

OFA TANF Talks Podcast: Agency and Resilience in the Face of the Unexpected
Episode 1

Lisa Washington-Thomas Hello, and welcome to the Office of Family Assistance's podcast series, "*TANF Talks*." **I am Lisa Washington-Thomas, Director of Self-Sufficiency Technical Assistance at the Office of Family Assistance**, also known as OFA. OFA administers several key federal grant programs, including the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF, Program. TANF programs help families to meet their basic needs and provide education and training opportunities for the well-being and long-term success of children and families.

OFA is an office within the Administration for Children and Families, which is an operating division in the United States Department of Health and Human Services. OFA "TANF Talks" podcast amplifies effective messages and strategies in advancing family stability for the states, tribes and territories administering TANF programs. In the first three-part "TANF Talks" series, "Agency and Resilience in the Face of the Unexpected," we examine TANF as a disaster response mechanism and highlight TANF agencies' response to unexpected crises, such as the COVID-19 public health emergency, wildfires, and flash floods. We speak with disaster response experts, TANF program leaders, and policy researchers who share strategies to better equip TANF agencies in supporting their staff and participants during times of uncertainty. We hope you enjoy listening.

In today's episode, our host, Damon Waters from the Office of Family Assistance, will talk to Richard Serino, former Deputy Administrator of FEMA, Natalie Grant, Director of the Office of Human Services' Emergency Preparedness and Response, and Ryan Howard, Executive Director of the Owens Valley Career Development Center. The three conversations will cover the various ways in which state and tribal program policies can respond and innovate in diverse ways depending on need. We explore impacts from the coronavirus pandemic, but also look into those disasters caused by natural disasters and other public health emergencies. We hope it provides you with a landscape of the various policy options available to TANF programs during past and current crises as well as insights into various experiences programs experience when allocating emergency temporary assistance for needy families, also known as TANF, funds. Let's get going. We begin today by talking to Richard Serino, who sets the context of disaster recovery policies and procedures from a federal level.

Damon Waters Hello, and welcome to this podcast. I'm Damon Waters, Program Specialist for the Office of Family Assistance within the Department of Health and Human Services. Good afternoon. Before we get started on today's podcast, I wanted to give Richard Serino, former Deputy Administrator of FEMA and distinguished senior fellow at Harvard's TH Chan School of Public Health, a chance to introduce himself to you. Rich?

Richard Serino Damon, thank you for having me on today. I'm currently, as you mentioned, a distinguished senior fellow at Harvard, the TH Chan School of Public Health and the Kennedy School of Government, also a senior advisor to MIT at the Urban Risk Lab. And as you mentioned, I was the Deputy Administrator at FEMA under the President Obama, and prior to that, I was the Chief at Boston EMS, pretty much rose through the ranks, held every positions of the department, and the longest one was as chief. And I also served as the Assistant Director of Health in the City of Boston. And I've been involved in this work, dare I say now, over 45-years-plus.

Damon Waters Thanks, Rich. Obviously you bring a tremendous history and great expertise to the area. So I wanted to start off just by asking you to provide us an overview of recent major disasters that occurred on US soil in the past 10 years or so.

Richard Serino Well, one of the things we've seen over the past 10 years is, we're actually seeing more frequent disasters and more severe disasters. If you start to think of it, some of the things that we've seen—everything from the hurricanes in Louisiana and Texas ... We had Hurricane Harvey and Maria, 2017. We also had the Hurricane Sandy in New York City and New York and New Jersey and up and down the East Coast in 2012. We had the Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico. We've seen wildfires that we've never seen before in the West. We've also seen just recently this past December in Colorado wildfires in an urban area in the middle of winter. We've seen drought in the Southwest. We've seen heat waves in the Pacific Northwest where we've never seen them before. And of course, we've all been living with COVID. So we've seen disasters just increase and increase and increase in severity, increase in the human cost and increase in the financial cost, as well over the last 10 years.

Damon Waters And often we just think about hurricanes, but hearing what you just said, that understanding these different types of disasters, their severity and their frequency, is crucial to preparation and planning. So what's the first thing that you would recommend a human services provider should be thinking about in terms of their clients' needs when of these disasters hits?

Richard Serino Well, I think the first thing is to be prepared, is to also think about where you are. If the human service provider is in Hawaii, you want to be preparing for tsunamis. You don't have to prepare for a snowstorm, but you have to think about tsunamis. You have to think about hurricanes. You have to think about volcanoes. Whereas, if you were in the Northeast, you may not have to worry as much about tsunamis but certainly about hurricanes. Flooding is universal, that flooding can happen, and wildfires unfortunately seem to be happening everywhere. So I think one of the first things is, really think about your community, where you are, where the people are. And so it's ... People always think of these. These are going to be ... It's a predictable surprise. We always know these are going to happen, but it's bringing it to the forefront. And I think that one of those is, we have to also understand that people who have needs are people who are in precarious economic situations. And we know that those people are going to be the ones that are going to be more likely to be disrupted during a disaster than other folks, as well. One of the things that we worked on when I was at FEMA is we had to change the mindset to change ... to start thinking about putting people first in what we called survivor-centric ... is understanding ... is how we can get to the population that needs us rather than how the population get to us. And we have to ensure that to make sure that people are safe, and if they're not, help them be safe. Understand that not all disasters but a lot of disasters, we know that they're going to come. We usually have some warning, sometimes not a lot of warning, but we have some warning, and we have to make sure that ... to communicate to the people that may not be able to communicate due to language ... They may not be able to communicate from any medical issues that they have, but understanding them, and that's why the front line service providers know the people in the communities. They know the people. They know their needs better than probably anybody else. And hurricanes, we usually have a few days' notice. Flooding, we usually have notice. We know storms are coming. People don't expect it to flood, but we know heavy rains are coming. We say that in New York City recently. But understanding that, where the issues are, understanding the environment they're in, you're in, and understanding what the potential disasters and emergencies that can happen in their community.

Damon Waters And you just mentioned predictable surprise, and I really think that that's a powerful concept. I know that we just went through a winter storm here on the East Coast and instances like that. There's so many varieties in the states and tribes and counties from around the country. Can you share something about disaster preparedness and what it looks like on a local, regional and national level?

