

MELISSA SCHMISEK: Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to the 2023 Formula New Grantee Orientation, hosted by OVW, Office on Violence Against Women, and by Leidos. My name is Melissa Schmisek, and I'm a Team Lead with the Formula Team. At this time, I would like to introduce Amy Loder, Associate Director with OVW.

AMY LODER: Thanks, Melissa. Hey, everybody. I'm Amy Loder. As Melissa said, I'm an Associate Director and I oversee these three Formula Grant Programs. And before I give my remarks, I just want to introduce my staff. So, I believe everybody has their camera on. The first person is Zelda Tackey, who is our Program Assistant. And honestly, I'm not sure if Zelda's on, but if you are, can you please put your camera on? Then we have Elizabeth Bauer, Latonya Eaddy, Omar Muhammed, Melissa Schmisek, whom you just met, Kevin Sweeney, and Emma West Rasmus. So please just wave your little hand to everybody and say hello. These are your Formula Team members. So, thank you very much. And I just wanted to say, welcome to the Formula New Grantee Orientation.

I'm super excited to be hosting this for you again. Two years ago, when we held this for the first time, we said that we would all be in person hopefully—and now we're not. We're still in boxes in the comfort of our own home or in our offices. So, we can still strive to try and be in person maybe in two more years. But anyway, I wanted to say we're still really excited to host this meeting. I think that this is going to be beneficial to everybody regardless of how long you have been in your position. The Violence Against Women Act was reauthorized in 2022. There are lots of changes and information that we're going to have a special session on. I'm sure that many of the presenters are going to touch upon some of the changes, so I think that's going to be beneficial to everyone.

Honestly, I think I've been to more New Grantee Orientations than I can count. But I can honestly say that every single time I go to one, I learn something new. So, a refresher is always helpful. And honestly, there's a lot of information that you have to keep in your head in order to be able to manage your grant appropriately. So, it's always a good opportunity to have a refresher and to get some points clarified for you on a particular subject. So, I just wanted to say, I think everyone is going to benefit a little bit.

We have a lot of people who registered—a lot more than those individuals who were required—so that's kind of exciting. So, I want to thank you all for your excitement. I always felt that this was, like, the hottest ticket in town, and the number of people on the Zoom right now sort of reinforces that. But realistically, I know that it's because it's virtual, so it's a lot easier to slide in and attend some of the sessions. But I also really think that you all do take it very seriously, that you are managing your awards appropriately. And so, this really is the place to get all of that information. So, I do want to thank you for your interest. I'm excited that so many people have attended.

As I've said multiple times, we're virtual. You can see that we're virtual, and that's great. It definitely has its pros. And one of the pros is that we have a lot of people in the meeting today, and we will throughout the next three weeks. The downside of it is that it's pretty hard to plan a virtual meeting that accommodates everybody. It's not just the

East Coast versus West Coast and the time zones. It is also our administrators and our coalitions in the territories. It was a little challenging to plan for that. I just want to be really upfront and I want to thank you for your flexibility. It's really important that individuals can attend these sessions live, as many of the sessions as possible. You'll notice on the agenda that a lot of them start later in the day. All of the OVW sessions, they do start late in the day. The ones that are a little bit earlier in the afternoon, those are the ones that are made by non-OVW staff. We don't have full control over other people's schedules. So again, thank you for your flexibility.

As Melissa said, all of the sessions are being recorded, so you will be able to view them about 30 days after. I think probably you all do not necessarily want to hear from me. I think you want to hear from our keynote speaker and also get into the rest of the content. So, I am going to turn it over in just a moment.

I have the pleasure of introducing Allison. Now, I know that Allison is known to many of you on this Zoom, but some of you not. Allison has been in the field of domestic and sexual violence for over 20 years. And for those of you who do not know, this is Allison's second stint at OVW, because she was actually the Chief of Staff at OVW from 2012 to 2019. And she is so incredibly passionate—not only about OVW's mission but also about meeting the needs of all survivors—that she was lured back, and she is happy to be here, hopefully. So, with that, I will introduce you to Allison, and she can show her passion and enthusiasm herself. So, thank you very much. Allison?

