Melissa Harris Zoom Audio

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**SPEAKERS**

Bill Wagner

00:00

Hey, everyone. Thanks so much for having me here today. So I'm with the American Association of service coordinators. We are a membership association that represents more than 4000 service coordinators all over the country. They're in every state and US territory. So there are service coordinators most likely in every single one of your communities. So what is a service coordinator, I won't go into too much detail because I'm so happy to be joined here today by a service coordinator, Briana who's going to come up and talk next. But basically, a service coordinator is a social service provider who's working in affordable housing to connect residents with services and resources within their communities. And so not that different from yourselves working to connect people with the things that they need to continue living well in their communities. There are service coordinators working out in the community, but by and large, they're working in affordable housing that's funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. There are 5000 service coordinators working in HUD section 202 properties, which these are properties specifically for older adults. And their goal is to keep these older adults living and aging in place as opposed to moving to nursing homes or assisted living facilities. So they're going to be connecting residents to services and resources very focused on their health, managing chronic medical conditions. Being able to afford living in their homes, those types of things. Their goal is to keep people where they are instead of moving to higher levels of care. And then there are about 500 service coordinators working in public housing communities, and they're mostly serving families. And their goal is the complete opposite of the service coordinators working with older adults. Because their goal is to instead of keeping people in affordable housing, it's helping them move up and out of affordable housing and off of public assistance. So they're helping connect people to job training, careers, making sure that their kids have access to transportation to school, and daycare, and all those types of things. The most common thing regardless of what type of resident The Service Coordinator serves, the most common thing that they're assisting their residents with is transportation. They have a huge focus on making sure that residents can get to where they need to go when they need to go there. As a matter of fact, ASQ has something called My community directory. It is a resource directory with free and reduced cost services that you can search for in your communities. It's powered by find help. So you all should be aware of this, if you're not your organization is likely listed as one of the free and reduced cost resources on this site. And so transportation is the number one thing that service coordinators are searching to get their residents access to. It's right up there with food and housing assistance. So this is clearly one of the most important things to the residents that are living in affordable housing is access to transportation. We have some information about specifically how service coordinators are helping their residents each year, they use something about 70% of service coordinators use something called Ask online. It's a case management system, they track all their resident interactions. And once again, transportation is one of the number one things that they're helping residents with. Last year, they helped 47,000 residents all over the country with transportation. And public transportation was actually the most common type of support they provided more than 30,000 times last year, they connected residents to public transportation. The most common reasons they're assisting these residents are for shopping, errands and appointments. So all things we're gonna talk about in a minute that are really important for them. And then also service coordinators in public housing, of course, are assisting residents with transportation. I didn't have the numbers yet when I made this slide. But I do know now that last year, the 250 service coordinators using family metrics to report they helped residents 30,000 times with public transportation, and most often that was to job training or work. So obviously, again, very vital to their well being. And so I'm really glad that we're here talking about how transportation and affordable housing can better come together because residents who live in affordable housing are very likely more in need of public transportation than the general population in your communities. And that's largely because, obviously the residents who live in affordable housing are very low income, and as a result, very few of them have access to reliable personal transportation. Many of them don't actually have personal vehicles, but even those who do may not be able to afford the maintenance, parking, gas, all of those things that come along with it. And so very few are going to be able to have personal transportation. So the majority of affordable housing residents are relying on you all to provide services and support to get them where they need to go. And there's just some basic stats that are about just how much money these individuals are working with. It's a very low amount. So and obviously, the other reason that service coordinators are spending so much time working on transportation, and getting residents connected is because that lack of transportation can lead to reduce opportunities, especially for all those that they help to get to work and job training, you know, that's their focus to get them out of affordable housing into the, into their own homes being self sufficient. And then also, social isolation is a huge piece of a lack of transportation. I'm sure many of you know that. Transportation is a vital resource to keeping someone connected to their community, I don't have to tell you guys that. And what we know is that when someone especially as they age loses access to their personal, or just reliable everyday transportation, their health starts to decline rapidly. And that's because they are no longer able to be connected to their community. And so it's really important when we're talking about working with affordable housing spaces, to keep in mind that housing that's specifically designated for older adults, because they're even more in need, you know, not only are they very low income and lacking access, but that access oftentimes means that they are very isolated, which is extremely bad for your both mental and physical health. And so we know that most of those people who are living in affordable housing for seniors are living alone. On the screen, you can see the average number of residents per HUD, senior housing property in one unit is 1.1. So essentially, they're living alone. So their only connection to the outside world would be reliable transportation. And just to kind of further elaborate on that, because we are talking about the connection between transportation and health right now is just to show you a picture of who older adults in affordable housing are. Because if there's any population, that you want to start thinking about serving in affordable housing, I'd say definitely these older adults who really really need access to their outside community, on average, they're 75 years old, they live alone, they have an average monthly income of $1,000, that's before they pay their $300 a month in rent. They also have for chronic health conditions. So we know is these older adults living in affordable housing or older, sicker and poor than the average older adults in most communities. So they need a lot of wraparound supports, including transportation, to help them continue aging in their communities, and being able to live well and feel like they have a sense of self sufficiency, you know, so keep that in mind, as you're thinking about how you can work with older adults in affordable housing. You know, keep in mind that they often do have a lot of chronic conditions, lots of medical appointments, lots of regular doctor's appointments. But you know, also they need some socialization, like going to the library or the senior center or those types of things. Because transportation, obviously, of course, is for necessary things. As the introduction said, you know, talking about getting them to services and resources, that's important. But even just getting an older adult to the grocery store, can make a huge difference in their lives. You know, someone who is home alone all day, being able to get to the grocery store and do something for themselves, changes how they see their life that shows that they have some meaning they're part of their community, right, they talk to the cashier that they see all the time they talk to the baker or or, you know, the person that meat counter, right, like, you might not think getting someone to the grocery store has such a big impact. But for older adults who are isolated, that is much bigger than just giving someone access to the food that they need. It gives them a sense of self sufficiency and belonging in their community.