Richard Serino One of the keys is, as I mentioned, understanding what's going to happen in your area but really making sure that people in their community are prepared. To have national preparedness, you really have to break it down. You have to go down not just to the city level. You have to go down to the neighborhood. Then you have to go down to the within the neighborhood into ... Some would call it the hyperlocal level ... to understanding what you have because if you have a local area that's prepared for disaster preparedness, I'm prepared. Then, I'm going to be able to help my neighbor because that's going to be the first person that you're going to look to help, is people that live in the apartment above you, below you, the people next door.

So if you are prepared, imagine that the person next door that's an elderly person that lives alone ... to help and make sure that they're okay. You mentioned the snowstorm, well, making sure that they're okay, that they have food, to make sure that they're okay, maybe help them shovel. And then, next door on the other side, you have the single parent with a few kids, and they're having trouble. And so you're going to help them be prepared. And then you know there's somebody down around the corner, a family with somebody with a child with functional access needs, to say, "Okay, I'm going to go help them." So now if you have that little, small community together, they're going to be prepared. Then you're going to go to the next level of your neighborhood, that they're prepared.

Then you go from that neighborhood to the city and maybe to the community around the city and the counties. And then you could then say, "Okay, now they're prepared." Then the state will be prepared. Then you have a prepared nation. But it really goes down to the individual. It has to go from bottom up as well as top down. So in order to have the country prepared, you need to have the individual prepared, as well. Similar to the analogy that ... Put the oxygen on yourself before helping others. So if you can help yourself, then you are going to be able to help others. And the individuals, it's part of the society, and I think that as we start to look at this and understanding what they're able to do, what people are able to do to help themselves, and a lot of people are not going to have the ability to go out and buy a week's worth of supplies to be ready. We understand that, but taking the opportunity just to understand how you can save lives, like if you know flooding is going to happen, heavy rains are going to happen, and you live in the basement, maybe at least of up a few flights.

If you're in an area that's going to have tsunamis after an earthquake, when you have an earthquake, know if you can go to high ground or just go up a few levels in a building. So there are many things that people can do that can make a difference initially.

Damon Waters Thanks, Rich. I know that previously when we had spoken, there was a lot of talk that you were mentioning about that ripple effect. And really what you explained is what is truly important, that it comes at so many different levels. And we've seen with this most recent series of disasters the different program needs or the different infrastructure needs that human services programs would need in that TANF programs are a cash assistance, job preparedness, work preparedness-type program. What type of infrastructure or program components are most critical for responding to disasters for a program of this type?

Richard Serino I think one of the main things is for the people who work in the programs to make sure that they are safe and that they are going to be able to help because if you are unable to take care of yourself, then you're not going to be able to help the people that need it. So I think taking care of yourself, making sure that you have systems in place and backup systems in place and those systems have backups in order so then you'll be able to serve the people that need the help. So this world that we live in, we're

seeing concurrent disasters pretty much as they go nonstop, but maybe not all in the same area, but it is across the country, and that causes a drain on personnel, as well.

So I think that they have to be able to understand that they are going to be disrupted, and so they have to prepare themselves how they can be able to respond when people need them. And that means taking care of yourself, taking care of your family, that you may not be there, and then also taking care of making sure, as I mentioned, having the systems ready to be backed up, as well, because they know that they are going to be impacted. People are going to rely on them and what they need to do. So disaster programs are not just FEMA. It's not one power in government. It's really everybody that needs to. It needs to be, if you will, that horizontal and vertical integration on the individual but then on the systems between the local, state and federal because one of the things that it's also incurring is upon ... for the service suppliers to know in the TANF programs but also to understand that FEMA has many other programs.

Try and become familiar with some of those that they may not be familiar with that can be available in a disaster that can provide assistance, whether it's other needs assistance under the individual assistance programs or, as FEMA calls, the VIA. There's many different programs that come under to that that can help for money for child care and fuel and if, unfortunately, necessary as we've seen with COVID, with funeral expenses. There's many different ways, and so I think understanding ahead of time other additional programs that can be helpful to the people that need them, especially in times of disasters.

Damon Waters Thank you, and we definitely see a lot of the challenges to the human workforce system, human services and workforce systems, as going virtual and having to do at-home and telework. Your focus on making sure that the service deliverer is already in a strong place is so very crucial to making sure that the services delivered are done effectively and efficiently, so thank you for that point in there. It's something I would write down if I had a place. When you're thinking about the outreach ... disaster preparedness outreach to TANF families, other low-income families, we know that there is a significant amount of Americans that are living paycheck to paycheck. What are some things or some recommendations that you have for strategies for engaging those busy folks, those constantly moving folks, those people who may not have the access to some of the Internet or public or private resources to get information quickly, but they still need to receive it?

Richard Serino I think that's always some of the toughest populations in the population that needs the help more than others. And I think we have to understand that we're looking at ... It's some structural issues, and we need to address as many of those structural issues as we can because the certain populations will continue to be unprepared. And I just remember that, yes, we have to deal with this, but we should also remember it's incumbent upon all of us to help, that we have to try and fix those structural issues, and those with means are going to be more prepared than those with fewer means. And I think just stating that and understanding that is crucial, as well. But there are several things that everyone can do to make sure they are more prepared, is, as I mentioned at the outset, is being aware of what the hazards are in your area, is key.

And some of us in the New England area know we're going to have snowstorms, and we know it's going to get cold. And then, again, looking out for your neighbors, looking out for others. And then I think also is having reasonable expectations of what people are going to be able to do and how they're going to be able to do it—simple things like maybe buying one extra thing a week, whether it's a granola bar, and just putting it away. If you do that once a week, you're going to have a little bit built up of storage. Maybe take a couple of diapers out of each pack and store them away slowly so you're building a reserve—simple things that you're doing already, and just take a little bit here and there. That's one thing. And just

also having a basic plan, understanding, if an emergency happens, where you can go, where you're going to be able to be evacuating. And by that, I don't mean going necessarily to a shelter.

They might not be open yet, but when something happens initially, to understand, "I can go to upstairs. I can go down the street to ... There's a church. I can go to wherever," but understanding that having a place to go immediately, that's a safe place. Then, once that comes along, understand where they will be able to get assistance and programs that can help, understanding where you're going to be able to get shelter. So having a plan, if you're not going to be able to do that, you aren't going to have to detail because you won't know where the shelters are, per se, but at least understanding that you want to be able to look for them.