ALLISON RANDALL: Thank you, Amy. Oh my gosh, it is so exciting to be virtually, at least, with Formula grantees, because you all are so foundational. The work that you do, that's the backbone of not just VAWA but of so much of the whole field, such as STOP, and SASP, and Coalition. So, it's really an honor, and we really appreciate that you're giving us so much of your time. I'm greeting you here from DC, which is the sacred and traditional homeland of the Nacotchtank or Anacostans and Piscataway peoples and their ancestors. I am honored to be here in DC, honored to be serving as the Acting Director of OVW. And you may know we might have an actual Director soon. She's pending in the Senate. So, she will arrive at some point—the incredibly brilliant Rosie Hidalgo. I'm not going anywhere, so I'll still be here talking about all of these things. As you heard, I've been in the field a long time and I'm a former direct service provider, and I've been an OVW grantee, which is one of the reasons why I'm so excited to talk with you.

For anybody who's new to OVW, thank you so much. If this is your first time managing a grant, we are an office full of folks who understand where you're coming from, state and territorial administrators—because we're administering funding and we love to talk with you and support you as you're working through that for coalitions. We've got a lot of folks who know coalitions well, including me, and appreciate the crucial statewide and territory-wide work and organizing that you bring. And we look to all of you as state administrators and as state coalitions for advice. We love hearing from you for critique, for ideas. So please don't ever hesitate to reach out to us, so that we can talk and connect more.

I'll just mention some of our priorities, which haven't changed since last year. I'm sure you've seen them in some of the grant postings. First is that racial equity must be and is front and center in our efforts to end domestic violence and sexual assault—that advancing racial justice is a key part of how we end domestic and sexual violence.

A key role that all of you play is taking the time to figure out who's not receiving not just OVW funds, but who's not receiving OVW services. We know that so many survivors who are killed by intimate partners have never reached out, never gotten any services. Not from OVW, not from FIPSA—not shelters, not reached out to law enforcement. So, connecting—we have these many unserved survivors, and we know there are so many unserved survivors of sexual assault who don't even know where to look for that assistance. How can we better meet the needs of the folks whom we're not reaching, who aren't coming in our doors? Your statewide and territory-wide roles are so key in that. I think you play a tremendous leadership role in improving that, helping to change that. But we also want to hear from you about where you see opportunities for us to do more and do better with that.

One thing that's really important at the statewide level is the consultations that you do as part of your state planning process. You're consulting with tribes, you're consulting with representatives of culturally specific organizations. That's key. The information from those folks is golden. That's so important. And they are such important partners. You want to center folks in your work. Don't invite folks in at the end; that doesn't work nearly as well as when you bring folks in right from the beginning and center your work on the communities who maybe haven't been heard and haven't been at the table.

One thing that's really helpful for you to be thinking about in your coalition roles, in your administrator roles, is having a really robust language access plan. Ensuring that your subgrantees have robust language access plans and plans on how to secure interpreters. What are they going to do? And how are they making their services known, right? How does a survivor who doesn't speak English know that they'll be welcome at this program, that that court is going to be responsive? That those legal services will be able to communicate. So, how can we also convey that and connect with those survivors, because we're doing this work, and we have to do it in an intersectional way.

We really want to improve every aspect of the work, right?—the outreach and services, the civil and criminal justice responses, prevention, all of that. How are we improving all of that in support of underserved communities, particularly LGBTQ and immigrant survivors in communities? We look at, again, who's not benefiting from our services, who faces high risks of domestic violence, sexual assault, homicide. We look at, for example, Black trans women and the need to bring all of our communities together to make meaningful change.

