

NAHP Update

Study Finds Service Coordinators Integral During Pandemic

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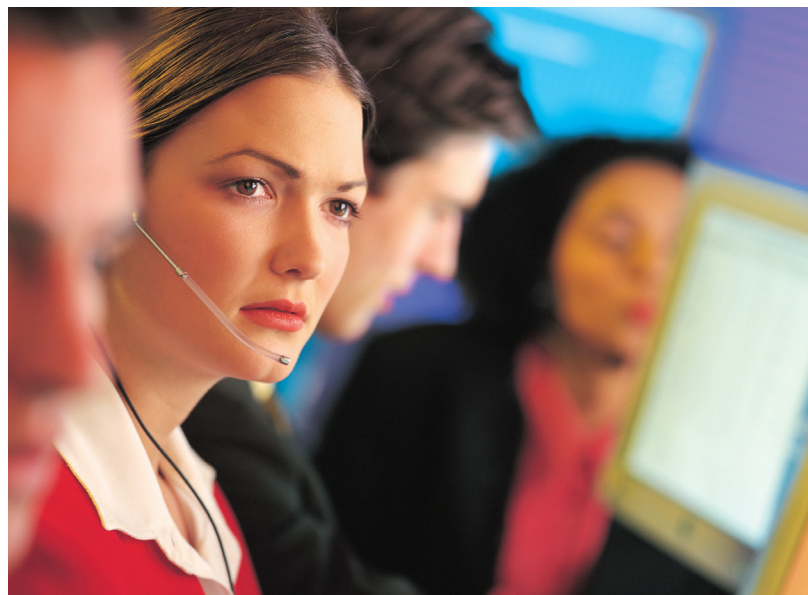
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The Joint Center for Housing Studies Harvard University released [Service Coordination in HUD Housing During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Bridging the Gap](#) by Samara Scheckler and Jennifer Molinsky.

According to an article written by Scheckler summarizing the study, "Service coordinators working in federally subsidized, multifamily housing for older adults and people with disabilities drew on their professional knowledge, connections, and relationships to identify and address pandemic-related challenges, according to two surveys we conducted in collaboration with the American Association of Service Coordinators."

The authors sent surveys to roughly 3,500 resident service coordinators working in federally subsidized properties designated for low-income adults 62 and older and people with disabilities in June 2020 and November 2021.

With 886 and 1,175



responses to each survey, the authors found that the COVID-19 pandemic created barriers to even the most basic resources, including older affordable housing residents' access to food, medication, medical care, transportation, and social experiences, while simultaneously facilitating a rapid shift in the landscape of public health and benefits program structure and access.

"Service coordinators

were integral to residents and their network of housing service providers, informal supports, professional supports, public resources, and programs. They were able to leverage relationships and institutional knowledge to navigate service gaps and limit pandemic disruptions. In this way, they improved both the efficacy and efficiency of programs and increased resident resilience. In practice,

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NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (NAHMA)—Protecting the Interests of Affordable Housing Property Managers and Owners

service coordinators managed information by assessing need, identifying resources, and coordinating responses,” Scheckler wrote.

Early in the pandemic, service coordinators took on additional roles. Typical information flows were interrupted. Properties restricted visitors, staffing shortages limited access to support, and many community organizations reallocated resources from routine

less available supports during the pandemic, with respondents in 2022 estimating that access to personal assistance was worse for one-third of residents than before the pandemic, the article said.

“Service coordinators tailored solutions to each property. They repurposed hallways and common spaces to safely engage residents. They nurtured mutual support, organizing phone trees,

According to the study, service coordinators collaborated with family members to communicate new property access rules and relay emerging needs. Additionally, they managed volunteers from the community.

Service coordinators built capacity for residents to use new technology as the pandemic changed how residents accessed and interacted with medical professionals. By the

that 65% of residents had less social interaction than pre-pandemic. Even in late 2021, when vaccinations were available, and social distancing restrictions had been relaxed, service coordinators assessed that 55% of residents showed more signs of loneliness and anxiety than before the pandemic, Scheckler wrote.

Respondents in 2021 described resident behavior that looked like depression, hoarding, disordered substance use, and even suicidal ideology or attempts. Service coordinators also expressed concern for the residents’ physical health. In 2021, they estimated that 53% of older residents had worse physical health than before the pandemic, and 62% were getting less exercise, according to the article.

“While acute pandemic impacts are behind us, service coordinators continue to help residents navigate both individual and macro-level disruptions, ranging from new health diagnoses and the loss of a spouse to unexpected emergencies such as fire or weather events. Yet service coordination is not consistently available across HUD-funded properties that house older and disabled residents. Additional study is needed to understand the deficits experienced by residents who navigated the pandemic without access to a service coordinator so that we might better assess the current patchwork funding available to meet the needs of residents experiencing a disruption,” Scheckler wrote. **NU**

“WHILE ACUTE PANDEMIC IMPACTS ARE BEHIND US, service coordinators continue to help residents navigate both individual and macro-level disruptions, ranging from new health diagnoses and the loss of a spouse to unexpected emergencies such as fire or weather events.”

activities to address sudden community needs. According to the article, service coordinators created processes to monitor residents and identify changes in individuals and property-wide conditions.

