve and strengthen the work of adult protective services. And this year, for the first time in U.S. history, federal funds totaling \$15 million were dedicated specifically to provide ongoing support for adult protective services programs. President Biden, Vice President Harris, and this entire administration will continue to speak out for our nation's older adults and fight for elder justice as a moral imperative that is part of our larger commitment to make America a stronger, better nation.

I know that it can be disheartening to hear about the terrible scams that prey on older adults, that we all shatter when we hear stories of abuse and neglect. But I believe the work we're doing here today and throughout the year does make a difference. We can achieve progress when we lean into our difficulties and apply ourselves to finding solutions, testing them, and spreading best practices across our nation, ultimately implementing them in our communities. Thank you so much for the work the Council is doing. The White House is fully supportive of your efforts, and we appreciate everyone who is working to support elder justice. And now, I'll hand the floor back to Allison to chair the rest of the meeting.

>> Alison Barkoff: Thank you so much, Jessica, for those remarks. Really powerful. We'll next turn to Deanne Criswell, the administrator for the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency,

or FEMA. Administrator Criswell represents a couple of firsts for EJCC. This is the first time we've had FEMA join us for opening remarks, so thank you so much, Administrator. And FEMA is the first agency to co-sponsor an EJCC meeting with us and has been really central to organizing our first panel today. I'll say, you're creating a little bit of a competition here, so we'll see who our next agency wants to step up and sponsor EJCC with us coming out. Administrator Criswell, we are so delighted to have you join us to open the meeting for today, and I'll turn it over to you.

>> Deanne Criswell: Great. Thank you so much, Acting Assistant Secretary Barkoff. It's really a true honor to be able to co-sponsor today's events and to join my colleagues from HHS as well as Special Assistant to the President Jessica Schubel, but also the rest of all of our partners that are on the line today or in this session today for today's discussion.

Today, I want to take a little bit of time to talk to everybody about how we can continue to work together to help make sure that older adults are ready for the storm season ahead, but also for the future challenges that they may experience from extreme weather events all year long. Last month, President Biden, he led the nation in observing Older Americans Month, and he urged all of us to celebrate the wisdom and contributions of our older adults. And with the Atlantic hurricane season now underway, already had our first name storm, it is imperative that we advocate for the wellbeing of our nation's older adults and help champion them as valued, honored, and respected members of our communities.

We know older adults face greater risks when it comes to preparing for the multitude of the weather events and the emergencies that we are now facing. They can be especially at risk if they're living alone, if they are low income, or if they have a disability, or live in a rural area. And I just want to take a minute to tell everyone a story to help illustrate the connectivity that we are really hoping to foster as we work together to launch a new campaign focused on older adults for National Preparedness Month.

So, recently, I traveled to assess the damage at the tornado destruction in Rolling Fork, Mississippi. And while I was there, I met three older women who survived the storm. They each lived alone in this very rural part of Mississippi. And when warned of the storm, they all move to their respective safe spaces within their homes. They got on their cellphone with each other, all three of them, and stayed connected during the storm. Because what they wanted to know is if one of them stopped communicating that they knew that they had to activate their network to go check on them and make sure that they were okay. When the tornado passed, two of them had homes that were uninhabitable, and the third friend offered shelter to the other two.

I think this is such an amazing story. And these three women really illustrate how survival depends on being prepared and knowing your neighbors, but more importantly, building community networks ahead of time, making sure we know what we're going to do before we are faced with a threatening weather event. And I cannot stress enough the importance of organizations working in their communities and of neighbors helping neighbors to help build these types of community networks.

The partnership between FEMA and EJCC, it represents critical collaboration between federal

partners, a partnership that will address the needs of older adults holistically, but also build resilience in the face of our worsening disaster landscape. These unique factors or the unique factors that make it difficult for older adults to prepare for and respond to disasters are ones that can only be addressed through a planning process that cuts across sectors and really implores a systems level approach to preparedness.

EJCC and ACL are critical allies as we broaden our coalitions to help older adults plan and be vigilant about preparing for severe weather, such as hurricanes and tornadoes, but also extreme heat events. You represent what is best about government, working in tandem to build and reinforce community networks. You are a voice for those who are often left out of the conversation. And for all of that, I thank you. And I know that I can count on you to help us develop and deliver preparedness information and resources that will help older adults before they are confronted with disasters. It has always been vital to leverage our partners as we've developed messages to help ensure that we are saying the right thing at the right time and in the right way. And that is why we are happy to be part of this today to listen to you. So, many of you are trusted leaders who enforce multipliers. We need and value your anticipation. We are all aware that older adults face barriers to preparedness.

The pandemic, it increased fears of leaving home and amplified levels of isolation. People with disabilities, they may have a difficult time evacuating quickly or finding suitable transportation or shelters that can help accommodate them. Low-income adults, they often like the resources to build preparedness kits or do home improvements to help lower their risks. In chronic health conditions, they also present challenges. According to the National Council on Aging in 2022, older adults are disproportionately affected by chronic health conditions. Nearly 95 percent have at least one chronic condition, and nearly 80 percent have two or more. In disasters, they exasperate this, taking disrupt regular healthcare for older adults and put them at greater risk. So, we must work together to anticipate these and other barriers and leverage resources to help our community members overcome them. With your help, we are going to be unveiling new tools and resources throughout the summer as a prelude to our Ready National Preparedness Month campaign.

In the summer months, one of the messages we're going to be promoting are the hazards of extreme heats. As we know, older adults are particularly vulnerable in higher temperatures. And I want all of you to put the month of September on your calendar. If you have a newsletter, please plan to dedicate some marquee space for a future story or maybe stories on older adult preparedness. Take advantage of all other ready materials, including easy-to-use videos, public service marketing, and ads that will be in public places that we have done in partnership with the ad council, like billboards, bus shelters, and kiosks. We're also going to be holding town halls to seek input to help mobilize even more partners. So, I urge all of you to get started by visiting [ready.gov/older-adults](https://ready.gov/older-adults).

Going forward, what I see is our partnership as a representation of the strength of our federal family, targeting the consequences of climate change to safeguard a cherished segment of our population. And I want to thank you for all that you do for older adults. I truly look forward to working with you on this very important mission. And make no mistake, what we do together will change and save lives for those who have given us so much. So, thank you again for the

opportunity to speak with all of you today. I'll now turn it back over to Acting Assistant Secretary Barkoff and her team.

>> Alison Barkoff: Thank you so much, Administrator Criswell, for those words, for that motivation. And I'm really excited to use one of your terms, how we can work together and be a force multiplier to the great work that FEMA has planned focused on older adults and disasters. We're really eager to hear more on emergency preparedness from our first panel in a few moments. But before we move to that panel, I'd just like to share a few thoughts.

The topics of today's panel are two that are very central, not only to the work of EJCC, but also ACL. As we just heard from the FEMA Administrator, older adults are among the most disproportionately impacted across all types of disasters. They're often unable to evacuate, can't access shelters, or unnecessarily placed in nursing homes and other facilities and pays higher rates of death and injuries. They also experienced disaster-related frauds and scams, cleanup and homework repair fraud, and requests for donations to fake charities often target older adults after natural disasters.

During the pandemic, we saw a host of scams, including vaccine and testing scams. With sufficient resources, ACL grantees and the aging network have illustrated their ability to address vital gaps and needs for human services during and following crises and disasters. Supplemental funding for the recent hurricanes and during the pandemic enabled the networks to provide critical services, really partnering with FEMA and emergency preparedness and public health systems on the ground. The aging networks have delivered meals, provided legal assistance, facilitated access to vaccines, and so much more.

The President has also recognized the gap in human services during and after disasters and the need to involve the aging network in emergency preparedness planning. The President's fiscal year 2024 budget included a legislative proposal to establish a human services emergency fund that will allow for targeted funding in real-time for human services when a disaster strikes. Again, it is meant to be a complement and really fill in gaps in places where we don't currently have resources. Emergency preparedness means being ready to stay safe when natural disasters strike. It also means being responsive to an array of devastating post-disaster impacts and needs, ranging from the acquisition of basic shelter, healthcare, and finances to rebuild and recover from losses. These critical issues impact older Americans and people with disabilities in community and in congregant residential settings.

Putting -- pairing emergency preparedness with the topic of our second panel is illustrative of our goals to move the conversations further upstream from just responding to active prevention. I don't know if you all have wondered why our spring EJCC meeting was always held in June. It's because June holds a special day that is observed all around the globe. On June 15, we commemorate World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. On World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, Americans joined the international community in reaffirming our shared commitment to prevent elder abuse.

This year, we commit to a world in which all older adults live free from abuse and neglect, and we have reaffirmed the value and dignity of every person. This year, ACL's resource center, the

National Center on Elder Abuse, planned the annual campaign for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. And during our second panel this morning, you'll hear from the National Center on Elder Abuse and other World Elder Abuse Awareness Day leaders about this year's events and how you can get involved. This month's commemoration and the Council remind us that every single one of us has a shared obligation to secure a just society. And that means a society in which older Americans live free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

But first, it is now my pleasure to introduce our plenary speaker for this meeting, Josh Gaul, managing attorney for Iowa Legal Aid. Mr. Gaul's local legal aid program is one of the ACL's grantees under our legal assistance enhancement program. Mr. Gaul's team is currently working with the University of Iowa to establish a replicable model to train older Iowan volunteers on how to prepare for disasters. Mr. Gaul is going to share with us today a little bit about what he is witnessing at the local level regarding emergency preparedness and disaster response, particularly in rural areas.

Mr. Gaul, thank you for joining us, and I'll turn it over to you.

>> Josh Gaul: Thank you, Allison. It's a pleasure to be here. Good morning, everyone. Like many areas of the country, I was no stranger to natural disasters. Since 2019, the state has experienced three presidential disaster declarations, one for flooding, and two for derecho events. And a derecho is a widespread severe storm with sustained winds that can reach hurricane-force levels, as they did in Iowa. But regardless of the size or type of natural disaster experienced, survivors face a standard timeline of legal issues that they might be faced with.