Also, having copies of IDs and important documents that you may need in case you have to evacuate, having any documents or cards that you need, make sure you take a picture of them. Make sure you have all the numbers written down, taken a picture of them to have them because it's difficult to ... People say, "Oh, I've got to put all this stuff and take it with me." That's the optimal, but at least get in the habit of taking a picture when you get important documents, keeping it on your phone and then putting it in a file or an album on your phone for emergency so when you need it and you need to get help afterwards, that you're going to be able to at least pull it up because people are going to stop and ask, "Wait, where can I get this? Where can I ... Do you have this number? Do you have that number?" And if you have it, that's going to make a huge difference, making things much easier going forward, so simple things that people can do in order to help themselves and help others going forward.

Damon Waters As you brought up the plan, so I wanted to ask you a question about that, and I'm going to throw you a little curveball. In that, from a system, an individual program and then an individual planning standpoint, are there any specific recommendations that you have on making sure that the plans are tailored to that individual, that program and that system? So, how can we operationalize that within our TANF environment?

Richard Serino There's many different ways you can look at that. One of the best things is that FEMA has a great website. It's [ready.gov](https://www.fema.gov), pretty simple. And on that website, it has lots of things that you need for very specific disasters. It has things that you can go out and look at, things you're going to be able to need depending on where you live, make sure your batteries ... The wonderful thing about phones now is they have flashlights built into them. They have a lot of things in the past you'd need multiple things for, but if you don't make sure you charged the battery ... so maybe picking up one of those extra little batteries so you can charge your phone and finding a place you can charge your phone. So going to [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) will give you lots of great access to extra tools that people can need and will be utilized.

Damon Waters And you mentioned FEMA. Are there other federally funded resources the TANF program should be aware of or TANF stakeholders should be aware of with regard to various disasters?

Richard Serino There's many different programs. Just within FEMA, there's a number of different programs within FEMA that people will be able to assist. And then when we actually ... When resources open up, we're actually able to draw upon those. We open up what we call DRCs, Disaster Recovery Centers, and they have usually the most up-to-date info because the information after a disaster ... It changes quickly, and depending on the disaster, what aid is available is sometimes dependent on the disaster and what type of disaster is actually made available to the localities.

Sometimes they have what's called public assistance. Sometimes they have individual assistance, and then within each of those, it expands quite a bit. But also HUD has a number of ... Housing and Urban Development also has a number of resources. And within the Disaster Recovery Centers, there's also a lot of the nonprofit agencies that are able to come in and assist everything from housing, as well. So we try to have as much as possible in one location so that when the survivors go, that most of the resources are in one location that they'll be able to get. I recommend that if people have the ability to have a case worker that they can work with or get in touch with that can then help them through the many different programs that will be available during a disaster.

Damon Waters Thank you. I was wondering if you could give some details on how the Disaster Recovery Centers are staffed and implemented during the disasters, and where can our stakeholders receive additional information about them and how to locate them?

Richard Serino Disaster Recovery Centers staffed with FEMA personnel and other federal agencies able to offer assistance, state personnel, local personnel, as well, and the disaster recovery centers set up after a disaster. And they try to set them up where people are. Usually there's not a predetermined site because it depends upon the disaster and depends on what's available. You don't want to go to an area that was flooded. You want to go to an area that's safe. When those set up, they are advertised very heavily after the event, and they're not advertised just on the TV, just on the radio, just on social media. They'll even put up billboards in the neighborhood.

They'll do a lot of outreach in the area to make sure that people are going to be able to reach out to them. And the key on making these available is that they're accessible, and they're where people are at. It could be a fixed location, a community center or a school or a superstore parking lot. It could be mobile. It could have these mobile Disaster Recovery Centers, can set up in parking lots. But they're staffed with FEMA staff as well as the others that I mentioned after a disaster. And then you could always find the closest one they have, DRC Locator, and Google that. That will tell you where they are, or during a disaster you can text DRC and a zip code to 43362, and that will tell you the local Disaster Recovery Center. That's, again, only during a disaster in your area. But the Disaster Recovery Centers are set up usually fairly quickly after a disaster in order to help the survivors through in rebuilding their lives with what happened afterwards.

Damon Waters And do those same programs have the same type of application processes and participation requirements for states, for tribes and territories?

Richard Serino Absolutely, and these frameworks apply to Puerto Rico, Guam, places that they go across all ... the geographically lower 48 to Alaska and Hawaii to all the states, territory, tribes. We saw sometimes it takes a little bit longer with the supply chain, as we're seeing now, can take a little bit longer to get there, but I remember myself flying out to American Samoa after the tsunami and visiting local Disaster Recovery Centers there and speaking with the staff and spending time with the survivors. You have to remember that we're talking ... You're not going to have a Disaster Recovery Center for at least probably the first 72 hours, but all disasters are local for the first 24 hours, and communities need to plan that they'll be there.

FEMA is going to try to have people, things that we know ... Hurricanes, we can sort of know they're coming ahead of time, and we're going to get there, but FEMA has a large presence in Puerto Rico, prepositioned supplies for warehouse in Puerto Rico. Hawaii has large stores there as well as in Guam. So there's a FEMA footprint in many different places, but FEMA staff can be on ... everywhere from

America to Samoa, which is not a huge place but can bring in large numbers of people as needed, as well. So I think it's important that all of the states, all of the territories and all of the tribes will have the same ability to have FEMA resources come to them and have.

Damon Waters And just one last question, could you please share some successes or challenges when it comes to allocating funds and if you have any particular jurisdiction, states, counties or territories that you would recommend to someone to look at for a pretty good approach, and any advice for building the disaster preparedness for a program like TANF

Richard Serino Well, I think a few things. I think one of the things is, FEMA does a lot to reach out to individuals through the Individual Assistance program. And one of the things that ... People know what they need, and we need to make it easier for the survivor, not for government. We need to make it easier for folks in order to reach out and really work with the communities that they need to get the assistance to. FEMA currently is really looking at and has changed a lot in the past just few months on the ability of looking at inequities and looking and making it easier for folks, especially in the past.

They have looked at where they live and the law and requirements that used to be there to approve where you live and home ownership. FEMA has completely expedited that process and is going to continue to do that to make it easier, to make it easier for the end user. I think that that's one of the issues that ... Certain cases that we have looked at and other disasters, people to get housed after a disaster, sometimes it took up to 34 interactions with FEMA. That's unacceptable, and that has been cut down and will continue to be cut down. So looking at how to look at the ... again, getting a case manager, someone that can work with them and making it easier for the survivor and reaching out to folks early is key. The other part, I think, that you asked about is, building disaster preparedness on the operational side for TANF is really ... Spend some time understanding, as I mentioned, what the disasters are in your area, but actually developing a program, and I think that that's one of the things that that's key, is. This is really when you want to reach out and talk to people who have done it, people who have been through it, because those of us have been through it, we know some of the mistakes that have been made. We know some of the things that have worked, and we know things that haven't worked. And sometimes it's just reframing it, and one of the things that we did was, again, making it easier for the survivor, not easier for us, and having a plan in place not just to respond but a plan for how the agency is going to respond, as well.

