#### Agenda January 9, 2019, 2:00 p.m.

Pre-meeting question (answer in the webinar "lobby" while waiting for the meeting to start): "What is your community currently doing for 'homelessness prevention' and 'diversion'? And what are your local resources for those?"

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Summary of prior meeting
- III. Data Snapshot Diversion Pilot Project Abilene and Denton
- IV. How We are Ending Homelessness -- With Homelessness Prevention and Diversion
- V. Community Conversation Unsheltered Homelessness
- VI. CoC Priority Projects
  - a. HMIS
    - i. Staffing changes,
    - ii. Capacity-building grant
  - b. Data
    - i. Point-In-Time (PIT) Count (January 24<sup>th</sup>) office hours Week of January 7<sup>th</sup>
    - ii. Volunteer registration and release forms
    - iii. "Counting Us" app
  - c. Systems Change
    - i. Coordinated Entry Steering Committee nominations due January 18<sup>th</sup>
    - ii. Built For Zero applications due February 1<sup>st</sup>
      - 1. Informational Session Tuesday January 22<sup>nd</sup> 3:00PM-3:30PM
        - a. Meeting Login: https://zoom.us/j/938117713
  - d. CoC Program
    - i. Quarterly Performance Scorecards
    - ii. FY 2018 Awards
  - e. SSVF Program
    - i. SSVF Program 2019 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). (see handout)
  - f. Governance
    - i. Board Seats 1 and 12 nominations due January 22<sup>nd</sup>
- VII. Next Meeting Wednesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00, by webinar. Topic: Outreach

Staff will be available on the webinar for 15 minutes after the meeting ends, for an open discussion on topics that attendees want to discuss.

Everyone is invited to participate in CoC General Meetings.



### Community Data Snapshot: BFZ Diversion Pilot Abilene & Denton, TX

John Meier, West Central Texas Regional Foundation Katherine Gonzales, United Way of Denton County



### **BFZ** Diversion Pilot

- Why was this pilot needed?
- What prompted your communities to embark on this human centered design pilot?
- Who was involved in the creation?
- How did you design the Diversion flow discussion?

### TX BoS CoC Diversion Script

#### Diversion Script

Are you in a safe place to answer questions? (for telephone interview)

- If **no**, proceed with safety planning such as: Can I ask where you are?
  - Is the unsafe person in the room right now?
  - If yes, can you go somewhere safe like a neighbor, friend or public space?
  - If no, do you need to get to somewhere safe right now? (Offer taxi to bring to shelter if necessary)
  - Do you need me to contact police for you?

#### If yes, proceed with script below:

I want to better understand your housing situation right now and work with you to figure out a solution that may not require you needing to access homeless services. The ideal situation is that there is somewhere else you can stay that is safe while you figure out your permanent housing needs without completing a full assessment. I am going to need to ask you some questions.

- 1. What led to your housing instability today?
  - Relationship breakdown
  - Domestic violence
  - o Problems with the landlord (but no threat of eviction)
  - o At risk of eviction
  - o Foreclosure on rental property
  - Living in a household that has been condemned
  - Utilities disconnected or threat of disconnect
  - o Newcomer to the community
  - o Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### (INVESTIGATE REASON. CONSIDER IMMEDIATE PROBLEM SOLVING.)

- 2. What has been the most difficult part of finding stable, safe and appropriate housing?
  - Affordability
  - Don't know where to look
  - Household relationship change (including divorce, death, incarceration, DFPS involvement)
  - Size of household
  - Credit history

#### (EXPLAIN REALITIES OF CURRENT HOUSING MARKETAND THE STRATEGIES OTHER LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS ARE USING TO FIND AND SECURE HOUSING. OFFER APARTMENT LISTINGS AND ACCESS TO PHONE AND INTERNET IF NEEDED.)

- 3. What else have you tried before contacting us?
  - o Problem solving with landlord
  - o Problem solving with family or friends
  - Problem solving with a non-profit, government agency or faith group
  - Borrowing money
  - Repayment plan
  - Splitting up family members to various households
  - o Staying with friends or family
  - Stay in at motel (self-pay)
  - Nothing
  - o Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### (UNDERSTAND WHAT HAS WORKED OR NOT WORKED THUS FAR. DETERMINE IF ANOTHER ENTITY IS CURRENTLY PROBLEM SOLVING AND HAS AN ACTION PLAN.)