In the immediate aftermath, tenants may not have access to the property they're renting. They may have questions about their rights to repairs, terminating their lease, or receiving prepaid rent they had already paid, or their security deposit back so they can find alternative housing. Individuals may have lost vital identification documents needed to apply for state or federal assistance. And as time progresses, they may have problems with their insurance company, need help with appealing benefit denials, or have issues with contractors.

In our experience in Iowa, it's often these issues with contractors that can be the most concerning with regard to fraud and exploitation of older islands. This is especially the case after significant events that receive extensive media coverage. It is not uncommon in those circumstances for individuals claiming to be contractors to converge on the disaster-affected area. And one tactic they've used in Iowa is going door to door and offering to bump individuals up to the top of their repair list if they pay a deposit or even the full amount of the job up front. There have been situations where they've added additional pressure by claiming they're only in town for a short period of time, so it's now or never, essentially.

Given the waiting list and backlog repair orders experienced by many of the reputable contractors responding to the event, these tactics can be particularly effective, especially with Iowa's most vulnerable populations. Unfortunately, the story sometimes ends with reported contractors gathering funds from several individuals and then skipping town, never to be seen or heard from again. While the Iowa Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division and local county attorneys will sometimes attempt to locate and prosecute contractor scams, locating out-

of-state scammers can be difficult. So, one way to prevent older islands from falling prey to scams is to educate them ahead of time on what to look out for, and this can be done through holistic disaster preparedness counseling.

To that end, and as Allison mentioned, we've been working with the University of Iowa's Disaster PrepWise program for the past several months. And the current focus of their program is to prepare 60 and over Iowans for disasters. The program consists of the individual meeting with the certified PrepWise counselor to create an individualized disaster plan. The plan includes medication lists, emergency contacts, where to go in different types of disasters, and important documents and emergency supplies that the person should have prepared.

These can -- plans can be particularly helpful for rural and isolated older Iowans who do not live close to many services or have caregivers close by. We're currently working to scale up these events to prepare 20 to 30 older Iowans at the same time. The idea is one individual would guide the group to the programming. And while that's happening, we would have certified PrepWise counselors, agency staff, and caregivers kind of circulating throughout, answering individual questions that people might have.

During these events, we will also have an opportunity to educate older Iowans on the legal issues they may face in the event of a disaster, including information on how to avoid being taken advantage of by contractor fraud. In addition to the University of Iowa, we are partnering with county public health agencies, state and local emergency management, and state and local aging networks in offering these events. And through these efforts, we hope to achieve a more prepared and resilient aging population in the state of Iowa. Thank you, Alison.

>> Alison Barkoff: Thank you so much for sharing more insight into the challenges, issues, and scams that you're helping older Iowans and their communities overcome. It's an invaluable context for our next lineup of speakers.

Turning to panel one, we are thrilled that FEMA has joined us as a co-sponsor to present a compelling program on emergency preparedness with a focus on the unique needs of older adults. We will hear presentations by Aaron Levy, who's the director of individual and community preparedness division at the United States Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA; from Justin Knighten, director of the Office of External Affairs at FEMA; from Susan Lynch, senior counsel for elder justice at the U.S. Department of Justice; and Amy Wiatr-Rodriguez, director of the Center for Regional Operations at our very own Administration for Community Living at HHS.

And it's now my privilege to turn the floor over to Aaron Levy from FEMA to kick off our first panel. Mr. Levy, you now have the floor.

>> Aaron Levy: Thank you, Madam Assistant Secretary. Can you hear me okay, ma'am?

>> Alison Barkoff: We can.

>> Aaron Levy: Thumbs up.

>> Alison Barkoff: We can. Thumbs up.

>> Aaron Levy: Great. Thank you. Good morning, everyone. I'm Aaron Levy. As the Assistant Secretary indicated, I'm the director of FEMA's individual and community preparedness division. I am honored to speak on this panel about preparedness for older adults. As time goes on, as my boss, Administrator Criswell, indicated, we anticipate more extreme and severe weather events that threaten our ability to survive and thrive. For those of us who are in the northeast, you can look out your window right now. And you can see the effects of extreme weather, and you can probably also feel it in your lungs and in trying to live your day-to-day life. So, it is an up close and personal reminder for many of us here what a lot of folks in California have been experiencing for a while of just the dangers of climate change and how disasters are getting more frequent and more severe.

As governments of all levels work to adjust and become more adaptable to these changes, innovative partnerships, such as this one, will expand the reach and effectiveness of our work to ready the nation. You simply cannot do this without the support of all of you, our interagency partners. As such, we look forward to a long and productive partnership between FEMA and the EJCC.

Now, to get more specific, our team develops premier emergency preparedness resources for individuals, families, and communities across the nation. We use science-based research to inform educational products for our preparedness and resilience programs. Individuals, families, and communities can trust that they have the latest and most accurate information to be resilient against disasters. Next slide, please.

With that said, I want to highlight a few specific preparedness products our team has developed. Our guides for alerts and warnings helps you and your family understand hazard alerts and the actions to take if you receive one in your area. We affectionately refer to this as our fridge guide. You can -- I'll get to this in a moment. You can download it both electronically or order it from our warehouse, and you can literally slap it on your fridge. "Are You Ready?" offers comprehensive information and recommendations on preparing for different types of disasters. This document provides general tips for before, during, and after disasters, as well as best practices to inform your preparedness decisions about specific disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and unfortunately, as we've seen in our country, active shooters. Ready 2 Help, one of my personal favorites, is an interactive card game designed for kids 8 through 12 that explores five simple steps they can take, stay safe, and make a difference until help arrives. This is a perfect activity for a grandparent or a loved one to play with the child in their life or, as we have learned, for caregivers to use with older adults to help empower them to stay safe during an emergency. The Emergency Financial First Aid Kit helps you organize and coordinate financial, medical, and household information.

Folks, what I like to tell people when I talk about this particular tool when I give speeches is, if I told you you had three minutes to leave your house before an incoming hazard, do you know where your home insurance information is? Do you know where your car insurance information is? Do you know where your mortgage information is, your bank accounts? You don't



necessarily -- this isn't about the balance in your account. But if you have the ability to organize those key financial documents before an event happens, whether you're going through your insurance company to start your recovery or coming to us at FEMA to help jumpstart your recovery, having that information organized will help get you there faster.

So, before I turn it over to my colleague, I do want to say, I'm going to go off script on a personal note. This topic for National Preparedness Month and the work I get to do at the EJCC is personal to me. My grandfather spent over 20 years as the director of the Office of Aging of Ocean County, New Jersey, and he was an innovative leader in developing programs for seniors. He passed away a couple of years before Hurricane Sandy, but many of us who were at FEMA at the time remember some of the images of older Americans on the Jersey shore struggling to get help. And it made me think of what I can do with my partners here at FEMA and all of you to build on his legacy throughout the country.

Finally, today is also a tough day for me personally, is that my own father is moving into an assisted living facility today to start -- to continue his fight against cancer. And as I talked to this group and I think about him moving into this facility and making sure that we're doing steps to have facilities like that around the country harden themselves and become more resilient to the ever-changing landscape of disasters. So, this is more -- National Preparedness Month this year, under the leadership of my distinguished colleague and our administrator, this is so much more about how we can reach out to a part of the population that's not only vulnerable, but at the same time are the elders in our communities, who we often come to for wisdom and guidance on the issues we all manage in our lives.

With that said, it's now my distinct pleasure to turn things over to my partner, Mr. Justin Knighten, who's the director of the Office of External Affairs, who will be talking about the challenges and barriers of access to older adults and our plan for National Preparedness Month moving forward. Justin?

>> Justin Knighten: Thank you. And thank you for your leadership and vulnerability today to bring yourself into this work and giving all of yourself to support older adults and all of you on the line who -- this isn't just about work and the job is about life. This is your life and this is our life. This is about how we're going to together make sure that older adult communities across the nation have the resources that they need and the information that they need to understand how to prepare themselves and ready their neighbors and their friends and their family for the next big threat that will impact. We know that these threats are ever emerging with the onset of climate change becoming a very real issue and crisis today, and the disasters that we need to continue to be mindful of that are always looming around the corner.

You know, I'm so thrilled that Administrator Criswell was able to join us today. And I hope that all of you are empowered and inspired by her words, as we are every day here at the agency. And one thing that is very true at FEMA is that we are about people. This is an agency for people, and we are so empowered by Administrator Criswell and her charge for us to put people first in all that we do. It gives us the permission to be bold and innovative and thoughtful about how we take the phenomenal work that this agency does and take it to the next level. And really thinking about the communities that we need to continue to support and think through as we are

actively working to ready the nation for those disasters.

You know, what is true is that one message of preparedness does not fit all communities. We need to be ever thoughtful and mindful of the historical, cultural context of people, their circumstances, the reality of where they live, their beliefs, their understanding of the world, the interaction in history with government, and the barriers and challenges that they face, as well as the opportunities that we in government are constantly needed to think through as we think about populations that we serve of the connections and the opportunity that exist.

Administrator Criswell gave a perfect example of the connectivity and the peer-to-peer networks that exist within communities of people who are plugged in with each other, who are having those conversations before disaster, who are making sure that their networks have the information to survive these threats, and are connected to each other to help each other support that recovery, right? We need to better understand and appreciate and value these types of connections and opportunities that exist within communities so that as we think about holistically the actions to prepare and the barriers that exist, we have a fuller, effective scope of what is true.

You know, we know that there are barriers because we see, after every disaster, the impacts that disproportionately impact some communities after disaster and older adults, unfortunately, remain at the top of that list. We see that our preparedness information, the more that we tailor it, designed for specific communities, in which I'll be talking through on the next couple of slides, is an effective way to make sure that we are not just pushing general preparedness information, but we're pushing information that is reflective of community that we shape with community. And that really has a better chance to effectively engage people where they are through the lens of their experience to make sure that those messages are resonating in more profound ways.