Damon Waters Thank you. Before we close out, I wanted to give you an opportunity if you have any last-minute thoughts or comments or recommendations or challenges to our listeners as we continue to face more and more natural disasters and then technology disasters and things like that.

Richard Serino One thing that we've seen over the last few years with COVID is that disasters are going to be affecting everyone, as we've seen with all the disasters from the wildfires that we've seen, from the hurricanes, from the flooding, and we haven't, fortunately, seen earthquakes recently, but we know we are going to see them, is, take the opportunity now to be prepared. Take the opportunity now to talk with folks. Take the opportunity now to talk to folks within your agency, and ask the questions. Where is that plan? If we don't have one, how can we get one? And to the survivors, is, making sure that the resources that they need to survive, that we're able to get them to them as soon as possible.

Damon Waters Well, Rich, I want to thank you for taking time with us today. We hope that we can continue these conversations into the future as we work with our TANF programs and stakeholders to improve their emergency preparedness. With that, I'll close out today's podcast with a thank-you from the Office of Family Assistance and the TANF family.

Richard Serino Thank you, Damon. We appreciate it.

Lisa Washington-Thomas In this next conversation, we sit down with Natalie Grant, Director in the Office of Human Services Emergency Preparedness and Response, also known as OHSEPR. Natalie shares the federal perspective of disasters response policies run out of the Administration for Children and Families.

Damon Waters I now am joined by Natalie Grant. Welcome, Natalie. Could you begin with an overview of the Office of Human Service Emergency Preparedness and Response, also known as OHSEPR, and describe how OHSEPR works within the larger Administration for Children and Families umbrella and how your work supports TANF partners?

Natalie Grant Sure, Damon. So OHSEPR was created after Hurricane Katrina under the direction of the White House following a report that assessed inadequacies in the coordination of the overall Disaster Human Services case management connection of services with disaster survivors. So OHSEPR is one of 19 program offices within the Administration for Children and Families, and OHSEPR partners with TANF and other program offices to ensure to disaster survivors, individuals, households, and communities receive those services and those social supports after a disaster to help them reconstitute themselves and their community.

So some of our focus areas are on case management and referrals to these social service programs, and some are actually direct services that we provide, as well. So we were tasked with leading not only our individual direct programs but also programs across in coordination with other colleagues, such as the Administration for Community Living and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. And we also work very closely with some of our partners at the Federal Emergency Management Administration, FEMA, and the American Red Cross on these topics in addition to the National Voluntary Organization's Active In Disasters, or NVOAD.

Damon Waters Thank you. Being inside of ACF, we often refer to ourselves as being quilted together, all these 19 different agencies. Can you go into a little bit more of the details about how ACF creates a broader safety net for disaster response?

Natalie Grant I like to think of ACF programs in their steady state, their day-to-day operations, as those support and service architecture that really undergirds the nation, right? So human and social service partners throughout the country provide necessary, required, important services on a day-to-day basis, so they're really helping people in crisis navigate that crisis every day. So it's not too much of a stretch to consider the work that ACF does in a disaster context, as well, as an extension of what's happening in a day-to-day time frame with the common thread of a disaster, natural or man-made, that really links together a whole host of different communities or individuals, as well.

So I'd say that ACF is uniquely positioned, and the services and programs out of ACF are uniquely positioned, to engage with this aspect. And then really and truly, because we have so many different programs and services that touch upon various aspects of human need, it's critically important that the case management and the coordination are linked such that the disaster survivor has a more seamless experience. That is to say, helping them navigate and negotiate a number of programs is one aspect, while also appreciating the life cycle of the human experience and understanding what the totality of that recovery plan might look like or that individual or household plan, so really identifying, what are the

resources and supports that are needed over time and as their condition evolves and changes and ensuring that the appropriate programs are really connected together?

So, as an example, when we consider some of our colleagues here at ACF and our linkages with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, we know that where you are really impacts and influences the services and supports that you receive, and especially if you are displaced or have tenuous housing or have been previously unhoused or otherwise. We know that you're going to need additional supportive services wherever you may be, and so part of our partnership with colleagues over at HUD is really to identify those place-based strategies that can support disaster survivors over time and really kind of wrap them around. So we're stitching together these various programmatic areas and then really creating this coverage, this blanket, this quilt that will support disaster survivors over time.

Damon Waters I really like what you were talking about, the comprehensive response to the human experience and the example you provided. Oftentimes people think of TANF as just a cash assistance or traditional welfare program. Are there any recommendations or tools that staff within TANF agencies can use to maximize collaboration between all these different programs that are responding to that entire human experience?

Natalie Grant Absolutely. I think the TANF program is exceptional in the type of training and technical assistance that you provide to TANF agencies across the country, and I think also in the emergency waivers and flexibilities that we have on the ACF website, the program instruction that accompanies that is really, really helpful in providing a guidepost for TANF agencies. And I think part of the collaboration that TANF agencies can look towards as they look not only at what TANF has outlined there in the way of some of the waivers and flexibilities, but they can also go there and see and understand the whole ... literally the breadth and depth of the services and supports that ACF provides comprehensively.

And if you look at that document very closely, you can start to see some of the networks and connections between the TANF programs, TANF administration, and so on and the timelines that are associated with that, and I'll get to that point in just a moment. The timelines that are associated with it and then also the services that are provided and take sort of a more holistic view of the person-based strategy, the individual or case-based strategy that works for that disaster survivor or that individual, that person that is in front of you virtually or over the phone. With regard to the timing, I will say that in disasters, there is a very, in a lot of circumstances, clear understanding of the temporal nature of the resources that are provided. So with hurricanes and other incidents, weather emergencies that have ample notice, we know that there is a distinct sort of pre-landfall phase, a landfall phase and then what happens post-landfall.

