



Meeting Notes

Briefing for Community Partners and External Stakeholders COVID-19 Response and Budget Update

August 21, 2020

Liesl Wendt: All right. Good morning everyone. My name is Liesl Wendt, and I am the deputy director for the Oregon Department of Human Services. Thanks for joining us on this Friday morning.

Our goal with you this morning is to share a high-level summary and overview of the agency's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to share recent budget highlights, so before I turn it over to our director and chief financial officer, I just want to cover a few logistics, and then I'll share a bit about our response.

First, I'd like to remind you this is an online meeting, so thanks for indulging us as we try a new technology. I know we had a few sound glitches a few minutes ago and we'll, we'll work through things with your, your patience and grace. There is live closed captioning today, and we're also recording today's meeting, so we'll make that available on our web site for you, for your colleagues who may not have been able to join us today.

In addition, I wanted to share a bit of a highlight. As you might notice, on our logo behind me, we have made a change in our acronym. We have shifted to ODHS and are beginning to refer to ourselves as the Oregon Department of Human Services. This is an important change that we have been pondering for some time, but given recent events, we felt it was time we should make this shift to differentiate ourselves, for you, our partners for our clients and customers, so that we're not confused with the federal Department of Homeland Security that shared our former acronym, so wanted to make sure you were aware of that, and we're all practicing that new acronym as we share information with you today.

So, I wanted to talk about our COVID response in particular, and if we can go to the third slide. When we came to realize in late February and early March that COVID was going to change our work and impact service delivery, little did we really know at that time when we reflect back on it today but we did identify a few themes that helped shape our response early, and to this day, so I just wanted to share some of that context for you.

First and foremost was safety, prevention and wellbeing. As with many of you, following the guidance of the Oregon Health Authority, we stayed focus on ensuring our staff was safe and ensuring that the people that were coming into our offices were safe. Like many public spaces, we quickly adapted to accommodate physical distancing requirements, and tried to do that in a as traa-informed way as, as possible, and are still playing with creative ways to limit traffic in our, in our buildings and in our public spaces.

Second is equity and inclusion. Disparity shown in our data reflects systemic racism, historic injustice and inequitable distribution of power and resources in Oregon communities and in our own agency. We are focused on improving access to programs and services for historically underserved populations who have been most significantly impacted by the pandemic, including communities of color, Oregon tribes and Oregonians with intellectual and development disabilities.

Third, empowerment, enforcement and accountability. We will continue to support our providers, many of you, and empower you to provide the highest quality of services to our children, families, consumers and service recipients. At the same time we will be staying, we have been and will be staying vigilant in the department's licensing and enforcement units to help us better protect the most vulnerable Oregonians.

Fourth, efficiencies and alignment. We have learned every day, we probably learn every 4 hours something new and in better ways to deliver services in this, in this pandemic and will continue learning from our pandemic experience. I'll share a few practical examples later in the presentation about how our services have adapted during this time.

So, next slide. What many of you may know or may not know is that throughout the pandemic we have kept our public-facing office doors open. We have directed people to our web site to access services, and in some cases who knew, we have drive-through windows in some of our buildings, and so that's been an option for people to drop off paperwork and minimize the need to come into those public-facing spaces. Most recently, we have experienced a increase in SNAP applications as a result of the July 25th expiration of the federal pandemic unemployment compensation program. Nearly 5,800 Oregonians applied for benefits in the first week of August, which was 37 percent higher when compared to the weeks before. Six weeks ago we also began implementing pandemic EBT these are benefits that provide food for students who loss access to free meals when school was shut down this spring. Families may receive up to \$384.00 per eligible child, and the actual food benefit amount is based in the date the child became eligible for free or reduced meals at school, and on the next slide you'll see a resource where you can learn more about food general food resources from the agency.

So, if we move to the next slide, so as you see on the left-hand side, we launched a need food campaign with many, many partners. There is a toolkit that's now available online in multiple languages and can be found on our web site. We really encourage you to check that out and share it with your partners and clients, customers. There is a wealth of resources about food needs or food resources in the community. In addition, we have heard from staff, from community partners the tremendous loneliness, , and concern for people's safety. We have seen decreases in our child abuse hotline, our adult abuse hotline, concerns around domestic violence not being reported, so just tremendous amount of concerns of safety and wanting to reach people who may not have traditional means to access services in this time, and so the, we have the you are not alone campaign to increase awareness of resources that are available, so encourage you to check that out, and hopefully you have seen that we have a dedicated section on our web site for information that both the agency's response and community resources that we're sharing specific to COVID.