And then really, the power of partnership. We can't do this work alone. Disasters start at the local level. And when the federal government is called upon to support, we know that it takes every partner to the full pipeline of government across the federal government, across sectors, across industry to make sure that we are thinking through, not only the preparedness, the response and the recovery, but all of those three pieces together as we're thinking about how to make sure that our people are supported and have what they need. Next slide, please.

So, to kick us off, we wanted to start with a video to really help highlight some of the messaging and framing that we're thinking through on this campaign and to really showcase how messengers and relatable messaging is our tool to support this work. We could -- please start the video. That would be fantastic.

>> Female Speaker: No two days are alike. So, every day, you prepare for yourself, for those you love, for whatever the day may bring. Being prepared is a part of who you are. But in the case of a disaster, preparation isn't always front of mind. In an emergency, when help and resources may not be available for days, being prepared is more important than ever. It's up to everyone to be informed about what types of emergencies might occur where you live or visit. Knowing the best responses for your personal circumstances is the key to maintaining your health, safety, and independence. Make a plan that covers when you go in an emergency and

how a personal support network can assist you. Build a kit that contains the specific things you need to survive for several days, food and water, medication, and supplies, as well as any important documents you may need. Being prepared is a part of who you are, and disaster preparation is no different. There's no one more capable of planning for your situation than you. Be informed, make a plan, build a kit, get involved, [ready.gov/myplan](https://ready.gov/myplan).

>> Justin Knighten: So, unfortunately, in the year 2023, what is true, which has been true, over the last several decades is that we know that there are still barriers for people to get prepared. And some of these examples just highlight some of those really hard truths that we experienced in a disaster where there are, say, barriers and impacts. And as we work across the emergency management industry at all levels of government to help evolve, as we do in emergency management, evolve our work before, during, and after disaster to solve challenges, to understand best practices, to think through what happened, to correct, or to put our hand on the scale when we know something has worked for the next big threat.

We take the hard reality of some of these disasters and they impact some people very, very seriously. And we use this as a tool to help us underscore where we need to innovate and to evolve. And these examples just really underscore our need to, as we continue to push and ready the nation, really hyperfocus, really, for the first time in such a dynamic way at this agency under the leadership of Administrator Criswell and this administration, on older adults. How do we take some of these hard truths and really have conversations like this? How do we build partnerships like the one we're forming here today to help think through how, from a messaging standpoint and a preparedness standpoint, do we just connect with people in a different way and evolve the work and tap into the full strength of the federal family to do that? Next slide.

Again, some of those facts and details that we really keep a top of mind here, there's not a disaster that goes by that we're not thinking about people. And as we work to, again, really make sure that we are tailoring our messaging and our work to meet people where they are really using the known stats and the data to help inform our work, making sure that we are taking the truth that exists on the impacts that people have and having conversation with partners and experts and people themselves from the communities that we're working to serve to make sure that we are reflecting their reality, their experiences, and their needs as we do our work. Next slide.

So, barriers, right? As I mentioned before, the unfortunate fact that in 2023, there are still barriers in getting prepared. And we know that for many of the communities that are disproportionately impacted by disaster, that just getting through today, just surviving today, just getting the medical support that you need today, the housing that you need today, the food issues that you're experiencing, the insecurities that you're experiencing today are enough of a struggle that thinking about tomorrow seems like a luxury. We know that that is true and that is real. And so, how do we then take that reality and understand the specific needs and experiences of people?

And here are just some that we're, you know, tracking for this community to make sure that as we ask people to also think about preparedness, that we are not adding a burden of effort into their lives, but that we are creating messaging that is simple and reflective of what they're experiencing today, so that there's more of an ease and a comfort to just take that first step to

prepare. That when they're thinking about the issues that, again, might seem urgent to just to get through today, they're also thinking about that preparedness because so much of it is connected and entwined. And how do we not feel additive, but complementary to the work that -- and the efforts that people are undertaking and thinking through already. To make sure that preparedness for disaster, again, doesn't seem additive and is a pull thread through what folks are, again, experiencing today to start thinking through how to bridge those connections in their preparedness journey. Next slide.

So, right, a common goal for our work here in building this partnership and the work that we're all trying to do to better support and fight for our older adult communities to get the resources and information and support systems in place so that folks have what they need to not only survive, but to thrive. And that's really our goal here. And the work that we're doing across the federal family, which we're so excited about -- the work that we'll be doing over the summer. And engaging communities across the country to have these conversations, to evaluate some of the messaging that we have to look at some of the creative, that we have to make sure that it hits the mark to empower others to join us in the conversation, to get folks prepared and to be part of this movement of preparedness so that it's not one or two communities or industries talking about the urgency of getting ready for disaster. But all of us who work with and support older adult communities are sharing that message, again, to have that pull thread and to bring that narrative together in a more credible and thoughtful and effective ways. Next slide.

Right. These are the -- more on the barriers that we know are true. And these are true barriers across demographics of communities that we're looking to serve and support and how we need to not only understand those -- these as barriers to overcome, but opportunities for empowerment and connectivity and partnership that we maybe haven't fully leveraged before and that we're doing now in more thoughtful and dynamic ways, again, to take the phenomenal work that has already happened and taking it to the next level to make sure that we are thinking through, again, people first, people first. And making sure that we're framing messaging that is more relatable to people thinking about the messengers, caregivers being a perfect example of people who are showing up for older adult communities today every single day, and how do we make sure that folks who are in these very important and dynamic roles are also thinking about and have the supports that they need to also talk about preparedness and the information that can really save someone's life. Next slide.

So, this is my favorite part of the presentation because it talks about what we're doing, the action, what's happening. You know, we know that the more we tailor our messaging to engage specific communities, we are more effective, and moving the needle and not only building understanding, but motivating action. It is very hard. Those of you who work in public information and communicating to the public, especially on something as important as behavior change type work, that's something that public health has mastered over the decades. Getting groups of people, especially groups of people that are more marginalized, to understand something is already very difficult when you're talking about something as complex and, frankly, overwhelming as disaster. It's very difficult.

It's even more of a challenge to transition that understanding into action and making sure that we are making the action accessible and simple, right? And so, we first did this in 2021 in

transitioning the Ready Campaign to really hyper-focus on the Latino community and making sure that we were providing culturally competent information for people to see themselves in emergency preparedness and to really start to have a more approachable sense of the steps to take. Steps that are free, right? Things that you can do that don't cost money, things that you can do that don't take a lot of time, and really easing people's minds that they don't need to do all the steps at once that they see and the information that they get on preparing for disaster, but a step here and a step there just to start taking the steps to get prepared.

We want people just to start the process and feel comfortable and confident and empowered to just start the process, picking up the phone to say, you know, "If a disaster were to hit, neighbor across the street, can we make sure that we're talking to each other about what information we're hearing from local authorities?" "Yeah. Okay. We can do that." "Great." Guess what? You've just taken the first step of doing something to get prepared and making it seem more tangible for people versus feeling overwhelmed by all the information that often ask people to know and to do.

Just last year, we evolved that work to focus on and empower the Black and African American community with a campaign, "A Lasting Legacy." And we did this in partnership with HBCUs and launched September's preparedness month and our ad creative with the ad council to kick off the month of preparedness in September with Howard University. And as we have this phenomenal moment with all of you today, this kicks off our work early than ever before on getting ready for September's Preparedness Month and building a narrative that will last all summer around older adults to make sure that we are continuing to work to not only provide the accessible messaging and to get information that is more approachable and culturally competent, but to leverage the partnerships and other credible voices and experts in this space to join us in this movement. Next slide.

Again, tailor messaging. We know that for all communities, but especially for older adult communities, and the various circumstances, experiences, and realities that people have that they're going to need to hear information around preparedness in different ways and coming from different people. And so, this is FEMA's effort to step into that truth and to broaden our work and our connectivity with partners like you to help us do that. We need to make sure we learned a lot during the pandemic was that having different messengers, having more tailored culturally competent accessible messaging, having the ability to think through the priority that we're all trying to achieve, and all the different circumstances and realities that people face and are experiencing need to be part of our work to drive, again, information for people to know and have awareness, and then turning that into action to mobilize and to motivate that first step in getting prepared. Next slide.

Moving forward together, we've been talking about it all morning. The Administrator mentioned it. September is National Preparedness Month. We will announce formally new ads with the ad council to engage older adult communities with new messaging, with new information, but we are starting that work early. We will have our information out and available today with [ready.gov/older-adults](https://ready.gov/older-adults) to get the information out to start the work in preparing the nation, specifically older adults, and building and leveraging partnerships, like, with all of you today to help us do that work and be out there and more systemic dynamic ways early.

We have a lot of other work that we're pushing out as well. This summer, we're launching a summer-ready campaign. Again, this is our effort to really help us address and ready the nation for extreme heat, which we know older adults are disproportionately impacted by. And so, join us. There are a lot of information and resources. And we want to make sure that it's not just FEMA-driven. We know that the work that you're doing with various communities in the healthcare space and the food and security space and the housing space, et cetera, are all working with your communities in very dynamic, issue-specific ways. And so, please help us to also send information to prepare for disaster relevant to the work that you're doing and the issues that you're working on that folks need to also understand in a disaster construct that is urgently important. And all of us together are going to move the needle to advance preparedness. Next slide.

And thank you. Thank you for your time. Thank you for your work to support older adults. And thank you for having FEMA join you in such a dynamic way. We're really excited about this work, and we're really excited to work with you this summer.

>> Alison Barkoff: Thanks so much to our colleagues at FEMA, and I'm really excited about this partnership. Well, I'm going to turn it now to Susan Lynch and I just want to be cognizant of time. I think people will really going to have a lot of questions, so I'll turn it over to Lynch. Thanks.