Typically when we examine the post-landfall response phase, there is a very targeted time frame for certain interventions before the quote, unquote, "incident" is stabilized. That is, the conditions are no longer degrading as rapidly as they were after the immediate aftermath of that disaster incident. So TANF really provides a critical service in that immediate period and also for a couple of months subsequent because many of those first responders, many of those other programs, tools and supports from our emergency management agencies, are geared towards that immediate response period, and that is less than 30 days and, under most circumstances, that's maybe, at most, 2 weeks.

So if you consider an individual or household who may have been displaced, who may have lost everything and those sorts of things, certainly there are other programs that our colleagues over at FEMA bring to bear. However, they also are constrained in terms of their overall dollar amount. They're

constrained in terms of some of their eligibility requirements. And they're constrained in terms of the length of time within which they operate. So there is this sort of drop-off of interest from community members. Once the sort of lights go out and the lights fade from the news media, this is what I like to sort of frame up as the disaster doughnut where you have this immediate sort of push of resources after a disaster, and then those resources go away, and then sometime under a much longer time horizon, additional resources, if provided by Congress, may come to bear. What that looks like is probably in around the 3-to-6-month time frame where individuals and households are at greatest risk for further degradation of their individual condition because there are not additional resources in the way that there were immediately after a disaster, and those new Congressionally appropriated or funded resources have not yet manifested. So there is this very critical liminal space that I think TANF and TANF agencies can really step into on a time-limited basis to provide some very targeted support to buttress those individuals and households until such time that they can be transitioned to another program or begin some other programs and supports that can actually get them on their way.

Damon Waters Thank you. Thank you so very much. Oftentimes people think of disasters as floods or as a fire or something like that, but there's so much within that definition of the unexpected. What disasters has your office responded to, and how does your office promote community resilience at the local level despite the type of disaster?

Natalie Grant Well, in these days, it's very clear that, unfortunately, disasters are only increasing year to year, and the type and the complexity of the disasters that we see are similarly increasing, particularly when we consider historically underserved communities and repeat disasters. So if you look at the Gulf Coast, especially some of our colleagues in and around the jurisdictions down there have been faced with multiple storms or severe weather incidents in 1 year, much less successive years, and that really impedes the ability to fully recover or reconstitute, even just to get back to what was the routine operating status. It makes it very challenging. So from OHSEPR's perspective, we respond to all things, COVID-19 being most recent, but wildfires, hurricanes, volcanoes, and other sorts of natural hazards.

We've also responded to some of the technological hazards, such as the BP oil spill, the Flint water crisis, some of those other aspects, even most recently down in Surfside in Florida with the building collapse, with the condominium collapse there. Wherever people are adversely impacted by an emergency or a disaster is really where we have a footprint and a toehold because disasters are only disasters because of the impact that they have on people, honestly.

And even if it is an environmental disaster, we frame it up as, what is the environment? What is the impact on the environment, and how does that then impact the people that live there or rely upon the resources of the land and sea? So when we look at unexpected, they can be large. They could be, quote, unquote, "small." I think small just depends on your sort of level of government. But ACF programs are always there, and OHSEPR, in a sense, is very much across the board and engaged. And I think part of what we look towards is, throughout our response operations, how best to augment and then buttress the community fabric and architecture because we know that as a federal direct service partner, we're not going to be there all the time, and nor should we be because that's really the networks and connections at the community level, are those that have the staying power.

And by extension, the community members themselves are the ones that have the most intimate and intricate knowledge of what their community is, what they want it to be and how best to support it in the immediate aftermath and even preceding a disaster. So they really set ... The community and the

individuals that composite it set the trajectory for the recovery itself and then also what the community should look like over time.

Damon Waters Thank you. Thank you very much. We often hear people talking about disaster relief and emergency preparedness, but from the perspective of the Office of Human Services, what do you mean by emergency preparedness?

Natalie Grant I think very specifically about awareness and also connection, and I think that's really the space within which human and social service providers operate. Awareness in the sense of understanding your community, understanding the threats and hazards, understanding the vulnerabilities and the persons that need support, especially after a disaster, and then really understanding how to galvanize the resources of the community and where those gap areas might be to provide the support to reconstitute the community after that disaster and really utilize those supports effectively during that immediate response period, as well. So I really look at it as two sort of specific items, having that awareness and then having that connection, so being able to know what's in front of you and then also being able to galvanize the resources, human and material, and really connect those pieces to respond to an incident. So that's really, in my mind, what being prepared for an emergency means, is, are those two things together?

Damon Waters And that's an excellent segue into my next thought. I was wondering, for a human services program like TANF, a work program, what type of infrastructure is critical to be able to respond to disasters?

Natalie Grant I think fundamentally TANF programs are run by people, right? So when we consider infrastructure and architecture and those sorts of terms, especially in FEMA and our other emergency management colleagues, they conjure a specific image, right, of a building, of a bridge, of a roadway or something along those lines. I consider the infrastructure to be very much ... the human services infrastructure that you hear much discussion about following COVID-19 particularly. It is about the people. It's about the people that are doing the work, the people that are providing the services, the case workers, case managers, the leadership and so on that are really doing the outreach and the connections to the people.

I similarly think of what those investments in the personnel might be such that they can receive the training, develop the knowledge, awareness and understanding and begin to view their program through the lens of, how do we maintain our services? What are the potential experiences that our clients may be experiencing? And what if there are some folks that are newly eligible who have never been part of our program? What is their user experience, and really drawing upon that knowledge and framing it within the disaster context? I look at it as really people.

People are the ones who do the work, really helping them understand and be educated and then trained and then sort of exercising and testing those muscles and really giving them the opportunity to see and learn and understand by doing and then ensuring that they have the tools, technology, and resources to effectuate the mission. And especially in COVID-19, we've seen that all of those things are hugely important, right, to have the personnel available, to ensure that the personnel know what they're doing and how they're doing it, and then to be able to link to others through remote or virtual means in a new way on the fly has been something that has been really innovative and a boon to the service delivery and then honestly a necessity that was borne out of the circumstances that the TANF agencies have really, really shown great capability in execution.

Damon Waters Great. Thank you. Can you outline a framework of policy options, program options, TANF administrators can rely on in a crisis? I know that at least for the TANF side, we relied a lot on non-recurring short-term benefits, would be maybe a cash payment or just something that doesn't have an ongoing need. What else is out there for programs to take advantage of in times of crisis?