- 4. What else have you thought about trying to be housed or solve your current housing instability?
  - Problem solving with landlord
  - o Problem solving with family or friends
  - o Problem solving with a non-profit, government agency or faith group
  - Borrowing money
  - Repayment plan
  - Splitting up family members to various households
  - Staying with friends or family
  - Stay in at motel (self-pay)
  - Nothing
  - o Other

(ENCOURAGE HOUSEHOLD TO PURSUE SAFE AND APPROPRIATE ALTERNATIVES. PROVIDE ACCESS TO PHONE OR COMPUTER AS NEEDED. BE PREPARED TO INTERVENE AND MEDIATE WITH OTHER ENTITIES. BE PREPARED TO USE PROBLEM SOLVING AND APPROPRIATE REFERRALS.)

- 5. Where did you stay last night?
  - With a friend/family member or other doubled up situation
  - In a motel
    - Self-pay

### TX BoS CoC Diversion Script Cont...

#### (IF STAYED IN A 24 HOUR RESTAURANT OR A PLACE UNFIT FOR HUM AN HABITATION OR ANOTHER UNSAFE SITUATION, PROCEED TO QUESTION7.)

6. Do you think you could continue to stay there for another 3-7 days if you were able to receive some help? If YES: is it safe to stay there?

#### If NO or don't know: (workflow skip)

- Is it safe to stay there?
- What would you need to make this option work?
- Financial assistance
- o Grocery assistance
- o Gas Card
- Bus tickets
- o Assistance with utilities
- Conflict resolution
- Landlord mediation
- o Community referrals
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### (IF UNSAFE PROCEED TO QUESTION 7. OTHERWISE PROBE FOR WHAT IT WOULD TAKE TO FIX THE CURRENT SITUATION TO BE ABLE TO STA Y IN THE CURRENT HOUSING SITUATION.)

Do you have anyone else you could stay with for 3-7 days if you were able to receive some help?

If YES: is it safe to stay there?

#### If NO or don't know: (workflow skip)

- Is it safe to stay there?
- What would you need to make this option work?
- Financial assistance
- Grocery assistance
- o Gas Card
- Bus tickets
- o Assistance with utilities
- o Conflict resolution
- o Landlord mediation
- Community referrals
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_

#### (PROBE FOR WHAT IT WOULD TAKE TO HAVE THEM STAY ELSEWHERESO LONG AS IT IS SAFE. DO NOT PROCEED TO QUESTION 8 UNLESS ALL OPTIONS HAVE BEEN EXHAUSTED.)

- 8. What is your current source(s) and amount of income?
  - Employment related (Earned income, unemployment insurance, etc.)
  - o Inheritance
  - o Pension
  - Child Support
  - TANIF
  - Disability
  - Veterans benefits
  - o Under the table compensation
  - o Other \_\_\_\_\_

(OUTLINEANYSPECIAL PROGRAMS THAT MAY EXIST FOR LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS TO ACCESS HOUSING, AS NECESSARY, GIVE EXAMPLES OF OTHER HOUSEHOLDS ON LOW-INCOME THAT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FIND AND SECURE HOUSING. OFFER RENTAL LISTINGS WITHIN PRICE RANGE. HELP PROVIDE REALISTIC OPTIONS. OFFER ACCESS TO PHONE AND INTERNET IF NEEDED.)