>> Justin Knighten: Right. So, two more to go [inaudible].

>> Susan Lynch: Well, good morning, Chairwoman Barkoff, and good morning, everyone. I'm Susan Lynch, senior counsel for elder justice at the Department of Justice, where, for the past 24 years, I have civilly prosecuted healthcare fraud matters and lead the National Nursing Home Initiative. Next slide, please.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about three specific issues. And let's turn briefly to the next slide. First, I want to talk about the department's response to what we're focused on today, which is national disasters in the department's National Center for Disaster Fraud. Secondly, I want to talk about the Bob Dean case and a case where things went wrong in the evacuation of older adults in nursing homes. Then I want to speak about the National Nursing Home Initiative, the department's efforts to prosecute those who provide grossly substandard care to their residents. And then finally, in the interest of time, very briefly touch upon the Elder Justice Initiative work that we're planning for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and Week next week. Next slide, please.

So, starting out with the department's National Center for Disaster Fraud. To combat national disasters and public health emergencies, the department has created this particular fraud hotline, which you can see here, 866-720-52 -- 5721, 866-720-5721. This particular line was established in 2005 in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, which we've heard a lot about today, when billions of dollars in federal disaster relief poured into the Gulf Coast region. This particular center has received over 220,000 complaints in that time. And just so everyone knows, the public can call this hotline to get help reporting national disasters, and they can do so by filling out the national

disaster complaint form. This department center is really the result of a cross-government partnership that we've been talking about today, various regulatory agencies, federal, state, and local. And it has as its goal to detect, prevent, and investigate and prosecute fraud related to national disasters. I should say that the center has also been involved with many matters, including the COVID-19 public health emergency in specific areas such as pandemic relief fraud.

And so, briefly, the department's to -- commitment to combating fraud in the wake of these natural disasters really started with the work of Hurricane Katrina, and there was a Hurricane Katrina task force specifically. That task force was charged with deterring, detecting, and prosecuting individuals who took advantage of disasters related to Hurricane Katrina and many other disasters as well, such as Hurricane Rita, Wilma, Gustav, and others. This task force, the Katrina task force, was made up of many different federal partners within the department components that is civil, criminal antitrust divisions. And also, postal -- the postal inspection service, the FBI, U.S. Secret Service, our partners at the Federal Trade Commission, and the Security and Exchange Commission. This particular task force, in the wake of natural disasters, basically brought charges against 907 individuals and 43 federal judicial districts across the country.

You know, over the years, it's become very clear that these natural disasters not only spawn frauds and scams but can also lead to devastating health consequences for older adults. And we saw this as it was described today by numerous folks speaking from FEMA, particularly related to older adults in nursing homes. And that's what I really want to focus on today. You know, we heard discussion of the story of the three individuals who were huddled talking on the telephone trying to figure out themselves in their communities how best to survive this disaster in Mississippi. But older adults in our nation's nursing homes are dependent upon those nursing homes, really, to provide that plan for them.

And they are not empowered individually, but rather, you know, as Administrator Criswell said, they themselves have to be prepared through reliance upon nursing homes, and we have to make sure that the nursing homes are in a position to actually get them prepared and safe. And who are those older adults? I mean, I think Aaron and Justin really talked about this very well. They are our family members. They are those individuals or loved ones in nursing homes that we're calling desperately to figure out how they're doing, and we're relying on those nursing homes to safely evacuate folks in the context of these natural disasters. So, next slide, please.

Many of you have probably seen the horrific news clips of nursing home residents being evacuated to that pesticide warehouse during Hurricane Ida and have heard the chilling stories of residents and family members who suffered through this ordeal. In January of this year, in 2023, the United States filed a complaint under the National Housing Act of 1934 against Bob Dean, Jr. -- next slide, please -- and several affiliated corporations for misappropriating and misusing the assets and income of four nursing homes in Louisiana before and after Hurricane Ida's landfall in August of 2021.

The four nursing homes, all of which were owned by Dean and his companies, have loans, in this case, insured by the Federal Housing Administration. The United States complaint identified

here and this press release was filed in the United States District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana. And it's specifically alleged that from 2016 to 2021, Dean required the nurse and homes to pay rent on an industrial warehouse he had acquired supposedly just sort of as a hurricane evacuation center. The rent, which totaled more than a million dollars, was paid to one of his corporate entities. And rather than using these funds to prepare the warehouse for a hurricane, he funneled much of that money to his personal bank account.

In the days leading up to the expected landfall of Hurricane Ida in August of 2021, Dean evacuated the residents of the four nursing homes to this warehouse. After the residents arrived, sanitation was not maintained, allegedly. The nursing home staff allegedly did not prepare sufficient food, provide wound care, or ensure adequate medical care and support for the residents. As a result, on September 2nd, 2021, the Louisiana Department of Health removed the residents from the evacuation center and revoked Dean's nursing home licenses. So, to the point that Aaron and Justin made earlier, that long list of preparedness, that was not allegedly put in place for these residents at these nursing homes.

The United States complaint in this matter further alleges that after the residents had been evacuated and the licenses had been revoked, Dean and his corporate entities continued to misdirect and mispend the nursing homes assets and income. Specifically, Dean allegedly directed his bookkeeper to sweep all of the nursing home bank accounts and transfer the millions of dollars of funds to his personal account. The United States further alleges that Dean didn't use these funds to operate or maintain these nursing homes, which at this point, obviously weren't operating because of the hurricane. And instead, he used this money to purchase personal goods and services, including things like antiques, firearms, cars, allowances to his family members. The complaint alleges that in total he misspent and misallocated more than 4 million of the nursing homes assets and incomes.

So, obviously, not what we want to see in terms of evacuation, in terms of healthcare, and in terms of fraud and scams around natural disasters. You know, notably, I'd mentioned at this point that, you know, President Biden's February 2022 Fact Sheet related to improving nursing home quality, specifically focuses in one point on ensuring pandemic emergency preparedness. And likewise, the National Academies of Sciences in their 2022 Quality of Care Nursing Home Report also supported robust emergency preparedness recommendations for the long-term care sector in areas like -- including nursing homes as part of organizations that are considered required to provide emergency plans.

Getting involved in emergency communication, again, back to this image that Administrator Criswell created at these three folks huddled together, we want nursing homes to be part of that emergency -- according to the National Academies, you know, part of that emergency plan. Access to regular communication systems as well as, you know, according to the National Academies, having CMS enforced. What's already existing and in place around written emergency preparedness plans, renewal of those plans, staff trained in those plans, and those plans being added to care compared. So much to do in the emergency preparedness space around nursing homework.

Sadly, you know, while disasters like Hurricane Katrina, Ida, and others that we've talked about



today, or public health emergencies, like COVID-19, they do bring to the light some of the horrific problems in nursing homes. But oftentimes, these disasters really just highlight problems that already existed. And so, the key problems that we see in nursing homes that are exacerbated by national disasters are staffing. There's not enough in -- appropriate skill level of nursing home staff. There's physical plan problems that are predominantly problematic in nursing homes, and there are care process failures. This is why the department through the National Nursing Home Initiative is dedicated to preventing fraud and abuse in our nation's nursing homes.

For over two decades, we have been focused on bringing to justice individuals, nursing facilities, and incorporations who provide grossly substandard care to their residents. And we've done this not just the department ourselves, but like many of the organizations I'm speaking today through our federal partners, our state partners, our tribal non-governmental partners, and specifically through the work of the 94 Elder Justice coordinators that the department has in districts across the country. In the interest of time, I'll only share two cases today, which highlight the important nursing home enforcement work and the quality of care in the nursing homes that could be subjected to heat, hurricanes, flooding, fire, et cetera. Next slide, please.

So, in February of this year, in this particular case, this is the Atrium indictment. A federal grand jury in the Western District of Wisconsin returned an indictment charging this individual, Kevin Breslin, in his operations, doing business as Atrium in Park Ridge, New Jersey, with a scheme to defraud Medicare and Medicaid in connection with the delivery and payment of health benefits and services. This particular set of organizations operated 24 skilled nursing facilities and 9 assisted living facilities. This indictment charged the defendants with healthcare fraud, six counts of wire fraud and three counts of mail fraud, conspiracy to commit tax fraud, and conspiracy to commit money laundering. It alleged that the diversion of funds caused inadequate care of residents, shortage of clean diapers, inappropriate wound care, inadequate cleaning supplies, and lack of respiratory supplies.

In addition, in this case, the diversion of funds allegedly caused non-payment of vendors, something we see in some of the most egregious cases. So, services were cut, fire alarms were cut, physical therapy was cut, phone and internet services were cut, preventing staff from obtaining prescription orders and necessary repairs. So, you can imagine if a hurricane or flood were to hit this facility at this time. If convicted, these individuals face penalties of many years in prison and 20 years on the healthcare fraud count. Next slide, please.

And the second example, in February of this year, the Justice Department, again, together with our state partners in New York at the Attorney General's Office, entered into a settlement agreement with the landlord and several individuals involved in the operation of the Saratoga Center, which is a facility operating in Ballston Spa, New York. This was a collective settlement under False Claims Act of about \$7.17 million for the submission of false claims to the Medicaid program for worthless services. And again, this facility was closed in February 2021, after the investigation was initiated. But for about four years, the United States contends that this facility in New York provided worthless services. And again, those same types of quality problems, failing to operate adequate staff in the nursing home, residents suffering all sorts of errors, falls, development of pressure ulcers. They didn't consistently maintain hot water or have adequate

linen services or dispose of solid waste. And in connection with this settlement, the Department of Health and Human Services negotiated voluntary exclusions of these individuals. Again, quality of care problems that set up a facility to really have major problems during a national disaster were one to occur.

So, finally, and very briefly in the interest of time, there's three issues I'd like to highlight around what the department is engaged in light of WEAAD coming next week. The first is the support - the department support of a national elder abuse victims services needs assessment to understand the needs of older adult victims of crime and elder justice professionals, and how existing support shaped the victims experiences. The study is nationwide, including all 50 states. Next slide, please.