All right, next slide. As I mentioned earlier, I think as you all know, COVID has exacerbated inequities that have been in place for a long time. The mortality rates are much higher for communities of color, and it's with this backdrop that communities and community partners and leaders came to us early in the summer really demanding swifter action from us, from other public entities. Our department responded by conducting listening sessions with community leaders and the really the question was how do you need us to respond. We were responding, as you can hear from, us in a pretty

aggressive way, but we weren't reaching different communities who traditionally have not had access to our services and information. So we have done a couple things that I'll share with you and I think from all of us in our leadership we want to tell you we're committed to working with staff and partners to pursue strategies to address both immediate and longstanding health disparities.

I share one specific example for how the agency is responding. Early in the pandemic, we developed a protecting immigrant families fund, and the goal was to partner with community-based organizations, specifically culturally specific and culturally responsive organizations who had better ways of reaching their communities, both with language, with service information, and really creative ways of making sure people were aware of how to respond in this pandemic. One of the recipients is Centro Latino Americano that services that Latinx community Lane County, and they have done some very clever things using social media to connect with the community. They created a text alert system and a What's App system in which they send information directly to people's cell phones. They have about 500 people subscribed in these systems and work directly with Lane County so that every Thursday after the pre, the county's press conference providing updates about COVID, they go live sharing the information in Spanish. By collaborating with the county, they have been able to setup testing sites for the community in both urban and rural areas. Their social workers help people over the phone with medical and food assistance applications, rent assistance and navigating the Oregon Workers Relief Fund, and then this is just one example of many that are happening around the state.

All right, next slide. People with disabilities are also a group at high risk for COVID-19 and have faced a long history of discrimination. Our Aging And People With Disabilities and Office of Developmental Disabilities services have quickly and consistently made temporary changes to protect the health of our clients, providing guidance to ensure that people with disabilities have the same access to healthcare during the pandemic and have issued information resources to help people with disabilities and their families to stay safe for what would happen if someone in the home needs to go to the hospital.

I just want to share a few examples. One is ODDS, Office of, , Development Disability Services, extended summer hours for children in services so families that normally have extra hours of care just during the summer can continue to have those support hours during the school year while many children are home during COVID-19. ODDS has also worked to provide creative ways of pro accessing information, and you can see some of those on our web site. It's, next, Vocational Rehabilitation was able to move most youth summer work experiences from in person to remote, and just a shout out for Voc Rehabilitation. Their leadership really led the way within our agency to move to remote work and remote services. Oh, one summer work internship for transition, which is an, an intensive 7-week dorm living and work experience for student with disabilities, was not able to offer obviously that experience this year, but 10 of the 15 youth who wanted to participate completed their remote program, and 4 of the students who didn't participate got jobs instead.

Next slide. As many of you know, we rely on community-based organizations to serve Oregonians. Each one of our programs has been in regular communication with providers to learn how you are adjusting to providing services, if you're providing services and attempting to plan for future service delivery. We recently sent providers a survey asking about their financial sustainability during the pandemic, and received just shy of 3,000 responses, so thank you to all of you who took the time to do that.

The survey results will assist us over time in understanding the needs of providers as we continue to identify federal or state resources to provide financial stability. While the survey was not intended for

a resource for budgetary reductions, it was really designed to assist us in learning how providers are coping and how services are being impacted. We want to know the best way to support you, and we need to learn that best from you. During this difficult time, we focused on maintaining a strong system of providers to meet the needs of Oregonians. You'll hear a little bit more about that from Eric when he talks about our budget. As a contracted ODHS service provider, your organization's wellbeing and sustainability is important to us.

All right, next slide. So I'm going to use some emergency management acronyms that I'll hopefully spell out as I go along here. But what I really want to talk about next is the transition to our agency's response ongoing with our partner agency, Oregon Health Authority. So, early in the summer when the state's Emergency Coordination Center, or ECC, , which really was the hub of activity for the entire state's response to COVID-19, as they began to ramp down, we both realized that our agencies weren't ready to ramp down. There was too much happening and too much need for a, a response and we had been working well together and saw some of the some of the alignment that could, that we really could benefit from having a joint unit, so what we have done is created a, a crew, a new unit, within both agencies, the COVID Response and Recovery Unit.