#### (ENSURE THERE IS A HOUSING PLAN IN PLACE PRIOR TO COMPLETING DIVERSION WORKFLOW. FOLLOW-UP WITHIN 14 DAYS.)







Homelessness Prevention & Diversion

Tiffany Hart - Systems Change Coordinator Mollie Lund - ESG & SSVF Coordinator Elena Lusk - Coordinated Entry VISTA **Strategies For Change** 

thn.org

# Why are Homelessness Prevention & Diversion Important to Ending Homelessness?

By having programs and resources in place to keep people in their housing and prevent them from entering the homeless crisis response system we are:

- Empowering & Encouraging individuals to self-resolve
- Reducing new entries into homelessness
- Cutting down on waitlists throughout the system
- Improving system performance outcomes by reducing new entries & re-entries into homelessness
- Targeting more intensive homelessness interventions and resources to be provided to those with higher needs who have no alternative
- Maximizing limited community resources

# **Learning Objectives**

- Define Homelessness Prevention
- Define Diversion
- What do these look like at the CoC & Local Level

### **Timeline of Rapid Resolution Interventions**



# What is Homelessness Prevention?

Homelessness prevention is a set of strategies to help low-income households resolve a housing crisis that could otherwise lead to homelessness. Prevention provides short-term financial assistance and services to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless.

# **Homelessness Prevention Programs**

- Permanent deep rental housing subsidies
  - Providing Financial Assistance to cover housing costs
- Eviction prevention programs
  - Legal Assistance, Financial Assistance, Mediation Services to keep tenants in their current homes
- Community-based services
  - Available Resources within the community that are available to assist those whom are at risk of homelessness: job resource center, financial assistance centers
- Critical Time Intervention
  - Comprehensive case management to those at risk of homelessness such as those being discharged from jail, prison, medical centers and mental health centers
- Proactive follow-up services
  - Maintaining case management to ensure that individuals remain housed and not entering emergency shelter

# **Examples of Homelessness Prevention Program Success**

Implementation of Permanent Deep Rental Housing Subsidies Program:

- Families who were offered a rental voucher were much less likely to experience homelessness than those put on a voucher waitlist
  - 3.3% VS. 12.5%

**Eviction Prevention Programs:** 

• Of 4,500 renters who called the Homelessness Prevention Call Center from 2010 to 2012; those who were eligible for financial assistance up to 1,500 dollars were 76 percent less likely to enter emergency shelter within the next six months

# **Incorporating Homelessness Prevention**

- Strengths Based Case Management
  - Creative Problem Solving Conversation
  - Conflict Resolution
  - Housing Search and Placement
  - Landlord/Tenant Mediation
  - Connection to Mainstream Resources
  - Tenant Legal Services
  - Credit Repair
- Financial Assistance
  - Rental Application Fee
  - Rental Subsidy/Arrears
  - Security and or Utility Deposits
  - Utility Arrears
  - Moving Costs
  - Transportation Costs



# Homelessness Prevention on the CoC & Local Level:

CoC Level -

- Advocacy for Rental Subsidies
- SSVF & ESG HP Prevention Initiatives

#### Local Level -



- Faith based organizations providing financial assistance to cover an overdue utility bill
- Non profit funded agencies providing outreach case management
- A lawyer providing pro bono legal services to a client facing an eviction and the lawyer being able to fight to have that eviction dismissed

### Why Homelessness Prevention Assistance?

- With **limited assistance**, most households can avoid homelessness.
- Trauma associated with homelessness can be **diminished** if homeless prevention is provided
- Allow for an **emphasis** on persons with more severe housing barriers
- Preventing an episode of homelessness **costs less** than sheltering an episode of homelessness.

### **Timeline of Rapid Resolution Interventions**



# What is Diversion?

Diversion is defined as the act of causing something or someone to turn in a different direction.

In the homeless crisis response system we do this by having diversion conversations and assisting households to find an alternative to shelter once a person/family has become homeless.

Diversion is NOT a "program" but rather an "approach" to finding creative alternatives.

# **Diversion: Safe & Appropriate Alternatives**

• Safe- diversion efforts never knowingly put people into unsafe situations

• Appropriate- diversion efforts never knowingly put people into inappropriate situations.