I'm talking about sexual assault and, for us, improving our work on sexual assault is really key because, even though we've all been working on this—you guys have been working on this, SASP folks, you have been working on this, right?—we're still not doing

what we need to do for survivors of non-intimate partner sexual assault. I mean, when we look at the numbers in our performance reports, we are not serving high numbers of survivors of non-intimate partner sexual assault. So, we have a lot more work to do there, and that remains an office-wide priority and another really key role that you all play. It's not just SASP, right? It's also STOP—how is STOP addressing sexual assault? So please be thinking about that and, you know, working with the resource sharing project and our other key providers for ideas.

When we step back, we think about “Well, how do we do this? How are we serving all survivors? How are we serving folks who might not be reaching us? How are we addressing sexual assault in a meaningful way?” We think about expanding access to justice with a really broad concept of what is justice. Because justice looks different for different survivors, and everyone deserves to have access to justice, to safety, to healing. We're expanding that in lots of different ways. One is for many, many survivors who say, “I called the police and they were not responsive, and I don't want to call them again.” The National Domestic Violence Hotline has a survey out, and there were shocking numbers of survivors who were like, “I'm never calling again. It was unhelpful calling police. But I want to be able to call them. I want to be able to call 911. I want them to come, and I want it to be safe. I want to be believed. I want to be heard.” And we hear from sexual assault survivors: “The way I was interviewed by law enforcement felt revictimizing.” “I wanted to talk with the prosecutor.” “I want to have my day in court. I want to be sure this doesn't happen to someone else.”

For those survivors who want a robust and responsive criminal justice system, we've got to work on that. We have a lot more to do. And OVW has gotten some additional funding just this year for trauma-informed law enforcement and prosecutions. You'll hopefully hear more from us about that. You've got increased money in STOP and SASP this year. So, think about how you are looking at those expansions of access to justice. Because we also want to think about survivors for whom the justice system isn't going to work, survivors who are not going to call law enforcement, are not going to go to law enforcement, no matter how much great training and advance work we do. We've got to have something in between 911 and nothing. We need survivors to have choices. We worked so hard for survivors to have choices.

Our office keeps thinking about and talking about how do we expand those pathways to justice. And maybe that starts off with some alternatives. Maybe people decide that they want to move into the criminal justice system. Maybe people started out with the criminal justice system and now they would like an off-ramp for that—like, that's not working. They'd like to try something else. Or maybe it's an option that's completely separate from the justice system. So, in your positions—statewide, territory-wide—I know you all are seeing different kinds of work around access to justice and what that really means. And I know many of you are involved in different kinds of alternatives, like CVI programs, those violence interruption programs, community violence interruption. You are working on co-responder models or even alternative responder models where maybe social workers respond to some 911 calls. People are doing all these things. Your states and territories are doing these things. And folks are doing them, and they

don't necessarily think about gender-based violence. They don't necessarily think about sexual assault or domestic violence. What's the trauma that people have experienced if we're working with someone who's used violence in the community. Have they used violence at home in addition to the violence they may have survived themselves? There are a lot of connections.

So, when you're seeing the work that's happening around some of these broader pathways to justice, think about our survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and stalking as part of the conversation. How do you make sure that survivors' voices are heard? Because survivors are interested in alternatives, they want to be heard safely, making sure that we've got advocates at the table and survivors at the table. For us, our guiding principle is always stepping back and saying, "What do survivors want?" Because we need to give survivors what they are telling us they need, not what we think they need.

Honoring tribal sovereignty is a priority that for us just cuts across all of our work. It's really an overarching priority for us. And again, that consulting that you do with tribes is so important. I just rushed back to the office from the National Congress of American Indians, from their VAWA Task Force meeting, and was hearing from one person who said, "We are so excited because we worked with our STOP Administrator and now some of our tribal programs are getting direct funding from STOP for the first time." They are so excited about that. The time that you take to do the outreach and to meet, and to listen, and to think about how tribal programs can fit in to your funding will pay off. It will be incredibly worthwhile.