The Elder Justice Initiative, SAFE, so in consultation with the FBI and the Modell Consulting Group, they developed the first forensic interviewer training for adults. And SAFE stands for a Safe Accessible Forensic Interviewing for Elders. And it's developed to meet the growing needs of victim-centered trauma informed interview techniques. This -- EJI will arrange for training in 14 communities for -- with this particular training. And then finally, department released a solicitation to found 10 new Elder Justice Multidisciplinary Team Centers. And the proposal is going through the review process, obviously, bringing on all the different players and professionals in this space. Next slide please.

If you want to follow up with what the department is doing on a daily basis in the elder justice, please take a look at [elderjustice.gov](http://elderjustice.gov). And, you know, briefly in closing, we, at the department, look forward to working with all of our federal partners to bring to justice those who seek to benefit from natural disasters through our center and through our work, and also continue to work together with our partners to support our two collective mission for elder justice. With that, Chairman Barkoff, I turn it back to you,

>> Alison Barkoff: Thank you so much, Susan. And to finish off our panel, I will turn it to my colleague, Amy Wiatr-Rodriguez from ACL. Amy?

>> Amy Wiatr-Rodriguez: Wonderful. Thank you so much, Chairwoman Barkoff. I thank everyone for the opportunity to provide information on some of the ACL's activities regarding elder justice in disasters. ACL funds services and supports older adults, people with disabilities across the lifespan, and caregivers provided primarily by networks of community-based organizations. The need for connections between aging and disability networks and disaster preparedness and response systems is critical. Next slide.

In my role as director of the ACL's Center for Regional Operations, our team uses our subject matter expertise to make such connections and educate federal agencies and others on the populations and home and community-based service networks with whom ACL works. For example, disaster preparedness and response professionals may under recognize that the majority of older adults live in communities outside of nursing homes, and also may not understand the significant and unique impacts of disasters on the residents of nursing homes. Aging services professionals may not understand nor know how to connect with the disaster preparedness and response infrastructure that exists at state, local, and federal levels. At the federal level, ACL

partners and coordinates with the sister agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services or HHS, including the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response or ASPR, the Administration for Children and Families, ACF, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration or SAMHSA, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services or CMS, as well as with FEMA and others. I'm pleased to share two initiatives exemplifying this involvement in coordination. But first, I'll share a little background on how ACL's disaster-related work is organized. Next slide please.

Emergency preparedness issues, as we know, can have unique geographic components such as areas of our country that are more likely to experience hurricanes or blizzards or earthquakes and/or tornadoes. As the country's disaster response is designed to begin at the local level with state oversight and federal support, our Center for Regional Operations is uniquely positioned to have responsibility for ACL's disaster preparedness and response related activities. ACL has a regional administrator serving each of the 10 HHS regions. And that regional administrator serves as the overall coordination point for disaster preparedness and response in their region. The regional administrator's relationships with local, state, regional, tribal, and federal context is key to successful coordination. When disasters occur, the regional administrator is in contact with the state aging services network in the affected area to ensure that emergency needs of older adults and clients are being met, and to ensure our federally funded meals and other home and community-based services are being provided in the immediate response and recovery phases of the disaster.

Disaster planning is required by the Older Americans Act, including in State and Area Plans on Aging, which regional administrators verify as part of their state plan on aging reviews. The regional administrator is also part of communications at the HHS regional level, including with those sister HHS agencies I mentioned, as well as communicating with the ACL colleagues in our central office. At the ACL Central Office level, we coordinate information sharing among team members responsible for a wide array of disability and aging programs and administer a small amount of discretionary funding to reimburse disaster-related expenses for state and tribal grantees under the Older Americans Act. Next slide, please.

One initiative where ACL experience and expertise has been involved is in the National Advisory Committee on Seniors and Disasters. In recognition of the unique issues related to older adults and disasters, the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness and Advancing Innovation Act created this advisory committee. The role of the advisory committee is to provide advice and consultation to the secretary of HHS and the assistant secretary for Preparedness and Response to assist them in addressing the unique needs of older adults in preparation for, responses to, and recovery from all-hazards emergencies and disasters. Next slide, please.

The advisory committee held a public meeting two weeks ago, where they discussed the following draft -- or following recommendations, which I believe they approved, to strengthen and improve community readiness, infrastructure, and behavioral health. It include advancing the dissemination of preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation information and communication support services, expanding trained community disaster partners, establishing, and sustaining a Disaster Care Centers of Excellence for Older Adults, and expanding the

existing Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program with dedicated resources and additional employees to advocate for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery planning across the long-term care continuum. The Elder Justice Coordinating Council may wish to consider how it's work, and the work of the National Advisory Committee on Seniors and Disasters intersect. We are grateful to directly ACL's regional administrator serving Region 6 out of Dallas for representing ACL on the advisory committee, including serving on the community readiness workgroup. Next slide.

As a second example, ACL's regional administrator serving Region 2 out of New York City, Rhonda Schwartz, has co-led efforts with her Region 2 FEMA colleague to develop and deliver Ready Seniors Workshops. The goal of Ready Seniors Workshops is to assist community-based organizations that provide critical and trusted support services to older adults to plan ahead, so they will be better positioned to assist in an emergency. In 2018, Region 2 FEMA received grant funding and reached out to ACL to partner, and since then this cross-agency collaboration has delivered more than 20 workshops, which have reached over 1800 attendees. Next slide please.

The typical format for these workshops is to hold presentations in the morning, followed by a scenario-based tabletop exercise in the afternoon, concluding with the debriefing/hot wash session. A summary of good practices is developed and shared with attendees after the event. Feedback regarding the workshops has been overwhelmingly positive. This time for learning, planning, and discussion is so vitally important. Audience members have included emergency planners for nursing homes, assisted living facilities, senior community centers, senior housing, adult daycare centers, home-delivered meal services, charitable organizations, and others who provide services to older adults as well as their family members and caregivers.

While in person events became virtual during the COVID pandemic, in person events are resuming. A workshop was held in Ocean County, New Jersey in March, and an additional workshop tentatively is planned for July in Passaic County, New Jersey. Discussions are also underway to potentially do a national virtual event for preparedness month in September. Please stay tuned for more information on that. Similarly, the EJCC may wish to consider how the successes of the Ready Seniors Workshops can inform its efforts to promote elder justice. Next slide.

As I conclude, resources on the slide show ACL's Emergency Preparedness webpage, the National Advisory Committee on Seniors and Disasters webpage, and contact information for the ACL funded toll-free Eldercare Locator hotline, which connects people to local aging services that are trusted and known across the country and includes free materials on emergency planning and response, and home improvement scams. And thank you for the opportunity to share information on the National Advisory Committee on Seniors and Disasters and Ready Seniors Workshops. We're proud of our work and look forward to supporting that EJCC's work in this critical area.

>> Alison Barkoff: Thank you so much, Amy. And we are going to turn it now to a brief Q&A. And I think -- why don't we start by opening it up to panel members? If you are interested in asking a question, please feel free to raise your hand. It was such incredible information we got, and I think the theme across everyone was we are stronger when we work together. We have a

lot of opportunities to collaborate, especially with the focus in September on Older Adults and Preparedness. And hope people on the council have some questions for folks. So, Eden, if we have anyone who has raised their hand? Okay. Ron, so glad you're here. And let me turn it to you to -- are you able to unmute? Perfect.

>>Ron Flag: Yeah. Thank you. And thanks for the excellent presentations. Too many Zoom squares, but if Josh is still on from Iowa Legal Aid, I'd love to hear from him who Iowa Legal Aid partners with across Iowa, not just in the program he described, but in its disaster -- its elderly law work generally.

>> Alison Barkoff: Great. Josh, are you still on?

>> Josh Gaul: Yeah. Hi, Ron. Thanks for the question. We and the -- my position is both focused disaster and older Iowans' issues. I manage our disaster project and our legal hotline for older Iowans. And so, I have kind of a unique position where for years I've been very involved at our Kent State VOAD level, voluntary organizations active in disasters, where we've worked with, you know, our Homeland Security and Emergency Management, our state VALs, with our FEMA VAL, with the American Red Cross, different state agencies to work on preparedness, work on disaster training, helping people recognized disaster legal issues.

And then with the older Iowan, legal hotline for older Iowans, I took that over a couple of years ago. And so, that's now tied into working with our Iowa Department of Aging, our area agencies on aging, to really kind of further the work that we do for regular legal issues with older Iowans. But now kind of building in some of those disaster components as well. Educating those partners on disaster legal issues, and then working together with this new project that we have, the Legal Assistance Enhancement Project, we're calling our Rural Justice Project for Older Iowans, building in that preparedness piece so that folks can, again, build resiliency and be more likely to bounce back if they are affected by disaster.

>> Ron Flag: Thanks, Josh, keep up the good work.

>> Alison Barkoff: Great. And I think we have time maybe for one more question before we turn to our next panel. So, if we have any last questions. Eden, do we have any more questions?

>> Eden Ruiz-Lopez: I am not seeing one.

>> Alison Barkoff: Oh, Ben. Great. Ben, you want to -- you can take our last question before we turn to the next panel.

>> Ben Belton: Good morning. I'm having some tech troubles with getting on and off of muting video, but fabulous presentation. I really appreciated it. And I really did appreciate all of the nods to partnerships and collaboration. That being said, are there potential sectors or partners where there are gaps? Who should we be trying to bring into the fold that needs a greater presence in this work?

>> Alison Barkoff: Why don't we maybe see if FEMA, you want to jump in on that? And then

have Amy or I can add to that, Susan. So, why don't we maybe start with FEMA. Oh, and you're on mute. What you were saying was really brilliant. Oh, you're still on mute. Maybe while we are getting that set, I don't know if Susan or Amy, you want to jump in on gaps that you see?