# Three C's of Diversion

Commitment
Conversation
Creativity

# **Diversion: Commitment**

- Diversion starts with a belief and commitment on the part of the communities doing diversion that individuals and families:
  - Are able to be diverted
  - Can have safe and appropriate alternatives to shelter
  - Shelter should be reserved only for those that do not have alternatives
  - Are best served through a strength-based framework

# **Diversion:** Conversation

- Successful Diversion uses the first conversation with a household as an opportunity to explore their current housing crisis
- Remembering that our job isn't to solve the crisis, our job is to empower people to solve their own crisis
  - Ask Questions
  - Use Active Listening Skills
  - Explore Strengths & Maximize Resilience
  - Option Exploration

# **Diversion:** Creativity

- There is not a single strategy that makes diversion a success.
- People are generally resilient, empower them to maximize their resiliency!
- Progressive engagement is a good idea!
- Safe and appropriate tenancies take many forms!
- Mediation is a worthwhile endeavor when solving a potential housing crisis.

# **Examples of Diversion**

(Always Safe & Appropriate)

- Helping persons go back where they have recently stayedmediation + food or utility assistance. Sometimes back rent.
- Back to a stable home out of town-phone facilitation +greyhound fare.
- **Own (new) housing-** temp place to stay during housing search. We order inspection and pay first month's rent and deposit.
- When shelters are full, staff may help persons safely stay with friends or family until space becomes available.

# **Diversion on the CoC Level:**

- First TX BoS Community Designed & Implemented Project
- Product of our Built for Zero collaboration
- Launched on December 12th, 2018
- Diversion conversations being tracked in HMIS
- Will be rolling out across the TX BoS CoC in phases

# Why Diversion?

- People are resilient and capable
- Resources are limited
- National Best Practice
- Helps facilitate an end to homelessness

#### Homeless Crisis Response System

Homelessness Prevention = sustaining an existing safe, appropriate tenancy

**Diversion** = locating safe, appropriate alternatives to shelter once a person/family has become homeless

**Coordinated Entry** = process to identify, assess for, refer, and connect persons/families who are literally homeless to housing and assistance based on strength and needs.

#### Housing =



### **End of Homelessness**

### Wrap Up

- Homelessness Prevention and Diversion are important rapid resolution techniques and a service in and of itself not a lack of service
- Both fall on a continuum to help individuals and households solve their housing crisis before emergency shelter is absolutely necessary via conversations and problem solving
- More Homelessness Prevention and Diversion will be phased into our processes and programs across the Balance of State per HUD's lead



Name	Login	Attendance Status
Adrienne Arthur	aarthur@longviewtexas.gov	Attended
Alaina Marcum	amarcum@tfci.org	Attended
Alena Morgan	alena.morgan@tdhca.state.tx.us	Attended
Alexzandra Hust	alexzandra@abilenehopehaven.org	Attended
Amanda Jackson	ajackson@connectionsnonprofit.org	Attended
Anne Spanyers	aws@advocacyoutreach.org	Attended
Beth Rolingson	Beth@advocacyoutreach.org	Attended
Bonnie Brooks	bbrooks@setrpc.org	Attended
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Cheteva Marshall	cmarshall@longviewtexas.gov	Attended
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Connie Sherman	Conniesherman@cableone.net	Attended
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Erika Thomas	homelesslinks@gmail.com	Attended
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Ginny Stafford	gstafford@midcoastfamily.org	Attended
Jessica McMurray	jessica.vethousing@gmail.com	Attended
Jo Patillo	joann.patillo@beaumonttexas.gov	Attended
John Meier	jmeier@westcentraltexas.org	Attended
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Melissa Gutierrez	melissag@lfrgv.org	Attended
Melissa Juarez	hopehousecc@mygrande.net	Attended
Michaelle Wormly	womaninc@pdq.net	Attended
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Roberta Gradel	robin.gradel@cccmhmr.org	Attended
Ruby Jones	BeaconPlace_Jones@yahoo.com	Attended
Sabrina Lang	sabrina.lang@communityhealthcore.com	Attended
Samuel Anzaldua	hmiscaseadvocate.blc@gmail.com	Attended
Susan Clark	susanc@faithworksofabilene.org	Attended
Tiffany Ross	tiffanyross@cacv.us	Attended
Tommy Lee Martinez	tommym@lfrgv.org	Attended
Vicki Smith	vickismith@cacv.us	Attended