Well, I know we've talked about that implementation plan, right? That's a statutory requirement. It is super, super important. You've got to do that. I know it can be hard, so work with us, because we're here to help. Our team really wants to help you work through that. And you can think also about how there's a set-aside of 10% of your victim services funding that goes to culturally specific services. That's for historically marginalized communities. It doesn't have to end there. How are you using that 10%? We don't want to just lump people into a box while you're providing culturally specific services, because we know that population-specific organizations are great at doing many different things around domestic violence and sexual assault. So, how are they factoring in in your other work around outreach, around services, around training for law enforcement and prosecutors? We would love to help you with that. So, don't hesitate to call and to think about also if you need to bring language access to some of your meetings.

One key issue I do want you to think about—and think about this in your work, think about this also with subgrantees and with the programs you work with—is to make sure that when you bring in culturally specific organizations, small organizations, they get compensated for their time. We often see that what happens is that folks say, "Great, I'm going to partner with this local culturally specific program." Or, "I'm partnering with a program that's providing language access." But they don't get reimbursed for much of their time. So, we want to bring folks to the table in a more equitable way and ensure

that they are getting enough funding so that they can sustain their work as an organization. Sustaining is something that's really important to us.

Expanding economic justice and financial advocacy for survivors is our last priority. We are so excited that we were able to get from Congress direct funding that will be able to do direct cash assistance. It's small. It'll be a pilot. It's \$4 million. We know that survivors know what's best for them, and there's incredible success that folks are having around the country with some of this direct funding, like paying rent or to fix tires on a car, or for a class, or a uniform, or food, or medicine. All of these things—a small investment can pay dividends. One survey found, for two years, small amounts of funding that were given to chronically homeless individuals were still paying off. They were still doing better as a result of that small investment.

The sexual assault services program now expands your ability to do these kinds of direct funding options. Programs could be making payments to vendors on behalf of survivors. This is a very exciting change from VAWA. And it's something where we want to hear from you: How is it going? How is it not going? What are you finding that's successful? We want to share what we know about best practices with you, but we really want to hear from you about what you're learning and what you're thinking: "How does this scale up? Where does this make sense in work across the country?" It's a really important part of the national conversation, so we appreciate that.

I know I have said, like, 50 times how much we want to hear from you. And I simply can't emphasize enough how important this partnership is with all of you—how much we value you. We are so grateful that you are part of the mission of ending domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We are so thankful for the work that you do and we know that it is hard, and sometimes the work of a coalition or state or territory administrator, sometimes that's unseen. So, I want you to know that we see you and we know the many things that you're juggling and that we're here for you to work together with. We're invested in you. We want you to succeed. We want to help you with what you need.

I also want to say that we appreciate all the work that you all have done to reauthorize VAWA and now to help implement VAWA. I know that changes in legislation, that's a whole thing. But you've played such an important role in shaping this work. And I know you're going to play a really crucial role in shaping where we go from here, how we implement VAWA, and hopefully we can have that ongoing feedback loop. You know we're staffing up at the office, right? We have been hiring across every team in the office. We have been hiring more staff in our budget and division—help with budget reviews and help answering your questions or questions for your subgrantees. We're here and we want to be as responsive to you as possible.

And don't forget your brilliant and talented technical assistance providers and a lot of the work that they do. They've got great resources on their own websites. And then there's a ton of OVW-wide technical assistance that's on the ta2ta.org website. And that's 2, the number 2, ta2ta.org. So, check that out. We've got loads of webinars and

resources that might be useful to you or might be useful to the local programs, or law enforcement, prosecutor's offices, courts, with the other folks that you're working with.

So, thank you again for joining us today. Thank you for doing this work every day you can. You are the backbone of our work. We can't do it without you. And we're so excited to hear from you about all the successes that you will have in the next few years. So, let me get off your screen. Thanks again. Hope to see you all in person sometime soon.