>> Justin Knighten: Got better.

>> Alison Barkoff: Oh, we got them. Okay. Hold everyone --

>> Justin Knighten: I'm in.

>> Alison Barkoff: -- except FEMA. Okay, FEMA.

>> Justin Knighten: Thank you, Ben, for that question about gaps in partnership. I think this -- I think the right way to think about partnership, especially in the disaster construct, is that there should be no partner left out of the mix. You know, yes, we have engaged the living facility community, we've engaged the caregiver community. But if there's a partner that is in your mind that we haven't yet connected with or that you haven't heard today or that you think should be -- have a seat at the table on this, please raise it with us. Please flag it for the council because what we know to be true is the unlikely partners, the unlikely voices, the unlikely folks in the community that are connected to older adults, or any population that we're trying to reach are probably the best voices to engage. And if they haven't been engaged before, that's a huge gap. And so, all partners in all backgrounds are on the table.

And so, you know, one thing that we're also working on is a national summit in Philly for older adults and preparedness. And so, if there's of any interest, we're inviting a lot of -- you know, EJCC is a partner, we're inviting a lot of partners who have expertise in working with older adult communities to come and get into the details with us. This is the end of June -- excuse me, end of July in Philly. If there's any interest in being involved in that work, please reach out and let us know, we would love to make sure that folks have representation.

>> Aaron Levy: Alison and Ben, I would just add really quickly. I know you want to move on. This -- thanking Eden and Alison and the staff for pulling together and giving us the honor of leading this meeting, but this -- we're not done yet. This meeting in a lot of ways is just a kickoff. So, when the smoke clears from all of this, no pun intended as I look out of smokey Washington, we're going to be getting together with -- hopefully offline with many of you and your staff to really figure out how we're going to push that coordination that partnership forward in September.

Thanks to Justin's leadership. We started this in January, but the summer is the real months where that comes to play. And then I got to say from the perspective of someone who's helping to care for his dad, I spent a lot of time on the Social Security Administration website over the last couple of weeks and on the Medicare website, so I'll leave it to Justin's public affairs folks. But even thinking within the beltway about how are we going to leverage all of those media capabilities and all those comms capabilities that people bring to bear to help get this message and help to move people into first -- that first step of action. And I think about the interactions

that older adults have with the Social Security Administration, and the ideas are overwhelming my brain. So, we look forward to following up more in the weeks ahead. Thank you.

>> Alison Barkoff: I see, Lauren, that you have a question. I will give you one minute real quick. We need to have it at the table. You are obviously such a critical partner, and you are a partner with us in so many ways. But I will give you the privilege of the last one minute of a question or comment and then we'll turn to the WEAAD panel.

>> Female Speaker: Thank you. I will be very brief. And you're reminding me that, yes, I did hear that you offer the last question already. So, thank you for indulging me. Susan, I just want to say there are so many overlaps between fair housing and the issues that you were raising, but also intersections with the department as we are the primary insurer of many of these types of facilities. So, I would welcome an opportunity to explore those intersections and maybe see ways where we can, you know, be greater than the sum of our parts. With that, Alison, back to you.

>> Alison Barkoff: Thank you.

>> Female Speaker: Thank you.

>> Alison Barkoff: We just take my one summary over the last hour is partnership, partnership, partnership. We have a lot we can achieve together. We have just kicked this off, and we will find ways to continue this conversation. So, thank you to all the panelists for just your incredibly passionate and informative presentations, to the EJCC members for such an excellent discussion. And now, we are finally going to turn to our second panelist speakers who will help us in recognizing World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

We will first be hearing from Betty Malks, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2015 chair into present. She's the creator of the National Adult Protective Services Association, chair, and Financial Exploitation Advisory Board, the chair of the National Institute on Elder Financial Exploitation, and a board member of NAPSAs, who's well known in the field and who has been extensively involved with planning World Elder Abuse Awareness Day observances. Then we will hear from Laura Mosqueda, professor of Family Medicine and Geriatrics at the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California, and the director of ACL's National Center on Elder Abuse. And finally, from our very own, Edwin Walker, deputy assistant secretary for Aging at ACL.

So, let me turn it now to Betty Malks. Betty? We have Betty on. Oh, Betty, I think you might need to turn your camera on for us to be able to pin you and come off mute. Okay. Maybe we will then turn it to Laura while Betty is working -- oh, Betty, I think if you -- perfect.

>> Betty Malks: How about now, can you hear me now?

>> Alison Barkoff: Yes.

>> Betty Malks: Oh, thank you so much. I'm so sorry from making everyone deal with this.

>> Alison Barkoff: That's okay.

>> Betty Malks: Thank you, Eden, for the intro. And I want to thank all of you for inviting me to speak to you about World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. It's a love of mine, and I think most of yours. And I would just like to say that I've been -- I've learned so much from these presenters this morning. That I'm very excited about prevention and preparedness of elders. And I really feel like I've brought that into my body now to -- and mind to work with all of you around this issue --

>> Alison Barkoff: And Betty --

>> Betty Malks: -- because it's such an incredibly important issue.

>> Alison Barkoff: We have your camera on, but it doesn't show your face. Keep going but if there's a way to adjust with that?

>> Betty Malks: All right. Let me try.

>> Alison Barkoff: Okay. Oh, there you are. Perfect.

>> Betty Malks: I'm sorry. A lot of [inaudible] with my computer, and I'm terribly sorry about that.

>> Alison Barkoff: No problem. Perfect.

>> Betty Malks: Okay. World Elder Abuse Awareness Day has captured the imagination and attention of people around the world, and it deserves celebration. As we circle the planet with activities that are innovative, creative, and bold, we see evidence of the tremendous impact of this day. WEAAD, as we call it, has become synonymous with caring and protecting older persons. This momentous occasion would not have been possible without the tremendous support and collaboration of the U.S. Securities Exchange Commission and the National Adult Protective Services Association.

The actual board, Financial Exploitation Advisory Board, which is part of NAPSA, has a number of very exciting people on this private partnership together. We're talking today about a lot of partnerships. Well, this is a private-public partnership. And when we first approached the SEC with the idea of creating the inaugural World Elder Abuse Awareness Day summit back in June 2015, we were overwhelmed by their generosity and willingness to offer their facilities. This marked the beginning of the involvement in World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. And their commitment to making a difference in the lives of older adults became a reality.

The SEC chair spoke passionately about the efforts that they made to protect our elders and enforce security laws against those who seek to exploit them. Their presence and support ensure that every WEAAD event became a resounding success. Do -- we have embraced creative choices to ensure inclusivity and global participation in our efforts. So, for many years, from



2015 until COVID, we had in-house representation from all kinds of people from all over the world at the SEC. Due to the onset of COVID, through videotaped virtual events, we have provided a platform where individuals from around the world could come together, and to learn and contribute.

In 2020, our first ever virtual event exceeded all expectations with over 1171 attendees. Building on the success, we saw an incredible increase in 2021, with 1400 attendees and astonishingly, in 2020, 2800 attendees. It is a testament to the growing interest and commitment to addressing elder abuse on a global scale. The actual issue is that there are many people who want us to see our world day every year who live all over the globe. And they would sign up during COVID times, when we were doing the video -- the virtual videos, and people walked in and out different timeframes, different lives, in and out, in and out. And those were the numbers. The numbers were not there for 2800 people sitting in their homes or in their offices. It was all over the world for all different times.

We are immensely grateful for the support of our 245 partner organizations, each playing a vital role in our collective mission. Together, we have created a network of dedicated individuals and groups working tirelessly to champion elder justice. And national and international speakers, through pioneers in their fields, have lent their expertise and passion to our cause. Their contributions have been invaluable in raising awareness, advocating for change, and empowering communities to combat elder abuse. Our work is far from over. Elder abuse continues to be a pressing issue, and we must remain steadfast in our commitment to protect and advocate for our elders.

Let us continue to collaborate, innovate, and educate, creating a world where older adults can age with dignity, respect, and security. Together, we have created a movement that is making a real difference in the lives of countless individuals. Let us carry forward this momentum, united in our commitment to eradicating elder abuse and building a brighter future for all. "And people immediately -- with WEAAD, people immediately embrace the feeling of satisfaction, warmth, and joy as older persons organizations, faith groups, students, and youth all had feel-good experiences promoting and presenting WEAAD activities." In conjunction with numerous humanitarian organizations dedicated to protecting the rights and well-being of older persons, people have been moved by the concept that collectively, we have the power to affect change.

And I want to give you a couple of examples of some of the things that we've done over the years. After in-person at the SEC elder abuse -- WEAAD, Elder Abuse Day, we felt that we needed to have an action plan. So, we started having action plans as the last session of our world's day. And it worked amazing thing. I'm just going to give you some examples of what it meant. We had a number of issues that people had trouble with all over the globe. And for example, the first one was promoting development and support for the Elder Justice and the Adult Protective Services field. And groups got together online during the year and we developed the National Adult Protective Services Resource Center, and you all know about that in ACL, providing research technical assistance and support for Adult Protective Services practice and collaboration.

NAPSA did have a resource center before it was moved to WRNA, which is the National APS

Technical Assistance Resource Center. We continue to be their partners. These are the kinds of things that we worked through during the year after our annual action plan. Support Adult Protective Services programs in utilizing the voluntary consensus guidelines for state APS systems developed by the Administration for Community Living. That is a completed one of these that we are now working through. Expand training opportunities. In fact, all of these have been completed. So, I'm going to go through these very quickly. There's only one that's not completed. We're working on it right now.

Expand training opportunities for Adult Protective Services and related fields on abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation. We completed this with the NAPSA's National APS Training Center funded by the Administration for Community Living, with comprehensive e-learning for APS and professionals and has almost 3000 registrants, very successful. We wanted to promote implementation, support, and expansion of the National Adult Maltreatment Reporting System, NAMRS. It is completed administered by ACL. All states participated -- participating NAPSA was critical in getting full participation from all states. The next is encourage implementation and advancement of multidisciplinary teams, including case review teams, financial exploitation prevention teams, fatality review teams, and others. This is completed.