Natalie Grant I do believe that the non-recurring cash benefit ... I do believe that temporary benefit is honestly, in a lot of circumstances, a bridge to stability. I firmly believe that. And particularly within the sort of context that I discussed previously about the disaster doughnut where there is this period of time following a disaster where there may be a deficit of services and challenges with eligibility, particularly for persons who've been displaced from their previous home of record and may not necessarily have all of their documentation, which may have been destroyed, and so on and so forth, I think that the inherent flexibility that TANF agencies have in examining what the circumstance needs and would dictate is huge, right?

And I would say particularly when we look at some of the emergency management programs that come in after a disaster, they have very, very challenging program accountability requirements that may not necessarily fit very neatly into the experience of the individual, right, or of that household. So I think ... and on top of that, those programs lack the jurisdictional knowledge and awareness upon implementation to have much flexibility to tailor even if that were afforded to them.

So I think looking at the TANF program, looking at the program instruction and really ascertaining, is there a need? Because we have had huge population shifts or movement Do we need to examine how persons are eligible for this program, the length of time up to that limit, the eligibility components? I think all of those elements that are just inherent in the TANF program lend itself really well to being a tool for leadership at the jurisdictional level overall. And then I'd say as you look to some of the other programs that have been outlined in the ACF Disaster Waivers and Flexibilities document, you can very much see the connection between the TANF program and some of the other ACF programs such that you can feel comfortable and confident that while TANF benefits may be sort of focused in this one arena, that there are potentially other options available to individuals and households to further meet their needs through other ACF programs.

Damon Waters So, Natalie, as we're closing out, I was wondering if there was one piece of advice that you would give to our TANF program administrators preparing for that next natural disaster or that next tech disaster or the next phase of COVID. What is one thing that should be on their minds right now and that they should really consider doing as they leave this podcast?

Natalie Grant I'm a little upset that you've constrained me to only one thing, but I'll do my best to answer the question as asked. I suppose it is very much about knowing and understanding your hazard environment and the people that you have in front of you to actually meet that risk. And part of the hazard environment is knowing and understanding that you have and provide critical services that must continue and, in some cases, may need to be buttressed and augmented and enhanced after a disaster to provide the additional services or continue to provide services to the community. And I think that's really what was resonant out of COVID-19 in that we were not simply confronted as a nation with just the immediate subset of persons who were in crisis pre-COVID-19 and needed services.

There was now a much larger subset of the population that needed services because everyone was impacted. So I think in order to meet that challenge, it is critically important to know you have in front of you such that you can assess and determine early on if you can meet the ask and the task in front of you or

if there's something additional that you might require in order to get there to continue providing services. So part of that is people. Part of that is the technology. Part of that is the knowledge and training. All of those things are kind of folded into this one aspect of awareness, right? And if you don't have awareness, then you can't have understanding, and then you cannot, by extension, move forward in terms of your readiness, not just preparedness but overall being ready.

There's one thing to be prepared. It's another thing to be ready to respond, right? So that's what I would say, is just having that awareness as a first step is going to be key and awareness of your partners, your sister and brother programs on the Human and Social Service level that can let you know where some of the gaps might be and with whom you might also find a community of practice, because it's not just TANF program administrators that are out here doing this work. It is office of child care. It is low-income heating and energy assistance. It's all of the ACF 19 programs that are very much in the same sort of readiness posture, especially following COVID-19. So find your community of practice, and really lean on them to support your overarching awareness and readiness.

Damon Waters Thank you.

Lisa Washington-Thomas To conclude, Ryan Howard discusses the importance of TANF programs in disaster response and specifically how Owens Valley Career Development Center has supported families through natural disasters and the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Damon Waters I wanted to introduce an old friend of mine. He's on the other side of the country, but I'm sure he's bright eyed and bushy tailed this morning and awake, so, Ryan, I want you to introduce yourself to our listeners.

Ryan Howard Thank you, Damon. My name is Ryan Howard, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Owens Valley Career Development Center, which is a consortium of 13 tribal nations out here in California in the central region of California with our administrative headquarters in Bishop, California.

Damon Waters Like I said earlier, welcome, Ryan. I'm glad to have you here. We've been having several different conversations with different TANF stakeholders around national disasters and public health emergencies. Many people have heard of the Lone Pine earthquake back in 1872, and since then there has been earthquakes and floods and dry seasons. And today, disasters are all the more common. How have your clients and the people you work with been impacted by natural disasters and public health emergencies?

Ryan Howard As you mentioned, Damon, earthquakes, living in California, is always a danger that exists here. We tend to have several small earthquakes almost every year, so that's always a danger and something that we have to be aware of and prepared for. With the changes in temperature rising globally, wildfires is also a present and persistent danger out here in California. So we've had to assist participants in evacuating from their homes and finding shelter and those types of things associated with wildfire. And then, of course, with the COVID-19 pandemic, we've had to find new ways to respond to this global health crisis.

Damon Waters Thank you, Ryan. And oftentimes people think about these crises and these emergencies as with regard to earthquakes and floods and tornadoes and different things like that. COVID has really changed the way a lot of people have thought about it. Could you give some examples and

share your experiences with how COVID has changed the response to national preparedness for Owens Valley? And in what way, specifically?

Ryan Howard Sure, Damon. So we've had to think about this particular crisis as one with a much longer response. So with other natural disasters like an earthquake or a wildfire, there are some immediate responses that we need to provide in order to ensure that people are safe. But in this particular crisis, it's obviously lasted much longer, I think, than most of us had anticipated and also has some unique challenges with the way that the virus is transmitted to other people and things that is obviously much different in how you would respond versus a natural disaster. So for this in particular, we actually had to create what we call a pandemic preparedness plan, and that really outlined the responses that the organization would take to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We didn't really have a model necessarily when this started back in March of 2020, so we started with creating something basically from scratch that would provide guidance to our employees and how they would report to work, what types of safety protocols would be put into place as well as when we eventually reopened our offices later in 2020, what protocols would be put in place to make the office as safe as possible for visitors, program participants, etc.. So we really had to rely on creating a lot of virtual spaces for our employees and participants just like many other organizations have, so relying heavily on virtual platforms for meetings, for interactions with our participants for intake interviews, etc. , also on providing workshops that we would normally provide in person, again, relying on those virtual spaces and also the telephone sometimes for participants who may not have a stable Internet connection at home.