So this unit operates like many of our shared services, so when the agency splint, split in 2011, we have a series of shared services, probably more information that you want to know, but this, this will fall into that category where a combination of DHS, ODHS and OHA staff will work together on the response, so I want to share a couple of the focuses for the crew. One is equity. Equity will drive policy decisions and program delivery to support communities that systemic racism and oppression impact the most. Secondly, coordination. The crew facilitates the sharing of resources and information from multiple stakeholders, and this actually goes beyond our two agencies to implement the state response and recovery plan. One just brief example is the integrated regional response team, so these are multidisciplinary teams that can be deployed when there is an outbreak or a situation that requires more than one agency's response. Third is resources. The crew develops resources that pull content, information and expertise from both agencies to improve coordinated delivery. Another term we all learned during the response is playbooks, so we have developed playbooks that help coordinate our response to outbreaks in long-term care facilities, outbreaks with migrant seasonal farm workers, outbreaks in, in a variety of settings, and so these playbooks help so that we can ha teams that go in, respond, learn, improve and then the next team can go on the next weekend so that we're not, we're not burning out staff quite as much as we were early in the response. So we're going to continue to learn. We, we anticipate the crew being active for 18 to 24 months and we'll continue to communicate with you as, as it really becomes more developed.

Next slide. So, much of our work is done in all 36 counties where we have local mean, managers that, provide management to staff and coordinate service delivery, and if you flashback to March, which I did when I was preparing these talking points, you'll recall that information was evolving, at times every 2 to 4 hours, and we quickly realized that we in central office could not keep up with the demands of decision making and needs that our local leaders had. They needed to make decisions in real time, and we were all learning as we go in this uncertain environment, so we empowered our leaders to make decisions with three, three things really at the heart. One, safety of children and families, safety of employees and with the focus on continuing services to Oregonians. As our co, our commitment early on is that as much as possible we didn't want people that needed services to suffer as we all were figuring out how to make sure we could keep the doors open and keep services moving. So we met regularly over online huddles, we still are, to share information and to hear lessons learned from our local leaders, and just a couple examples, and many of you may have experienced some of these in your own communities.

In Jackson County our Child Welfare team made 400 baskets for foster families. Community businesses, such as Harry and David, Costco, Target, contributed goods and services, employees, and community members contri, also donated, and then they were delivered to those families. As I mentioned earlier, a few of our offices actually were former banks, and so converted those drive-through windows to, as a walkup or drive-through option for customers or clients to drop off information or to have conversations without coming into public spaces, and in some cases we have heard extremely positive feedback about using technology to increase visitation, to access services as nontraditional hours, so we're looking forward to changing our services going forward based on some of the lessons that we have learned with all of you.

All right. I have talked at you long enough, so I know what you really want to hear is some budget information, so I am going to turn the conversation over to Fariborz.

Fariborz Pakseresht: Good morning everyone, and thank you for joining us this morning.

I wanted to take us back in time to the beginning of this year, and you may remember that in the beginning of 2020 in February when the state revenue forecast came out, it showed a very positive picture, over a billion dollars, that had exceeded expectations during that time, and we were on a positive trajectory. At the same time you re, you may remember that during the 2020 legislative session we had an ask of about \$140 million to invest in various program areas to address workload, to create efficiencies and also to address the infrastructure of this agency, which really has never been fully funded ever since 2011, and of course, right in the midst of that, the pandemic hit, and we went, literally overnight from being in a positive trajectory into a negative one.

You may remember the economy shut down, and when the May revenue forecast came out, we showed a picture that was completely different than just from a few months ago, so rather than being a billion dollars up, we were nearly \$3 billion down for the rest of this biennia, and the picture also showed that if nothing changed, we would be about, just over \$4 billion short in the next biennia.

Now, you all know that the state's requirement for, balancing the budget is different than the federal government. We cannot run a deficit and will have to have a balanced budget at the end of each biennia. So you may remember that back in April when we talked with you, we were in the midst of doing an exercise of about 8½ percent reduction to deal with the rest of this biennia and naturally that was a pretty devastating picture because we only had about 12 months left to implement, so that actually multiplied, but again, thanks to the federal government and what came our way, several different packages, including money from FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Organization, the Corona Response Fund, FMAP, the Fed, federal Medicaid percentage that our CFO, Eric Moore, will talk about in just a moment. That really helped us be able to manage the budgetary picture at least until of June of 2021 with this caveat that nothing really changes from the present picture, meaning there is a lot of anxiety about what is going to happen in fall. When the flu season start, are going to have another surge? All of those things I was, like, contribute to whether or not we can maintain the, the current picture. If that all of that stuff stays fairly stable, and if the economy stays open, we should be able to manage this budget for the end of the biennia, and again, Eric will talk more about the impact of the second special session on DHS' budget.

So what's the outlook for '21, '23? Again, right now, there is an estimated \$4 billion shortfall which translates into about the 17 to 18 percent reduction for DHS. To give you a magnitude, just some ballpark figures, we are talking about \$655 million in general fund if you're talking about a 17 percent reduction, and also remember that in DHS we match our general fund with federal funds. It's about

60 some percentage points, so, if we take that kind of reduction, we'll also leave about \$2 billion in federal funds on the table, so that would be the magnitude.