I know I have a lot to say, but this is what the work has produced after working with World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Promote and support research and analysis in elder justice and financial exploitation. This is very important, NAPSA's Elder Financial Exploitation Summit -- excuse me. Every year we have [unintelligible] Elder Financial Exploitation Summit with speakers, and this is another expansion or example. And that is supporting analysis of financial exploitation data, such as publicly available suspicious activity reports, statistics to understand gaps in knowledge and areas that need attention.

So, last but not least, we are engaging in financial institutions in detecting and preventing elder abuse and exploitation. We'll talk about that. This is in process with the financial exploitation advisory board. The one thing I wanted to tell you, before I am almost ready to honor Dr. Elizabeth Podnieks -- of course, now I can't find this. One second. We will find it later. Let's leave that alone because there are three areas I wanted to talk to you about. One is helpful, which is an important partnership with [unintelligible] and also to other very important in process projects.

So, let's move on to honoring Dr. Podnieks, and that's a very fun thing for me to do, of course, and everyone else who knows her. And we'll get back to that other program before we end our presentation. Dr. Elizabeth Podnieks, her remarkable contributions to the field of elder abuse prevention have not only transformed lives but have also ignited a global movement of compassion and change. I had the privilege of sitting next to Dr. Podnieks in 2005, and little did I know that this encounter would mark the beginning of remarkable journey.

Dr. Podnieks with her unparalleled vision and unwavering determination, turned a simple idea into a worldwide movement. What began as a tea party conversation blossomed into something much greater, fueled by the care and brilliance of professionals who shared a common goal, to address the pressing issues facing our elderly population and bring about global change. Dr. Podnieks' visionary idea of the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day in cyberspace initiative,

revolutionize the way we raise awareness of elder abuse. Collaborating with local, national, and international partners, she harnessed the power of social media to spread knowledge, provoke conversations, and ignite action. Through her efforts, countless individuals around the world have been enlightened about the importance of combating elder abuse and the need for collective intervention. Not only has Dr. Podnieks been a trailblazer in the fight against elder abuse in religious settings, but she has also been instrumental in educating children and teenagers about this critical issue. By empowering younger generations with knowledge and empathy, she has planted seeds of change that will flourish and shape a more compassionate and just society for years to come.

She has remarkable achievements, which have earned her numerous accolades and recognition. In 2012, she was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal, a testament to her lifetime of dedication and unwavering commitment to improving the lives of our elderly population. This prestigious Order of Canada was bestowed upon her, acknowledging her exceptional contributions to the field of elder abuse commitment -- sorry, elder abuse prevention. Furthermore, the United States National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse recognized her invaluable work by appointing her as an honorary director. In 2013, the National Protective Services Association bounded her with the National Rosalie Wolf Award, a reflection of her significant impact on the fight against elder abuse. That's the NAPSA one.

Her legacy extends far beyond the accolades she has received. Her visionary leadership, unwavering determination, and boundless compassion have sparked a global movement that continues to make a difference in the lives of countless individuals. Through her work, she has inspired us to come together to challenge the status quo and to envision a future where every elder is cherished, protected, and respected. And a little tiny example I want to give you, in that 2005, while we were sitting next to each other at the U.N., my luck, she -- we were listening to a very wonderful speech about elder abuse and prevention. She leaned over to me. She looked at me and she says, "Why don't we do a World Day? We should do something as a world day every year. We should have this." I said, "Anything you want, Elizabeth, sure. Of course, we'll get together and we'll do this." That's how it started from 2005, leading over with this phenomenal idea. That's what I'm talking about, that's Dr. Podnieks.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication, your boundless empathy, and your indomitable spirit. Your work has touched countless lives, and your legacy will continue to inspire generations to come. We salute you and extend our heartfelt gratitude for your profound contributions to the fight against elder abuse. Thank you all for listening.

>> Alison Barkoff: Thank you. Thank you so much, Betty, for those words. And congratulations to Dr. Podnieks on the honor. I want to turn now to Laura Mosqueda for her brief comments. Laura?

>> Laura Mosqueda: Thank you. Before I start the slides, I just want to be on video. Because Chairwoman Barkoff and other team members of the Elder Justice Coordinating Council, I'm very grateful to be here on behalf of my team at the National Center on Elder Abuse for this opportunity to talk about World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, which takes place on June 15. So, as a family physician and geriatrician, I'm going to take off my director of the NCEA hat for a

minute and put on my doctor hat, my physician hat, for a minute to take a moment to reflect on why we're all here.

I was recently asked to review a situation in which an 86-year-old woman with moderately advanced Alzheimer's disease was found on the floor, covered in bruises, and bleeding from her ears. Videos taken by a person who lived in the house, in the months leading up to this incident, showed repeated incidents of her husband, also elderly, screaming at her, making her eat food that she had dropped on the floor, slapping her so loudly that we could hear it from the next room from where the scene was being videoed. After she was found by the paramedics, she died a short while later in the relative safety of a hospital.

In reviewing the sequence of events and records leading up to her death, the year prior, she had numerous contacts with the healthcare system, and we failed to notice signs of abuse. Her husband had asked for help but said he couldn't afford to move her into a nursing home, that he felt trapped and unsupported. A family member knew something bad was going on but didn't know what to do and did nothing. Home healthcare came out once and then they stopped because they said her husband didn't want her -- want them there. And the list of failures, both as individuals and of systems, goes on and on. So, we clearly have a lot of work to do.

I'm going to put my director of the NCEA hat back on and talk about the bigger picture issues. But I think it's important to always remind us of the reality of just one individual who represents so many other individuals across our great country, who every day are dealing with these issues. So, these are not just theories that we're talking about, but people's lives are at stake. Let's put up the first slide please.

The NCEA or National Center on Elder abuse is one of nine Elder Justice Resource Centers funded by the administration for community living. Next slide. We provide policymakers, professionals, and the public with information and resources on a variety of topics in the elder mistreatment realm. The NCEA hosts a comprehensive data and publications repository. We synthesize and disseminate evidence-based practices and lead our nation's World Elder Abuse Awareness Day campaign. As the EJCC has recognized -- next slide, please -- elder abuse is -- we're somehow off track, but that's okay.

Let's -- as the EJCC has recognized elder abuse as a widespread social, public health, economic, and justice concern, it impacts an estimated 1 in 10 older adults each year. And for the 6 million people in the United States with -- who are living with dementia, 1 in 2 will be abused or neglected. And only 1 in 24 cases of abuse in the community is ever reported to authorities, and we have almost no idea about what's happening in licensed facilities such as nursing homes. Next slide, please.

The CDC recognizes five major types of elder abuse, physical, psychological, or emotional, sexual, financial abuse, and neglect. And polyvictimization, where people experience multiple types of abuse often simultaneously, is very common. The consequences can be severe and life altering, not to mention life ending, as we heard in our opening example. And advanced age itself creates vulnerabilities. What are some of the vulnerabilities? Well, multiple chronic conditions that impact physical function, dementia, mental health problems that might be

unrecognized, untreated, or undertreated, limited social supports, perilous economic reserves, a lifetime of accumulated traumas. All of these vulnerabilities add up and explained why we have a special category called elder abuse. Like other forms of interpersonal violence, elder abuse -- I'm sorry, next slide, please.

Like other forms of interpersonal violence, elder abuse often occurs in private, hidden from public view. It's frequently outside the public's consciousness and discourse. Many older people living with abuse never get the help or resources they need to prevent or mitigate harm. Think about the story I told you at the beginning of this presentation, how many times we've missed these -- the opportunity to help? And as the number of aging Americans increases steadily, the amount of abuse is, of course, predicted to rise. But this is not a future etched in stone. We have the opportunity now to alter the trajectory. Next slide.

Our goal at the NCEA is to ensure that older adults enjoy the liberties and freedoms we all deserve, including aging with dignity and respect, free of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The EJCC's belief in elder rights and justice memorialized in the eight recommendations for increased federal involvement to address elder mistreatment are critical to driving and supporting this goal. So, the WEAAD campaign is one example of how we, at the National Center on Elder Abuse, support the EJCC's recommendations to develop a broad-based public awareness campaign. As we heard, WEAAD was launched by a wonderful Canadian colleagues, particularly Dr. Podnieks, in 2006, to raise international awareness about elder abuse. It's a day to take elder abuse out of the shadows and into the light of public attention, and to convert awareness into action. Next slide.

Under the guidance of, and in partnership with the ACL, the NCEA leads the effort to engage individuals, communities, agencies, and organizations, internationally and nationwide in an expanded week of WEAAD activities. The week will kick off on Friday, also known as tomorrow, with a national weekend of prayer and action, followed by a focus on interdisciplinary partnerships on Monday, intergenerational collaborations on Tuesday, intervention and prevention on Wednesday, intersectionality on Thursday, and international elder justice efforts on Friday. Next slide.

Interdisciplinary action is essential because elder abuse cuts across social, medical, legal, public health, financial, and law enforcement domains, and that's only a partial list. And we appreciate the interdisciplinary action, that is a fundamental aspect of the EJCC's activities, fostering collaboration among agencies that might otherwise never work together in a coordinated, comprehensive, whole system response to elder abuse. The EJCC's recommendations to enhance investigative and prosecutorial efforts, expand services for victims, and augment Adult Protective Services will only occur through such collaborations. Preserving elder rights and safety is foundational to a free and fair society. Each of us has a role to play to ensure that elder liberties are protected.

One thing all of us can do is to challenge ageism starting early in life. The NCEA launched an awareness initiative directed at college students that includes written material, volunteer opportunities, and mentorship programs. Together, people of all ages can help build strong, connected, supportive communities. Freedom from mistreatment is an individual right and our

collective responsibility. To prevent and intervene, we must have intentional coordinated efforts to recognize, report, and respond. The EJCC support of a federal elder justice research agenda is necessary to identify and validate interventions.