So our services had to pivot significantly. We also included drive-through events as part of our response, especially when infection rates have been very high in some of our communities. We've encouraged those sort of drive-through activities where the participants are given information in a drive-through-type fashion. We've also utilized outdoor activities when the weather has been nice enough and in communities where that is available, so providing classroom-type-workshops outside, also live in a part of California where there's a lot of natural beauty, so encouraging hiking, fishing, things like that that are, of course, beautiful outdoor activities but also can minimize that risk of transmission by being outdoors. And then when we have had the small classroom environments, we've had to, of course, limit the number of attendees. We used to go from really packing rooms with our participants and trying to make sure that as many can participate as possible to really then limiting those due to safety and maintaining 6-foot distance from other people that are outside of their household; of course, all the protocols that we're all probably used to now of wearing face coverings, having temperature screenings and those types of things. So those have been some of our responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Damon Waters So it really sounds like Owens Valley has created an infrastructure to adapt to such unexpected disasters. Have you made a real investment for future disasters or if COVID continues to go on? What does that future infrastructure for disaster preparedness look like?

Ryan Howard So we have really kind of created an emergency response team that includes several of our program directors, our facilities director, human resources. And so what we've done is, we've met regularly in order to review our policies and procedures and to really try to better plan for future unexpected disasters. We also have an emergency action plan, which we had created prior to the pandemic, but that really guides each one of our site locations' response to an emergency, and so that could be a fire. That could be an earthquake. But we've also adapted those to include the COVID-19 pandemic.

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We've updated our policies on communicable diseases, so we didn't really have strong employee policies related to that, and so we've revised those and adapted those. I did mention earlier our pandemic preparedness plan, and that really guides those responses with our employees and our program participants. And then ultimately our organization also chose to enact a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy, which, again, was part of that response and efforts to maintain a healthy and safe workplace as well as being mindful of the communities that we serve and the risk that that poses to our program participants and those tribal communities. And then finally we've built stronger relationships with agencies, such as the American Red Cross, county, state and federal partners to really be able to share information and resources more readily and to assist us in creating these plans to guide how the organization responds to natural disasters.

Damon Waters Thanks, Ryan. I'm wondering if you would be willing or if Owens Valley would be willing to share any of those templates or some of that information with regard to developing those plans with some of your sister TANF programs out there, tribal, state and county.

Ryan Howard Damon, we are always willing to share, and we have had some requests throughout the pandemic to share some of those policies or to share some of the process that we use. And we are more than happy to share those with others that may benefit from them.

Damon Waters Great. We are going to follow up with you on those, and hopefully we can get some of those up on our peer TA website. Now, we've all been talking about the pandemic emergency relief fund, emergency assistance fund, and the different funds or different pots of federal money that are being used to fund different local activities. How has Owens Valley thought about or if you've already started using non-recurrent short-term benefits to serve your clients during these disasters?

Ryan Howard Yes, we have already used non-recurring short-term benefits, and that was something that several years ago, in conversation with our program specialists at Office of Family Assistance, we really tried to create and develop a policy that fleshed out that a bit more to make sure that we have that benefit that's readily available in those instances of emergency, crisis, natural disaster, or other episodes of need. So we created a policy that covers those. We have a specific eligibility criteria for non-recurrent short-term benefits.

One of the unique things that we decided to do was to increase the total family income in order to be eligible for those benefits, so the income level is different than what a family would need to qualify for regular monthly cash assistance. And then we also provided some criteria for the type of need that a family ... for the types of needs that we can cover with that benefit, and so that would include short-term mortgage or rental assistance for families that might have been displaced from their home due to a natural disaster or also lost employment.

We've included costs associated with virtual learning for families who have lost employment and short-term utility assistance and other energy assistance, clothing allowances for families that had maybe lost their possessions during a natural disaster and family support services to deal with traumatic events. So our non-recurring short-term benefits do not exceed 4 months from the start of the crisis situation, and we do have a lifetime limit threshold, the amount of assistance that a household can receive in total. So the non-recurrent short-term benefits have been really helpful in responding to some of the natural disasters and was one of the first benefits that we really promoted at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well.

Damon Waters Great, great. So it sounds like they've had a tremendous impact on your families within the program.

Ryan Howard Absolutely.

Damon Waters How does your program mediate between needing to provide immediate assistance to folks as fast as possible but also needing to collect information on participants to fulfill reporting requirements in these situations? We know that there's always that intake form, and then there's the other forms you have to fill out, and then there's often the client assessment and all that stuff. How are you balancing responding to those emergencies with also handling those administrative requirements?

Ryan Howard So I believe that we are doing that by trying to, of course, make sure that our policies are followed while also being flexible and being mindful of the types of emergency situations that our participants are ... When they're coming to our door, and they're needing this type of assistance, we also need to show that ability to be a bit flexible with them, as well. So we do have a separate application for non-recurrent short-term benefits. We simplified the application so that it's much shorter than the application for monthly cash assistance and really tried to go through and ensure that what we're requesting is really just the basics of what's needed in order to process this benefit. We understand that if somebody has evacuated their home, they might not have all of their documents that we normally would require when somebody comes in our door requesting monthly cash assistance. And so we really tried to streamline that to really just get the basics, make sure we have the income from verified income information from the family. And we just try to do our best to process those timely. I think our staff are fully aware of the needs of those families when they're coming to us in crisis, and so we try to provide the flexibility that we can and also the quick responses that those families need when they're coming to us at that time of crisis.

Damon Waters Great. Thank you, and I'm sure those families appreciate all that flexibility, given the circumstances. And they're like, "Oh, my gosh. I can't think of this right now," but it really sounds like you have a real plan that really takes into account what's happening in their lives. So I'm glad to hear that, and thank you for that. We know that Owens Valley, like you said, is having the earthquakes, it seems like every year, every week, every month. Then there's the droughts, the snow, of course, COVID and flus and everything like that. And what are some of the lessons learned from implementing disaster policies in the past that you have and you want to share with your TANF friends out there?

Ryan Howard So I think one of the most important lessons is that we need to really be thinking and preparing for future disasters. And for us, that's meant building those networks and relationships with other agencies outside of the time of crisis. So one of those that we've spent quite a bit of time cultivating and working towards building a stronger relationship and network is with the American Red Cross. And I think that's definitely ... They've been a very important provider of services during crisis, and building that relationship outside of just those times of crisis has been really helpful to furthering that and being better prepared when we actually do need to call on those agencies and find out what the response is to specific disasters.