Now what can change that picture? What can change that picture is additional federal funding, which is currently is, is not moving through congress. There is not agreement, but we are hopeful because if we do see another one or two packages coming from the federal government, we could change that trajectory and that picture.

So, before I talk about preparing for '21, '23 budget, I want to turn it over to Eric Moore, our chief financial officer, to talk about how we have fared in the second special session and what can you expect.

Eric Moore: My name is Eric Moore. I am the chief financial officer for the Oregon Department of Human Services, and earlier this summer, at our last stakeholder forum, I spoke to you about a series of budget reductions that we thought we may have to take in order to help balance the state's budget. The good news is that, thanks to pandemic-related increased in federal match rates as, Fariborz just mentioned, the level of reductions that the legislature ultimately took were much less than we expected for the Oregon Department of Human Services.

The department is able to access an estimated a hundred and eighty million dollars of additional federal match through the enhanced FMAP rate due to the Cares Act which is helping states deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. By using some of these dollars to help plug the hole in the general fund, the legislature was able to lessen the impact on our current programs. All told, the reductions taken during last week's special session equate to about \$74 million in general fund. In addition, there were some investments and the legislature allocated some positions and funding that we had requested during the February 2020 session, as Fariborz mentioned, including a rebalance of our budget to account for changes in caseloads and cost per case and we were able to access some federal COVID relief dollars for many of our programs to provide relief and protection to Oregonians, as Liesl had discussed earlier in the presentation.

The following presentation materials included detailed breakdown of the budget changes for each of our programs, and I'd like to go over just a few of the major actions.

In Aging and People with Disabilities, the major reductions include elimination of the mental health funding for the rest of this biennia, reductions to staff levels in both state and contracted Area Agencies on Aging and a reduction to the Older Americans Act services that we provide.

Investments include some critical positions for the provider time capture system, which will allow us to avoid some federal penalties if we don't complete that project in a timely manner. Funding for Aging and People with Disabilities-related COVID beds to assist in preventing the spread of the virus and for COVID testing, the backfill of anticipated reduced nursing facility provider tax that was backfilled with general fund.

Next slide please. And, in Child Welfare, the major issues for reductions were that the Child Welfare foster parent night out was reduced for the rest of this biennia and there were some reduced employee training dollars that were removed from the budget.

Investments in Child Welfare include providing funding to preserve SPRF or Strengthening, Preserving and Reunifying Families contracts for the remainder of the biennia. The expectation however is to ramp down or close contracts in 20, 21 to be at approximately 75 percent of the 2019

total fund budget going into '21, '23. Critical positions for human resources and the child abuse hotline were provided, and critical positions for shared services to conduct third-party investigations as part of Senate Bill 155 were also provided. Those, those two just actually show up in a different slide that we'll see later on, but they are Child Welfare related so I'm, I'm mentioning them here.

Next slide please. For the Office of Development Disability Services, there was a permanent elimination of the Family-to-Family Networks Program. Investments include costs related to a 3-month, 10 percent increase in certain I/DD providers to help them manage through the pandemic, and an investment to provide funding to I/DD day services providers who have been severely impacted by COVID, the COVID pandemic.

Next slide please. In Self Sufficiency, there is the elimination of housing and jobs pilots that were not yet started, and then that allowed a fund shift of TANF funds into the jobs and TANF program and the freeing up general fund to be used elsewhere. Investment in Self Sufficiency include exceptions to disqualifications for certain TANF clients related to time limits, resource limits, child support sanctions and other disqualifications for a limited time, and costs related to implementing limited time changes to SNAP rules. In addition, there were funding provided to the Oregon Food Bank.

We don't have a slide for this but it, it's worth mentioning that in Vocational Rehabilitation there was a one general fund reduction that we anticipate being backfilled with federal funds that we will receive later in 2020.

And for Central and Shared, again, we don't have a slide for it but I, I have to say that the, there were significant cuts made in Central and Shared, meaning less IT-related budget, services and costs, so we're replacing computers and things, that budget was reduced and most vacant positions will need to remain vacant the remainder of the biennia in order to help balance the budget in Central and Shared Services. So that will obviously impact the capacity of them to support our programs.