#### January 9, 2019, 2:00 p.m. Notes

#### Attendance

CoC General Membership Attendees: See attached attendance list from the webinar

- I. Welcome and Introductions Sophia Checa, CoC Director, welcomed members to the meeting and introduced staff. Attendees were participating via webinar. The Community Conversation topic will be unsheltered homelessness. Kraig Blaize-Fiero, CoC Programs Assistant, facilitated attendees indicating their locations on an interactive map.
- II. Summary of prior meeting -- Mary Stahlke, CoC Manager, summarized the 12/12/2018 meeting.
- III. Data Snapshot Diversion Pilot Project Abilene and Denton
  - a. John Meier from Abilene: We asked ourselves, "How could diversion empower our homeless neighbors to use solutions of their own instead of going through the CE assessment and getting on a waiting list?" With more choices to end their current housing crisis. The community's involvement in Built for Zero taught them taught them about PDSA: plan, do, study, act.
  - b. Abilene and Denton discussed diversion as a project. They use the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and Coordinated Entry (CE) system to capture data.
  - c. What is the script to put into HMIS, to allow assessors to go through the diversion process with neighbors? We started with the OrgCode script and made some slight changes. Goal: to get answers they needed
  - d. Katherine Gonzales: Denton joined 1.) Because diversion is not an absence of services; it's a strengths-based way to problem-solve and help people use their natural resources/support systems. 2.) It helps their data reliability and quality. They are now able to focus more on people on the by-name list who have no diversion options.
  - e. John: What could have been a big hurdle was not having the data. But THN and the HMIS Team gave us the opportunity to collect real-time data to communicate about using diversion.
  - f. Tiffany Hart, Systems Change Coordinator for the CoC: We're one of the first CoCs using HMIS to track diversion.
  - g. John: Once answers are given in the screening, we offer the person a choice about whether to move forward with diversion or to go into the CE assessment. We continue to follow up with them for 14 days, to ensure there is



success with that diversion plan. If there is success, they are closed out of the diversion work flow in HMIS. If at any time in the 14 days, their plan is not successful, they can do the CE assessment and become part of the by-name list and Housing Priority list.

- IV. How We are Ending Homelessness -- With Homelessness Prevention and Diversion see presentation slides
  - a. HP Mollie Lund, ESG and SSVF Performance Coordinator
    - i. What is HP?
    - ii. Homelessness Prevention Programs and their success
      - 1. Permanent deep housing subsidies
      - 2. Eviction prevention programs
      - 3. Community-based services
      - 4. Critical Time Intervention (CTI)
      - 5. Pro-active follow-up services
    - iii. Incorporating HP (strengths-based case management and financial assistance) on the local and CoC levels
    - iv. Why do HP?
      - 1. With limited assistance, most households can avoid homelessness.
      - 2. Trauma associated with homelessness can be diminished if homeless prevention is provided
      - 3. Allow for an emphasis on persons with more severe housing barriers
      - 4. Preventing an episode of homelessness costs less than sheltering an episode of homelessness.
  - b. Diversion—Tiffany Hart
    - i. Diversion is not a program; it's an approach. Diversion is a best practice nationally. Use diversion as the first step in the CE process. Trying to help households find safe and appropriate alternatives to a homeless shelter. Empowering people to solve their own crises and to maximize their resiliency.
    - ii. Three "Cs" of diversion: commitment, conversation, creativity
    - Approximately 33% of people who entered emergency shelter in the TX BoS CoC left the shelter within 14 days. We can support this selfresolution, and maybe increase it, by talking with people about diversion.
    - iv. Email <u>CE@thn.org</u> with Diversion questions, and email <u>Mollie@thn.org</u> for HP questions.