So that's definitely been helpful. I think also reaching out to your federal and state partners for resources, so our state partner here with the State of California has a number of disaster preparedness programs and resources, some even specifically for tribes. And so finding those resources and connecting with them and outside of times of crisis has also been really helpful. And then at the fed level, our program specialist, Office of Family Assistance, has connected us with several other partners at the federal level that have

provided resources that should draft plans, draft policies—things like that that have been really helpful for our organization to review and sort of take what we can from some of those and look at implementing things that can help us to be better prepared. So I would say those two things have been very helpful to us.

Damon Waters Great. Thank you. So if other TANF programs, tribal or state or county, are interested in coordinating or getting started establishing the type of what really sounds like a comprehensive approach to disasters and forming collaborations, who are your collaborating partners? And what recommendations do you have for creating and maintaining those partnerships, collaborations?

Ryan Howard As I mentioned, the American Red Cross is really a great partner, and I think throughout the United States, they're one of the first agencies that's there and ready to help coordinate emergency response. So I think reaching out to those partners with the American Red Cross in any one specific jurisdiction is extremely helpful. We've also found that connecting with our county partners, and I forgot to mention them earlier, is also super important. So oftentimes, there's a coordinated county response, and then counties have specific infrastructure in which they operate in response to a natural disaster. So, of course, that's going to vary depending on who those county partners are in your location. But those have also been really helpful to meet up with, to set up some meetings just to talk about what the county's response might be in an emergency and what types of resources we might be able to share in responding to that.

And then as I mentioned, of course, states generally have resources in responding to disasters, and I know here in the State of California they've been very helpful in sharing information with us and willing to partner with us. So I think just kind of looking at those different agencies, trying to, again, set up communication, which might be just a formal introductory meeting, and then really talking about maybe what the needs of your organization or tribe may be and how those different entities might be able to help you to respond in a crisis situation.

And as I mentioned, oftentimes they have plans, written plans, written policies, things that they might be willing to share with you in order for you to help to develop your organization and/or your tribe's policies and procedures. So we've utilized sort of all those different methods to create plan and response that I think is unique but also takes information from lots of different sources to really make sure that the plans are comprehensive. And so I think the other thing that programs could look at is to set up some regular interval at which you're communicating with those partners. That oftentimes in those relationships is helpful, too, whether it's you're checking in twice a year or annually but having some interval that you're just checking with those partners, especially outside of those times of crisis because when we're in crisis, oftentimes that means there's numbers of people and agencies that are contacting these specific partners for help. So it really helps when you try to cultivate those relationships outside of just the crisis situation.

Damon Waters Great. Great. Just want to sum things up for our listeners. For programs that are still ramping up disaster response policies and protocols, really trying to get into this, knowing that we may have many more natural or health disasters in the future, what advice would you share with them for getting it started and keeping the focus and attention on it?

Ryan Howard My suggestion would be to reach out to similar programs or grantees specific to the type of programs that you're administering, and see what kind of policies and procedures they might be willing to share. That's really been a great resource for us. We've oftentimes coordinated that with our program specialists at Office of Family Assistance, and they've helped us to connect with other programs with information like that to share.

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Again, as I mentioned, reaching out to those partners at the county, state, federal level, checking in on what types of resources are out there, how we can coordinate our emergency response, and oftentimes again those partners may have policies, procedures, things that they're also willing to share that you can take what you need from in terms of developing your own comprehensive response. And of course, trying to figure out some time where you can regularly check in with some of those partners, whether that's maybe twice a year or once a year, just making sure that you know who the contacts are at those agencies, asking any questions that you may have and, of course, just like our organization, respond and adapt to emergency situations.

Sometimes those partners also might have a new or innovative approach in terms of responding to a natural disaster. The other thing I would mention is really kind of creating an emergency response team within your organization or tribe. That's been very helpful here, to bring in several different directors, to really talk specifically about emergency preparedness and then, of course, being able to create the policies and procedures that then we take to our board for approval and then rolling those policies and procedures out to our staff, which oftentimes requires training, requires learning opportunities for those staff to get the information and be able to understand how we're expecting them to respond in emergency situations and then making sure that those are tailored to their specific situation and needs, making sure that individually those site locations are aware of the local resources in emergency response.

Damon Waters Well, Ryan, I wanted to thank you for taking the time out today. Some very, very good information for our state, tribal, and county TANF programs and other stakeholders. Again, Ryan Howard, the Executive Director of Owens Valley Career Development Center, will be sharing with us some templates and other information about Owens Valley's emergency disaster preparedness resources that we will hopefully put up on the peer TA website in the coming months. Ryan, do you have any last words that you want to share with our partners?

Ryan Howard I guess part of it is that you don't necessarily need to recreate the wheel every time, so again, making those connections with other agencies that can share and then figure out what makes the most sense for your organization to utilize and adapt to what your specific needs are.

Damon Waters No truer words. The wheel was invented years ago. No need to reinvent it. The answers are usually out there with one of your partners. So on behalf of the Office of Family Assistance and the Administration for Children and Families within HHS, I want to thank you again, Ryan, and to all of our listeners today.

Ryan Howard Thank you, Damon.

Damon Waters And a big thank-you to our listeners who joined today. As a recap, during our conversation with Natalie, she said it's one thing to be prepared. It's another thing to be ready to respond. And I think that's the perfect way to summarize this episode. One way to do this, according to Ryan, is to start preparing for future disasters today. He encourages us to foster relationships with other agencies and local organizations who could be valuable partners. Also, establishing disaster response policies and procedures early can help a program be able to respond as quickly as possible in the most effective and efficient way.

As much as we don't like to think about disasters occurring, we need to take steps to ensure that we can respond when they do occur. This relates to Rich's point that programs need to be survivor-centric by putting people first within their programming and operations. In addition, programs need to make sure

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they're taking care of their staff so their staff can in turn respond quickly to help others in need. That's all part of making sure that everyone is coordinated and ready to respond when a disaster strikes. Finally, Ryan mentioned that he's willing to share how Owens Valley Career Development Center has developed new emergency action plans and disaster response procedures. You can find some of these resources mentioned on the peer TA website by going to peerta.acf.hhs.gov.

Lisa Washington-Thomas A big thanks to our amazing guests for joining us today, and thank you for tuning into the inaugural episode of the Office of Family Assistance's podcast series, "TANF Talks." We hope you listen in to our second episode, which explores how Maine and Vermont's TANF programs pivoted funds, staff, and procedures to accommodate increased demands on services, such as emergency shelter, food, short-term employment, and one-time TANF payments to affected families.