Looking ahead, kind of just as, as Fariborz, mentioned a little bit, you know, '21-'23 right now is, it's really too early to tell where we're going to end up. Uncertainties at the federal level, uncertainties of revenue forecasts, of caseload forecasts, mean great risks to moving forward in '21-'23. The Agency Request Budget is due September 1st. We're currently feverishly working on producing that document to meet the timeline. We will then reshoot the budget for the governor's budget which means that we will account for changes in things like costs per case and caseloads that will then pick up some of the COVID pandemic impact to caseloads.

Right now in the current forecast, because of the timing of the pandemic and lag in data, the forecasts do not include the impact on COVID on our caseloads, but the next forecast will start to pick up that data. The next, you know, forecast will again, the forecast our part of the uncertainty that we have going, going forward, so bear with us with '21-'23. We'll have the Agency Request Budget out with our 10 percent reduction list, coming again September 1st, and there will be many conversations between now and the Governor's budget and then between the Governor's budget and the legislative session that will be coming up soon. There may be another special session in between now and then, but the full session is still where we'll talk about the '21- '23 budget, and with that, thank you for your time and continued interest in the success of DHS, Oregon Department of Human Services programs. We recognize that we don't do this alone and your support is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Fariborz Pakseresht: Thank you, Eric for that update, and I just wanted to add to what Eric said in preparing our '21-'23 budget. There are a variety of scenarios that we'll be working on, and again,

remember when we had the conversation in April when we were working on a 8½ percent reduction, we may be working on a 20 percent reduction. It, it all depends because the budget picture is so unclear, as Eric said, so what I wanted to share with you is let's not get too nervous about some of those numbers that come out because again, these are just scenario planning, and at the end of the day, we'll have a better and clearer picture about what our future looks like after the federal picture becomes clear, and that may take some time, so again, bear with us and we'll move forward together.

I also wanted to share with you that we are fully aware that during these times many people, small businesses, our provider community and our partners are suffering and at the same time, demand on our services go up. We have been trying to do what we can within our means to support our providers because they are so important to our future. As Eric just said, we cannot do this work alone. We cannot deliver these services by ourselves. It takes a community, and the community needs to be healthy and sustaining, so we'll work together to get there. We rely on that network to be successful, and we will do all that we can to support them.

You may remember that in the beginning of this year, 2020, when we began to set our focus for this year, we identify six different areas, and we can see that on the slide. We talked about building a positive, inclusive and enduring culture. We have been building that culture within DHS. It's called Rise. That has six elements. I talked about that before, but really the, the core of that is for our people and for those people that we serve to feel safe, to feel supported, to feel accountability on the part of the organization, and also on the part of those who are receiving services to make sure that equity and inclusion and racial equity is in the center of everything that we do in this culture that we are building to make sure those practices allow for meaningful participation, because without participation by our staff and those people that we serve, we cannot do the best work for them, and ultimately this is about building community. Through doing all of that, we will be a community within DHS to serve the community out there, and we'll have to merge with the community out there because the work actually happens at the community level.

The next thing that we said was our focus was using data research and analytics, and a lot of progress has happened on that front. We don't have time today to go into it, but in future sessions we'll get a bit deeper into what has happened during the past 8 months within DHS.

Advancing equity and inclusion and honoring our commitment to Oregon Tribes, Liesl talked a bit about the work that's happening around equity and inclusion, racial equity, and the reason that we call out the Tribes is because really, they're in different category. We have a government-to-government relationship with them and particular responsibility and commitment that we have to our nine federally recognized Oregon Tribes.

We said that we wanted to become an interconnected organization by working across programs. Again, it's that vision of making sure that we look at our services the way that our service recipients look at them. They don't necessarily care whether this is Self Sufficiency, Child Welfare or any other part of this organization. They want to receive their services. They don't care about the silos that exist within the organization, and to the extent that we can eliminate those silos, we'll, we can better serve them.

We talked about engagement with the community. Liesl talked a bit about some of the engagement that's happening, specifically with communities of color, but again, I talked about community as well and how without the help of the community and without their engagement and involvement, we will not be successful, so work is happening on that front.

And finally putting a management system in place to optimize our resources and the quality of our services, and I am pleased to report that within the past 8 months we have done a lot of work around that piece, the management system. We had basically reworked our DHS management system and had our first quarterly target review with this new launch in June, and will continue doing that. All of our five programs are moving forward with their fundamentals map that basically identifies the work that they are doing, how that work is getting done, how do they actually know that work is being done well, and at the end of the day, what's the measure of our outcome. That's happening across DHS.

So what are next steps? Whether it was the beginning of this year or last year, we shared with you the Human Services Value Curve. This success and improvement trajectory in the world of human services that begins basically with the regulative approach. Here we are. These are our services, and these are our regulations, and it goes to the upper end of that trajectory, which is we are basically generating ideas with the community about the best way that we can serve the community. That's the Human Services Value Curve.