#### V. Community Conversation – Unsheltered Homelessness – Sophia Checa

- a. The Point In Time (PIT) Count will be held January 24<sup>th</sup>.
- b. 35% of people in 2018 AHAR were in unsheltered homeless situations, which is an increase over the prior year. Of the 7.638 people counted in the TX BoS CoC 2018 PIT Count, 53% were unsheltered. Are you seeing unsheltered homelessness in your community? If so, what are you seeing that could influence our CoC's P&Ps and our advocacy efforts on the national and local levels? Type in, or send your info privately to us,
- c. Andrew Willard, CoC Performance Coordinator: If you're doing front-line work, what stories are you hearing from people in homeless situations in your community?
- d. John Meier (Abilene): Increase in number of people staying outside in warmer weather. People experiencing homelessness will not use high-barrier shelters
- e. Kathryn Bisson (Abilene): We have a low-barrier shelter in Abilene, but it's small.
- f. Sophia Checa: Did you apply for funds for PSH in the CoC Program competition in 2018? If so, what data did you use to support the need for PSH? KB: Yes
- g. Melissa Escamilla (McAllen): Sometimes community members don't understand that we can't force people to enter shelter. We can offer shelter and services, but we cannot force anyone.
- h. Ginny Stafford (Victoria): no option for men who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Victoria
- i. Melissa Escamilla: need to work with people who have come into the U.S. across the border and need assistance while their cases are being processed.
- j. John Meier: sometimes community members complain about people who are staying outdoors.
- k. In some communities, no shelters take single fathers with children, and no shelters accept new entrants after 2:00 on Fridays.
- l. Marsha Wilson (Galveston): Limited shelters here, We are noticing that our calls are from 2-4 homeless people who are putting their money together to rent cheap motel rooms.
- m. Mary Stahlke: In CoC Program-funded emergency shelter, <u>separating families</u> <u>is not allowed</u>.
- n. Sophia Checa: The National Alliance to End Homelessness (<u>NAEH</u>) has a <u>webinar series</u>: moving your shelter from high-barrier to low-barrier. OrgCode has also done some work on that topic.
- o. Sophia Checa: THN is seeking emergency shelters that would like to work with THN on a systems change process, to become low-barrier
- p. Thank you for your input. We need this info to share with Board, especially as we're working on policies related to unsheltered homelessness.



#### VI. CoC Priority Projects

- a. HMIS
  - i. Staffing changes,
    - 1. Open position Trainer. Job description on <u>THN's website</u>. Encourage anyone to apply.
    - 2. Victoria Lopez will shift into a new role in February as the System Performance Coordinator
  - i. Capacity-building grant -- to help develop system capacity. One-time opportunity for only some CoCs. Only THN, as the HMIS Lead Agency, can apply. THN will apply on behalf of the CoC.
- b. Data
  - ii. Point-In-Time (PIT) Count (January 24<sup>th</sup>) office hours Week of January 7<sup>th</sup>
  - iii. Volunteer registration and release forms volunteers need to complete these
  - iv. "Counting Us" app online application used to document answers given by people experiencing homelessness during the PIT Count
- c. Systems Change
  - i. Coordinated Entry Steering Committee nominations due January 18<sup>th</sup>
  - ii. Built For Zero -- Helping communities to end veteran and chronic homelessness. The CoC can support one more community in the upcoming year.
    - 1. Applications due February 1<sup>st</sup>; click <u>here</u> to learn more
    - Informational Session Tuesday January 22<sup>nd</sup> 3:00PM-3:30PM; Meeting Login: <u>https://zoom.us/j/938117713</u>
- d. CoC Program
  - i. Quarterly Performance Scorecards CoC Program recipients need to complete their score cards and submit them via GoogleForms. Click <u>here</u> for more information.
  - ii. FY 2018 Awards have not been announced yet, and they likely will not be announced until the government shutdown ends
- e. SSVF Program Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program 2019 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). (see handout) -- New funding opportunity for SSVF Priority 4 applicants (those that do not currently receive SSVF funding). Applications due Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup>. All interested organizations are encouraged to apply NOFA requires letter of support from THN; request letter from <u>Mollie@thn.org</u> or 512-861-2119.
- f. Governance
  - Board Seat 1 (persons with lived experience of homelessness) and Seat 12 (law enforcement/criminal justice) nominations due January 22<sup>nd;</sup> the CoC Board will consider nominations for appointment to the Board.
- VII. Next Meeting Wednesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00, by webinar. Topic: Outreach



The meeting ended at 3:30 P.M.

Link to a recording of the meeting:

https://thn.adobeconnect.com/ptaawgzdk23p/?OWASP\_CSRFTOKEN=e5e610ad17f04b46 1cdfdd476f9c211a6a7303c8f761868f6863afb76131921b