Recognizing the intersectionality to elder abuse is core to understanding the origins and impact of abuse. Older adults of all abilities, ages, education levels, ethnicities, gender identities and sexual orientations, religious affiliations and spiritual beliefs, incomes, and other identities experienced abuse, neglect, and exploitation. But it doesn't happen uniformly across these domains. Our histories and the identities that we carry influenced how we experience abuse, as well as things like our help seeking behaviors. For older adults from marginalized communities, the multiple compounding forms of oppression and discrimination experienced across the lifespan manifest differently. Responses must be person centered, trauma informed, and culturally appropriate. The EJCC's recognition of the need for enhanced victim services speaks to this need. The NCEA will explore this issue more fully in our WEAAD webinar on June 15. Next slide.

We'll have a webinar called, "Trauma-Informed Practices to Address Abuse and Build Resilience." And during that webinar, we will explore the cumulative and complex trauma histories of diverse older adults, how trauma relates to elder abuse, and strategies to provide culturally responsive and trauma-informed support. And we will round out our WEAAD week with the international justice efforts, sharing best practices and coordinated efforts across borders to strengthen prevention work for global elder justice. Next slide.

EJCC members have been spearheading meaningful abuse prevention measures in collaboration with the NCEA for many years. The DOJ funds the Elder Abuse Guide for Law Enforcement and educational initiatives for judges leading -- leads efforts to improve capacity assessment. So, it really helps advance the core EJCC recommendation. The NCEA and CFPB work on initiatives to combat financial fraud and scams. We work together with the Social Security Administration Scams Prevention Group on anti-scams training. And the final example is the work with the U.S. Postal Services to use reframed anti-ageist messaging in its materials. Final slide.

These collaborations -- next slide -- are just the beginning of what this council and its members can achieve and inspire for the cause of advancing elder justice. With the eight recommendations as driver, you can lead the field further and faster. Catalyzing a coordinated research agenda, promoting proven interventions, and augmenting multidisciplinary detection and response systems are just examples of what you at the EJCC have the responsibility and power to champion. And we must also help older adults and their families who have been traumatized by abuse to heal. We cannot be bystanders to situations like the one I told you about to start this presentation. The EJCC can better the lives of millions of older people and their loved ones who have been impacted by abuse. And the NCEA looks forward to actively and meaningfully partnering in these efforts. Thank you.

>> Alison Barkoff: Thanks so much, Laura. And we will turn it now to our very own Edwin Walker to close out the panel. And don't worry everyone, we're able to keep going a couple minutes after noon. So, thanks for everybody for indulging us for a few extra minutes. Edwin,

turning it to you.

>> Edwin Walker: Hello, everyone. As we all come together to unify communities and raise domestic and global recognition of our social justice movement, we really wouldn't be where we are today without our World Elder Abuse Awareness Day visionary Dr. Elizabeth Podnieks, who can see the idea. So, thank you, Betty, and thank you, Laura, for highlighting her. You know, we think of WEAAD as a call to action for societies, individuals, organizations, and communities to educate each other on how to identify, how to address, and how to prevent abuse, so that we can all do our part. It's important that everyone support everything related to this effort as we all age. It really is an opportunity to remind us that elder abuse impacts each of us. And it's so important that we try to find, and we work together to find the right solutions.

We know, in fact, that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be felt despite the end of the public health emergency ending last month. COVID-19 had an unprecedented impact on our communities and on our lives. Across the nation, we had to mobilize and bolster supports to people most in need, including many older Americans and Americans with disabilities who were living independently or in long-term care institutions. And as Laura illuminated, research indicated that elder abuse was predicted to rise due to the rapid increase in the older population. However, during the pandemic, we saw an unprecedented increase in elder abuse. The rates of elder abuse across the country grew at a rate far faster than research previously anticipated, with incidents of abuse doubling among the older population.

Elder abuse grew as a result of the many variations of fraud, schemes, and scams. And older people neglected and socially isolated with limited access to the social supports that they rely on. So, as the cohort of aging Americans steadily increases to over 20 percent of the total population, the incidence of abuse is predicted to continue to rise. And it's up to every single one of us, no matter the role we play in society, to develop solutions to overcoming abuse, to ensure that solid structures are in place, and that individuals are taking responsibilities. Members of society must realize that elder abuse is not a family matter for which they should not get involved or should not feel a responsibility to address.

As Americans, we believe in justice for all. And we must continue to work together to create critical social support that keep us safe as we age and prevent abuse from occurring in the first place. It's up to every single one of us, no matter the role that we play in society. And although more research and data are needed, the Administration for Community Living has supported a number of key initiatives to further the elder justice agenda, including creating a federal home for Adult Protective Services, releasing the first national guidelines for Adult Protective Services systems and practices, which are being adopted and implemented by many of you. Awarding the first dedicated set of grants to inform and enhance APS through our Elder Justice Innovation and Elder Justice State Grants Programs, which have made substantial progress in evaluating elder justice systems and determining outcomes and providing over 4000 direct complaint resolution and advocacy services to help people transition from institutional to community settings and using artificial intelligence to predict maltreatment.

As you've heard, since fiscal year 2021, over \$400 million has been invested in APS programs through COVID supplemental and regular appropriations. In addition to addressing core needs,

states and territories use the funding for emergency housing, wraparound services, technology, training, partnerships, staffing, reporting, and outreach to empower clients in the aftermath of abuse. This funding represented the largest ever federal investment to support APS programs, and the first time the federal government has awarded formula grants to every state in the country.

This year ACL continues to invest in enhancing, improving, and expanding the ability of the APS to investigate allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation by awarding funding dedicated specifically to providing ongoing support for APS programs to improve and create better systems to address the problems of elder abuse. And we're so pleased that in the president's 2024 budget, it includes \$43 million increase for these formula grants to continue this effort. Also, ACL has many systems and tools that we can celebrate, that will help move the needle forward, such as, as Betty mentioned -- names, the National Adult Maltreatment Reporting System, which we developed as the first comprehensive national reporting system. Policymakers, APS programs, and researchers rely upon the system to provide consistent, accurate national data on the exploitation and abuse of older adults and adults with disabilities, as it is reported to APS agencies. This data is used to evaluate and to improve programs and services.

To effect systemic improvements in maltreatment interventions, ACL works with, and values our relationships with our partners in the field. And in particular, it's important for us to coordinate with the National Adult Protective Services Association or NAPSAs. You know, they are responsible for providing APS programs, a forum for sharing information, solving problems, and improving the quality of services. And our relationship with NAPSAs helps make the policies we developed, as well as the technical assistance we provide, much better because we can directly incorporate feedback from our stakeholders. The relationship we've developed makes it easier to fulfill our mission, because we are constantly engaging with our stakeholders.

ACL not only wants to support our partners in the field but work together with them in partnership. Our focus is really on listening to the field in order to raise up good solutions. And as many of you know, we've been engaging in gathering input for the development of the first ever set of federal regulations for APS. And they're going to be designed to advance both the administration and stakeholder priorities, respond to stakeholder engagement, and advance person-centered principles, equity, and uniformity of practice. We are so excited, and we look forward to issuing a notice of proposed rulemaking later this summer.

On behalf of the ACL team, I really want to emphasize our deep and abiding commitment to advancing equity, racial justice, inclusion, and the equal opportunity in everything that we do, including ensuring the people from underrepresented and underserved communities are at the table to inform our work and by reducing new threats and new challenges of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. And that ACL and its federal partners must all address these issues. Finally, we should speak to and be reminded of the importance and significance of this body, the Elder Justice Coordinating Council. Just as we had in global forums and convenings of the United Nations, where we have said, "With one voice, we have joined our global colleagues, U.N. bodies, government, and civil societies all around the world, to encourage all sectors and people to join the movement toward elder justice. Through the Elder Justice Coordinating Committee in the U.S., we have coordinated the efforts and activities of federal agencies to improve systems,



prevention, and response."

So, I'd like to echo the importance that some of our government partners have mentioned. First, an effective all-of-government approach is essential. And second, a call to action to develop solutions that will not only support older people but strengthen our communities is also essential for the elder justice movement. So, as we celebrate World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2023, join us in recommitting to deliver all older Americans with a world free from abuse and neglect, and reaffirm the value and dignity of every person. Let us stand united with the international community in upholding elder rights and honoring the contributions of all older people. We have had a stake in ending elder abuse. We need to continue with that stake. Let's honor and work together. Thank you so very much, and I couldn't be more pleased to be here. Alison?

>> Alison Barkoff: Thank you so much, Edwin, for those really powerful words to cap off our meeting today. I want to thank all of our panelists for an incredibly compelling and informative meeting. I think the theme that cuts across everything is partnership, how we can work together, and be force multipliers, whether it's talking about disaster planning, response, and recovery, or how we can together really make a difference around elder abuse.

It's really been a privilege to host today's meeting. I want to thank FEMA for being our partner in today's meeting. And to each of you, members of the EJCC, for joining us today. Of course, most importantly, I also would like to thank all of the attendees across the world for joining us virtually. And a huge thank you is in order for all of the ACL staff who worked so hard to make today happen.

Council members, we will reconvene again towards sometime in December for our second meeting of 2023. Off note, 2022 marked the 10th anniversary of the first convening of EJCC. We are excited to share that at our next meeting, we will include a retrospective of the work of EJCC member agencies, that all of us have done together over the last decade to address elder abuse, neglect, exploitation, and other types of maltreatment of older adults.

We look forward to seeing all of you in about six months. We have a lot of work to do, working together in between now and then. And today's Elder Justice Coordinating Council meeting is now closed. Thank you all for joining us. And we will see you again in a few months. Thank you.

>> Eden Ruiz-Lopez: Thank you.

[end of transcript]