We are going to continue what we are doing on budget and cost saving and efficiency funds, but at the same time, we are going to make sure that our budget request meets the needs of the community within the parameters of the resources that we have. Regardless of, you know, what our budget ends up being, the community and service recipients will remain our focus, and at that same time, I want to be very clear and transparent about this, there is a certain structure, certain amount of a structure that's required to support the programs, and we have to be focused and mindful about that as well, and we also will apply the lessons that we learn from COVID.

We have learned a lot about ourselves within these past 8 months. We have learned that we can be really agile, and we can move quickly, quicker than we even expected from ourselves, and we have also identified areas that perhaps should be permanently changed. 65 percent of our staff currently are working remotely, and we are evaluating that right now to see how would we actually move into a permanent environment who can work remotely, who can work in the office.

And, finally, if you can go to next slide, is we are engaging now with American Public Human Services Association, and organization that works with 50 human services organizations across the country. They look at best practices. They are in direct communication with Congress. They identify the needs of the various human services organizations. They have been really helpful for us to articulate the kind of things that's needed to help the people, the population that we serve during this pandemic and beyond.

They have a small consulting practice. We are going to be engaged with them within the next 6 months to identify best practices in health and human services agencies so that we can become more efficient and focus on providing services to all of the Oregonians, to 1 in 4 Oregonians that we serve. Again, we will take the existing lessons into our planning for the future. And the way that we are actually going to look at this engagement and this practice is through the lens of service delivery rather than saying how should DHS be structured and organized. We are going to look at the needs of the community and say if we were to address the needs of those who are receiving our services, and then work back to DHS, how should we be structured in order to be able to deliver those services. It's just a different way of approaching this so a structure might change through that lens. That would be our work within the next 6 months, and we'll report on those to you.

With that, again, thank you so much for being with us, and I'll turn it over to Liesl for some closing comments.

Liesl Wendt: Thanks Fariborz, and actually before we get to closing comments, we have about 15 minutes for some question and answer, so if you'd like to type into a question into the Skype Q and A window, which I believe people should be seeing right now. Christy will read the questions off and we'll tag team answering them, so we'll give you a, a minute to see if there is any, or a couple seconds here to see if there is any questions in the queue.

Christy Sinatra: We have no questions in the queue yet.

Liesl Wendt: Excellent. All right. We'll give you all a second. We're learning in this environment it takes time to get off mute and, and compose your thoughts and send us some questions, so we'll wait for a moment. And actually, while we're waiting, let me just kind of take care of some announcements. We have begun a community newsletter as a way to share more regular information with all of you and you can sign up by following a link that I believe you'll receive as a follow up to participating in today's session and you just need to select human services provider news and updates from, from the list and we'll hope to, at some point it becomes a regular cadence but we'll, we'll sort of start ad hoc as we have information to share with you.

The other piece that I would just add is we're exploring different ways of conducting these sessions. As you'll note, this time we decided to focus on a agency-wide overview as opposed to each of the five programs presenting. And what we're contemplating for the rest of 2020 is a series of breakout sessions. As both Fariborz and Eric mentioned, you're going to see a lot of budgets, you're going to see a lot of reduction lists and we want to keep you apprised of, of those changes as the months go by, so look for some different opportunities to participate in the next few weeks and months.

All right. Did I buy some time for some questions?

Christy Sinatra: Thank you Liesl. You did a wonderful job, and we do have some questions coming in. The first one is are in-home services that provide a one-on-one ADL going to be affected?

Liesl Wendt: I am going to kick that one to Eric. Can you ask the respondent to spell out ADL just to make sure we know what the acronym is referring to?

Eric Moore: Activities of Daily Living and no, I do not believe that the activities of daily living are going to be impacted.

Christy Sinatra: Thank you. Next question is will you include recipients of services in any restructuring plans?

Liesl Wendt: We'll kick that one to Fariborz. The camera is panning over to him now.

Fariborz Pakseresht: Yes. Thank you for that question. Absolutely, as if there are going to be any structural changes, and again, through this engagement with APHSA, we'll keep you posted on what we are discovering, and part of that discovery is some of the feedback that we have received from you and we will be receiving from you. Ultimately, again, if the focus is on service delivery, that means the focus is on all of you who are receiving those services, so we cannot do this work without that element.

Christy Sinatra: Next question is for you Fariborz. We are interested in hearing more about how the APHSA identifying best practices will be shared with the agencies.