09:15

So I won't talk too much about this because Briana is gonna go over how she has a service credit or helps her residents, but just in general to help make sure residents get access to the transportation they need. They're often educating residents on public transit schedules and routes. They help them acquire and pass out reduced cost or free bus passes. That's really important for those in public housing, because oftentimes, transit is free for older adults, but those who are in public housing do often need vouchers or bus passes. And then this is a big one where you guys are all going to come into play here is that oftentimes service coordinators are advocating for public transit options within their communities. Brianna does an amazing job of this, but some service created was may not know that what you do exists. And so, you know, they want to be able to work with injuries like yourselves, and organize organizations like yours to make sure that bus stops are in places that make sense make sure that routes and transportation are going whether residents need to go. And so, you know, as you're hopefully thinking about how to better serve residents and affordable housing, the number one thing I want you to keep in mind is to find service coordinators in your community. Like I said, they are in every state and territory, there is definitely one probably in your area. So connect with the service coordinators understand what it is that they're already doing to get residents connected to transportation. And I promise you even if they are doing a stellar job, and doing everything they can, they are still looking for more reasons for transportation, that's what we always hear is that there's never enough options for transportation. So definitely reach out to your service coordinators in the community, see how you can help. Also, hopefully, you guys are already doing this, but connect with developers and your community early. You know, look at the I'm sure you know, the local zoning, or it takes many years to put together a deal to build affordable housing. So make sure you're part of that plan is there a building that affordable housing site. And then also, of course, obviously, we hope you keep affordable housing in mind when you're thinking about your strategic plans for transportation in your communities. And then just real quickly, before I pass it over to Briana, I wanted to share this list of resources with you, the number one is the most important, so feel free to take a screenshot or reach out to me, you can always reach me at m as a Melissa Harris at service coordinator.org. Or you can go to the American Association of service coordinators website and find the information, I can send all this to you. But that first link is specifically to help you find service coordinators and affordable housing sites in your community. So not all of the housing sites that you see on this map, when you go in there are going to have service coordinators. Some of them don't, but don't worry about that, you still want to contact those, because oftentimes, the housing manager is the one who's trying to cobble together some transportation support for residents. And they're probably really struggling, because they've got lots of other things on their plate. So please look at this map, reach out to the ones in your community, see how you can partner that can be as small as going in, you know, talking with the residents about what the transit options are, what the schedules look like all of those things, to you know, working really in depth with a service coordinator to improve access to transportation. And then the other two are just examples of case studies of HUD properties, working closely with transportation authorities to make sure that transit and affordable housing are working together from the beginning, and really connecting residents meaningfully to transportation. So I'm happy to take questions or we can turn it over to Brianna and wait, whatever you prefer.

**Bill Wagner** 13:14

Yeah. Yes, I forgot where it was. Where do you find us a service coordinator?

13:24

Yeah, so to find a service corner, obviously, and that affordable housing site that I talked about at the beginning. So any of those senior housing sites, affordable housing properties, and any of those public housing sites. So again, on this Mac, you'll see a list of all the HUD housing in your communities, oftentimes, obviously, they are apartment buildings. So you probably are, maybe you know where these apartment buildings are, but it might not be obvious that they're specifically affordable housing are specifically affordable housing for older adults. So hopefully, this map will come in handy. But yeah, always, almost always service coordinators are working in HUD affordable housing properties. These are when I talk about public housing. It's not like you know, Section Eight vouchers or something where they can go, they can live in any house in your community. These are all like high rises, apartments, those types of things. Thank

14:19

you. Oh, nice.

14:24

Yeah, let's see, oh, here we go. Um, I might, so you can find your local public housing or find affordable elderly and special needs housing that. That's going to show you where all of the properties are specifically for older adults, they're called multifamily properties. I'm actually familiar with a number of these companies like I have. All of these are serving specifically older adults, if that's a population that you specifically want to reach out to. And then there was that other option where you could check for public housing authorities and and those who are a great resource to they might not have a service coordinator, but oftentimes public housing authorities. They do have people whose job it is to be in charge of services and supports for residents. And so when you connect with them, they may not have a service coordinator, but they can still be a good resource for you.

**Bill Wagner** 15:22

Okay, one more question. So, if I'm looking for service coordinators, I call or if I'm looking for housing and I call affordable housing are getting linked up with how does that next step occur? Forget working with a service coordinator.

15:40

Yeah, I would say call the affordable housing site, ask for the Service Coordinator, you'll get connected to that service coordinator, set up a coffee set up a meeting and talk about what the needs might be, I think the best place to start is, you know, hearing from the Service Coordinator, what they're already doing in their community, what additional needs they have for transportation for their residents. And then you also may be sharing you know, what you do, and what services you can help them with and kind of starting to build that relationship. And I think from there it can grow to see what the needs are specifically in their community and what's available for you guys. But obviously, Brianna, I'm guessing can talk more to that too and have good examples of what she has done working with transportation providers.

**Bill Wagner** 16:24

I want to reserve the right to ask more questions later. But now I would like to introduce our next speaker, who is a service coordinator