Survey respondents in 2020 estimated that about 1 in 3 residents lacked the food or medication to isolate for a week. The authors found that pandemic disruptions were especially complicated for older residents with limited economic means to react to changing conditions and who were less likely to have access to the internet, which became a lifeline to services, medical providers, and social connections.

Underlying health conditions and functional limitations that increase with age also increase reliance on

peer support programs, and buddy systems, and noted increases in resident inter-reliance. ... They also facilitated access to public benefits, bridging gaps created when public agencies transitioned to virtual platforms,” Scheckler wrote.

The study concluded service coordinators particularly harnessed the strengths of community organizations, volunteers, and local resources to provide food, medication, supplies, and supportive services. Half of 2021 respondents spent more time working with community-based organizations during the pandemic, and over 80% were managing a partnership to address food, health or health care, and personal care or assistance. More than 4 out of 10 organized a new partnership to address nutrition.

2021 survey, respondents estimated that half of the residents accessed more virtual health care than before the pandemic, and two-thirds used more virtual mental health care, Scheckler wrote in her article.

Well over half of 2021 respondents spent more time developing and organizing device lending and technology literacy programs to ensure residents could access the internet and internet-capable devices. But 2021 respondents still estimated that only half of older residents had internet access plus an internet-capable device, up from 38% in 2020. Inadequate internet access was compounded by reduced access to transportation.

During the pandemic, limited social contact took a toll on many residents, with 2021 respondents estimating

Help Residents Achieve Their Higher Education Goals

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The 2023 NAHMA Educational Foundation scholarship season is open. The digital [application](#) is now available online, and you can help your residents achieve their higher education goals by sharing information about the scholarship program. The application has been revised to make it more user-friendly and to secure more completed submissions. This will be the 17th consecutive year the foundation will make scholarships available to worthy student residents. To access

scholarships. The foundation is hopeful that 2023 will bring in more completed applications than in any previous years the program has existed.

Eligibility for the program requires that an applicant be a resident in good standing at an AHMA- or NAHMA-member multifamily community and be either a high school senior with a minimum GPA of 2.5; or a high school equivalency diploma holder or matriculated college student with a minimum GPA of 2.3 at an accredited community college, college, university,

website at www.nahma.org by clicking on the [Educational Foundation](#) link under the About Us tab.

Anyone with questions about the application process or the scholarship program, in general, should contact Dr. Bruce W. Johnson, NAHMA scholarship program administrator, at 215-262-4230 or bjohnson@tmo.com.

"We encourage application from any resident of an AHMA-member community who is a high school senior, holds a high school diploma, or a high school equivalency

"WE ENCOURAGE APPLICATION from any resident of an AHMA-member community who is a high school senior, holds a high school diploma, or a high school equivalency diploma holder and intends to continue, or begin, their pursuit in higher education this year."

the application, visit <https://nahma.communityforce.com>. The deadline for completed applications is 10 p.m. Eastern on May 12.

Please assist the foundation in promoting the scholarship program to your residents by downloading and sharing the promotional flyers ([English](#) version, [Spanish](#) version) available on the Educational Foundation's [webpage](#).

In 2022, the foundation awarded 96 student residents scholarships. Each scholarship is worth \$3,500; the total scholarship money awarded last year was \$336,000. More than 75% of eligible applicants have received schol-

arships. The foundation is hopeful that 2023 will bring in more completed applications than in any previous years the program has existed.

Applications from students in graduate-level programs are not accepted. The required application components include an application form, one reference, an essay, and a certification of residency in good standing form. Additionally, an official grade transcript showing courses taken and grades awarded through the fall semester of the 2022/2023 school year is also required, and it is the only component submitted to the foundation via mail. All necessary forms are provided within the web-based software.

The application can also be found on the NAHMA

website at www.nahma.org by clicking on the [Educational Foundation](#) link under the About Us tab. Anyone with questions about the application process or the scholarship program, in general, should contact Dr. Bruce W. Johnson, NAHMA scholarship program administrator, at 215-262-4230 or bjohnson@tmo.com. "We encourage application from any resident of an AHMA-member community who is a high school senior, holds a high school diploma, or a high school equivalency diploma holder and intends to continue, or begin, their pursuit in higher education this year. Higher education includes attendance at an accredited college, university, community college, trade/professional school, or institute. We invite all who are eligible to apply for the scholarship grants to be awarded in 2023," said NAHMA Educational Foundation Chairperson Alicia Stoermer Clark. "The NAHMA Educational Foundation is one of only a few of its type in the nation. We are very proud of the impact the scholarship program has made in the lives of many from our AHMA-member affordable housing communities." **NU**

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NAHMA Seeks to Recognize Quality Multifamily Affordable Housing Development

The deadline for nominating a property for one of NAHMA's 2023 Affordable

Housing [Vanguard Awards](#) is June 2. Download the [application](#) today to get a head start on your submission.