Fariborz Pakseresht: Again, as I said, as we go through that assessment we'll be sharing the outcomes incrementally throughout. Again, it's a 6-month engagement, so we can provide monthly updates, and naturally our stakeholder meetings are not that often. They're quarterly, but we can, we do plan to put out regular updates about how that engagement and assessment is going. It actually has not yet started, so we will do that. Absolutely we will share that.

Christy Sinatra: Liesl may like to take this next question. It's about equity and inclusion. There is an interest in understanding how we are doing with or discussing with, I'm sorry, how we are dealing with and discussing equity topics right now? How diverse are the people in the conversation? Do they include disabled people and African-American or other people of color?

Liesl Wendt: It's a great question, and it's a good opportunity for me to introduce, we have a new director of our Office of Equity and Multicultural Services, Dion Jordan, who came to the agency in June from Multnomah County. And, Dion has jumped in with two feet really to address everything that that question answers.

Much of our equity work has been internal, and our goal is to engage community partners even more. Think one of the biggest lessons learned from the COVID response is we do a good job talking to the people that we talk to and we need to do a better job of talking to people who don't necessarily join stakeholder calls or engage with our services or know about our services, and so broadening our conversations. We have done listening sessions with diverse communities, and we'll continue to do that. I think one of the biggest pieces of feedback that we have heard from community is we don't want to do your work for you but we want you to bring us ideas and solutions, and so Dion and his team are really organizing themselves and developing a strategic plan that will position us to do that work much more aggressively, for lack of a better word and we feel some momentum and are committed to not losing that moment in terms of making sure our services and who we're talking to; that we're meeting people's needs in, in diverse ways.

Christy Sinatra: Thank you. Fariborz, the next question may be for you. Do you expect that there may be additional budget adjustments in this current final year of the nine, of the 2019-21 budget after the September forecast?

Fariborz Pakseresht: Yes, there could be, and really that all depends. Again, the flu season starts right around that time. Depending on how this winter goes, if the events lead to another shutdown of the economy, it will absolutely will be necessary to do another adjustment to the budget, and that's why the Governor is trying to do everything that she can and direct the rest of us to be as careful as we can to limit and to stop the spread of this virus. It's good for our health. It's good for our economy.

Christy Sinatra: Well, let's stay with you for a moment, Fariborz. Next question, are there any states that you feel are good examples of governance models effectively offering services?

Fariborz Pakseresht: We will find out more about that. I think many states share the same challenges and many opportunities. Quite often during the times of crisis, opportunities begin to emerge. That may be the best time to review what we can do and what we cannot do, what do we need to start, and, you know, I should say that even in the midst of budget reductions, as Eric noted before, there are opportunities for investments, and when we talk about investments, we are not necessarily just talking about expenditures. The question is what do you get by investing this money? Naturally it is an expenditure, but if that expenditure is also an investment, then we may want to do that, even in the midst of a reduction. Which states, again, I want to wait until we have the opportunity to talk with our

consultants in American Public Human Services Association. We do know of a few states that are doing good in several programs, but as far as the entire human services arena, we will get a better view of that within the next 30 to 60 days.

Christy Sinatra: Fariborz, another question for you. What is the strategy to support long-term care settings who are struggling with meeting staffing requirements when staff test positive for COVID and must quarantine?

Fariborz Pakseresht: It's a great question, and it's a very difficult challenge that's in front of all of us. I think providers have been fabulous in the way that they have worked with us in public health whether at the county level, the local level or our partner agency, Oregon Health Authority, and also Aging and People with Disabilities; our surveyors, etc. We do have a, a contract right now for staffing, and again, this update that we provided today was really more focused on budget and the impact of COVID on the entire agencies. We will have individual updates that, that would focus on various areas, including long-term care. Staffing remains a major challenge for long-term facilities right now. We have had some successes with the contract that we have but continue to remain a challenge for two reasons. One is any congregate facility is basically the, the ground ripe for COVID, which is not a good thing. And the second thing is that this pandemic has impacted the population 60 and higher. In fact, if you look at the data, you'll see that about 47 percent or so of the fatalities are basically 80 years of age and higher, and about 75 percent I think are 70 years and older, so we will continue working with our providers and also with contractors that may be willing to step up to help augment staffing because as the person who asked the question noted, that's one of our biggest challenge right now.

Christy Sinatra: Thank you, Fariborz. Let's go to Eric for the next question. Eric, to start a clarifying question, what was the 10 percent reduction that you referred to in your closing comments?

Eric Moore: Then 10 perc, oh, the 10 percent reduction is a statutorily required list. We have to provide with our agency request budget a 10 percent reduction to the current service level as required by statute, so that's part of the '21- '23 budget exercise or build.

Christy Sinatra: And to clarify that would be released in September and submitted to the governor's office.

Eric Moore: That's correct.

Christy Sinatra: And then the next checkpoint in the budget process would be in December when the governor releases her -

Eric Moore: Correct.

Christy Sinatra: – budget?

Eric Moore: Correct.

Christy Sinatra: Okay. Thank you. Next question for Eric. How will these budgetary cuts in all these programs affect the increase to minimum wage? Since minimum wage is going up, the funding is going down, how will this be addressed?

Eric Moore: That is a very good question. We will be, I think our providers do have some struggles with meeting competing with the minimum wage. We are trying to keep rates up, to exceed the minimum wage or at least keep up with it but it's going to be a continuing issue that we have to address. So we have to be sensitive to the current minimum wage and the increase in the minimum wage and do what we can to propose increases in rates where, its wages are impacted.

Christy Sinatra: Thank you.

Eric Moore: Sorry, did that –

Christy Sinatra: And can we go to Liesl for the next question? Will you be building the equity and inclusion expectations for collaboration and breaking down silos and partnerships into our contracts? Meaning will we be holding the same expectations for our contracted staff as we're holding for our own staff?

Liesl Wendt: That's a great question, and we haven't gotten to that decision point yet, but I think it's a fabulous idea for us to consider. I think our lesson learned with the fund that I mentioned earlier is the value of partnering with culturally specific and responsive organizations who have an expertise and have relationships with community that we as an agency aspire to, but, but simply don't have, especially around this incredibly large and, and diverse state, so we will definitely take that comment to heart as we continue our planning.

Christy Sinatra: Thank you. And Fariborz, I think we have a couple more questions for you. Have you analyzed how reductions in APD field staff will impact client access to vital long-term services and supports and public benefits?

Fariborz Pakseresht: That really is a question for Mike McCormack because it's a program-specific question. We do know any kind of reductions impacts services, and it impacts those population that you are serving. It's not an easy environment to operate in, and these are not easy decisions. The challenge is at the end of the day when that target comes out for the agency, we'll have to make the best decisions and no reduction is a good reduction. That's why we are hoping, and I truly understand that hope is not a strategy, but we cannot lose hope either that the federal government and the House and the Senate and the President will reach an agreement, because frankly, and it's not just Oregon, many states, almost all states, cannot sustain this pandemic without at least another one or two packages coming from the federal government. That's what has sustained for the rest of this biennium. If the picture does not change and, you know, you can ask the very same question about our population that we serve in developmental and intellectual disabilities. You can ask the same question about those people who are receiving our Self Sufficiency services or our Child Welfare services or Voc Rehab, so that's a valid question which does not necessarily have a good answer, because no cut is a good cut.

Christy Sinatra: Thank you. I would like to share a kudos that came in for our staff. Somebody wanted to share that they wanted to thank us for the incredibly hard work to keep people informed and safe and doing our best to ensure we have the resources needed as your community partners. Thank you for that. And then Fariborz, one more question here. Will there be an opportunity to study the sustainability of services and adopt changes to increase the efficiency of service models?

Fariborz Pakseresht: Part of the reason that we are doing this assessment of the organization is that how efficient and effective are we, not only internally, but also externally? How well are we connecting with our communities, because again, as I said, in most cases there are the communities

that can really change the picture on the ground. So yes, there will be opportunities, and if we happen to miss those opportunities, please bring it to our attention. Please keep communicating with us and let us know. Quite often we don't see the picture as clear as you see them on the ground, and that's why, and again, I really appreciate the kudos for staff because our staff are much more connected with the people that we serve than we are in the administrative level, and our goal continuously has been to break through these layers so that the communication goes back and forth. What's happening on the ground is reaching to us, and how and why we are making decisions are also communicated to all of you.

Christy Sinatra: Thank you, Fariborz. We are at time, so we'll turn it back to Liesl to close us out for today.

Liesl Wendt: Great. Thank you. Those are fabulous questions and, and in them I hear suggestions, so know that we will review those and share them with our leadership team. We really want to thank you for joining us. I think if we have relearned anything during this pandemic is that we are better together. We're better together across our programs. We're better together with you, with the people that we serve, and a call for us to collaborate more effectively with you, with community, pulling diverse voices that don't necessarily have the same access to our conversations and decision making. And, you know, as Fariborz said, we are learning innovations that maybe we thought we're possible before but we have found to be possible, and so we want to build on that as an agency and look forward to doing that with all of you.

So a video recording and transcript of this meeting will be posted soon on our web site. We want to thank you for joining us, and we look forward to connecting with you over the course of the next few months of 2020. Be well and stay safe. Thank you.