The Vanguard Award recognizes new and major rehab, quality multifamily affordable housing development. The award pays tribute to developers of high-quality, affordable housing; demonstrates that exceptional affordable housing is available across the country; reflects the creativity and innovation that must be present to create superior properties given the financing and other challenges to development; highlights results of private-public partnerships required to develop today's affordable housing, and shares ideas for unique design and financing mechanisms with industry practitioners to further stimulate creative development in the affordable multifamily industry.

"The Vanguard Award complements NAHMA's Communities of Quality (COQ) National Recognition Program, through which multifamily properties are certified as having achieved a high standard of excellence in the way they are managed, the services they provide residents,



2022 Vanguard winner Royal Oak Manor Co-Op in Michigan.

the experience and training of personnel, and other criteria," said Kris Cook, CAE, chief executive officer of NAHMA. "The Vanguard Award was created to honor communities that are too new to meet the qualifications for the COQ program. As the properties mature, they will become eligible—and will be encouraged—to enter NAHMA's COQ National Recognition Program."

The Vanguard Award categories are:

- New Construction, two subcategories: more than 100 units and under 100 units
- Major Rehabilitation of an Existing Rental Housing Community
- Major Rehabilitation of a Nonhousing Structure into Affordable Rental Housing
- Major Rehabilitation of a

Historic Structure into Affordable Rental Housing

Affordable multifamily housing communities less than 3 years old—as of June 2, 2023—may apply based on the date of completing new construction or major rehab completion. Please note: A management company can submit one entry for each of the four categories; however, each entry must be a different property.

Applications and information about entry fees, judging criteria, the benefits of winning an award, and more is on NAHMA's website at nahma.org. Click on [Vanguard Award Overview](#).

The Affordable Housing Vanguard Awards winners will be recognized at an awards ceremony at the NAHMA fall meeting in Washington, D.C., Oct. 24-26. **NU**

Welcome New Certificants!

NAHP

- » Christopher Butkovich
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Braintree, MA
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- » Dawne Penner
Diocesan Housing Services
Camden, NJ

**Awarded between August 2022–January 2023*



All in the Family

EDITOR'S NOTE: This profile first appeared in the January/February 2023 issue of *NAHMA News*.

TESCO Properties Inc., headquartered in Tennessee, is truly a family business. More than 40 years ago, the business was started by Larry Sisson's father. Today, Sisson, president and CEO, runs the company with his brother and brother-in-law. Sisson has also had two nieces and a nephew transition into leadership positions at TESCO.

Despite the number of family members on the payroll, nothing is just handed to someone because of their last name.

"We have a rule, you have to work somewhere else first," Sisson said. "Go get experience, build a good reputation and relationships. We have some really talented, educated leaders coming up."

Sisson has been involved in the affordable housing industry in one way or another his whole life. His first job was as a groundskeeper at one of TESCO's properties, then eventually working in

the accounting department before going to law school.

"In sixth grade, I wanted to be a lawyer and work for TESCO," he said. "And that's what I do now."

Sisson received his bachelor's degree in business administration, majoring in accounting, from David Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn. He received

his Juris Doctorate from the School of Law at the University of Memphis and is a certified public accountant.

After law school, Sisson worked as a regional manager to gain the experience he'd eventually need to fulfill his goal of having an executive management position within the company.

"It was a natural fit for me. We already had family members in other roles. When you are a small company, you are involved in all the departments," he said. "I really do

like working with family. When I'm not in the office, I miss that."

He said he is proud of what the company has accomplished, but he still has goals for TESCO's future. Sisson said he wants to see the company transition to the next generation.

"It's hard sometimes. It's not easy to let go," he said.

Property Manager, Certified Occupancy Specialist and Housing Credit Certified Professional designations, and NAHMA's NAHP-e designation.

When he does have free time, Sisson is involved with his church and tries to go for a run every day. He also likes traveling for pleasure, not just work.

"WE HAVE A RULE, you have to work somewhere else first," Sisson said. "Go get experience, build a good reputation and relationships. We have some really talented, educated leaders coming up."

He'd also like to see the company grow. Additionally, he wants to redevelop some of their older Section 8 properties with tax credits.

"Providing affordable housing in this country is truly a need," he said.

He has also continued his education and experience opportunities, having held leadership positions at SAHMA and NAHMA, including recently beginning his two-year term as chair of the NAHMA Board of Directors. He holds the Certified

"I love D.C. and going to the Capitol. I also love New York City, I'm really ready to go back there, and Florida," he said.

Sisson has been married to his wife, Lee, for 31 years, and they have two adult children, William and Caroline.

And a fun family fact, "Ernest Hemmingway shot my wife's grandmother," he said. **NU**

Jennifer Jones is senior director of communications and public relations for NAHMA.