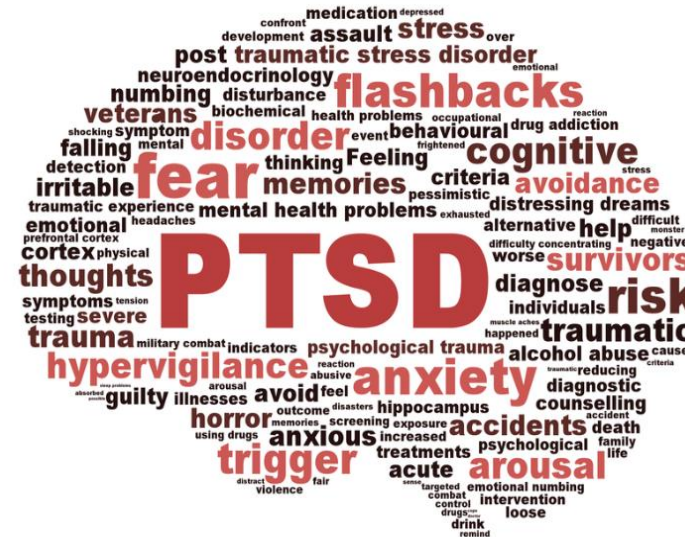


Coping with Disaster PTSD

Vicarious Trauma and Self-Care



Get to Know Your Producer

Robin Stout Migala



- Consultant to the industry
- 48 years' experience in residential lending and default servicing
- 23 years with Freddie Mac in Housing Outreach
- Specialty in loss mitigation and foreclosure prevention for housing counselors and real estate professionals

DISCLAIMER:

This session is about PTSD, specifically Vicarious Trauma related to disaster situations. The information related here is from professional sources and is not a substitute for proper medical care. For additional information, please reference the abundant resources at the end of this presentation. Please note that information is subject to change at any time.

Viewing the Recorded Webinar



"Online Training Done Right"



The Counselor's Corner...



THE Online Resource for Housing Counseling and Real Estate Professionals

Your one-stop Resource Center:

- Provides information that enhances your knowledge of industry changes and regulatory updates in a timely manner, all in one location
- Our online “Learning Center” provides Continued Education Hours for your active participation

Question For You to Think About



Was your area affected by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, or Maria, the California wildfires, or the Las Vegas mass shooting?

Even if not, realize that a natural disaster or civil unrest can happen anywhere at any time.

The information you learn in this session applies to any of these kinds of situations whenever they occur and includes your interactions with servicemember clients who may also be suffering and borrowers losing their homes through foreclosure.

Get to Know Your Presenter

Dr. Gerri Tartt



- 18 years Executive Director/Psychotherapist in private practice
- 41 years' experience in counseling arena
- 7 years as Adjunct Instructor of Psychology with Florida Southern College
- Chief Administer of the Employee Assistance Program at Lockheed Martin for 15 years

Coping with Disaster PTSD

Our objective today is to enable you to:

- Understand the meaning and process of vicarious trauma
- Identify and analyze your personal signs and symptoms
- Recognize the impact that vicarious trauma has on counselors' professional proficiency
- Identify effective coping strategies
- Get resources available to you and your clients



Terms

DISASTER – a sudden event, such as an accident or a natural catastrophe, that causes great damage or loss of life.

VICARIOUS TRAUMA (VT) – the emotional residue of exposure that counselors have from working with people as counselors are hearing their clients' trauma stories and become witnesses to the pain, fear, and terror that trauma survivors have endured. Also related to as:

- **Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)**
- **Compassion Fatigue (CF)**

Terms, continued...

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) – the emotional duress that results when the individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another. Its symptoms mimic those of **post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**.

Compassion Fatigue (CF) – the condition of emotional and physical fatigue that results when helpers feel compassion for those they help but do not have adequate time away from caring for others to refuel and care for themselves.

- It differs from Vicarious Trauma (VT) in that it is not typically characterized by the presence of trauma-related symptoms and does not necessarily involve a change in one's world view.

Understanding Vicarious Trauma (VT)



- **VT** creates state of tension and preoccupation with stories/traumatic experiences described by clients
- Typically involves a shift in the world view of the helper
- Helper's beliefs about the world may be altered and/or damaged by repeated exposure to traumatic material

Understanding Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)



- Developing **STS** is recognized as a common occupational hazard for professionals working with traumatized clients
- Women are at greater risk and the risk appears to be among individuals who are highly empathetic by nature
- More likely to have unresolved personal trauma

Understanding Compassion Fatigue (CF)



The emotional impact of hearing traumatic stories could be transmitted through deep psychological processes within empathy, which generates compassion fatigue.

This process is the unconscious empathy, the empathy outside awareness and control, that might interfere with the well-being of the caregiver.

Question For You to Think About



Have you observed PTSD, as we have just described it,
in a client or in others?

Risk Factors for Developing VT

Management and Counselors' Competence

- Lack of training and supervision
- Lack of supervisor's awareness to the potential of VT
- Little or no follow up of inappropriate or bizarre behaviors
- Unclear guidelines or directives
- Lack of support from management

Risk Factors for Developing VT, continued...



Characteristics of the **CLIENT** that can contribute to VT

- Working with demanding clients who present with **evident-based interfering** behaviors (e.g., no shows, non-payment, non-compliance with treatment regimen, calling too frequently, repeatedly demanding extra session time)
- Working with clients who are hostile and threatening to the counselor, others, or the guideline/program (e.g., verbally and physically threatening, stalking the counselor, bringing weapons to sessions)
- Working with suicidal clients
- Working with clients who may relate trauma stories of human cruelty and intense suffering

Risk Factors for Developing VT, continued...



Characteristics of the **CLIENT** that can contribute to trauma

- Graphic details of trauma, especially sexual abuse, work with rape and torture victims, Holocaust survivors
- Descriptions of acts of intentional cruelty and hatred (e.g., child physical and sexual abuse)
- Client reenactments in therapy aspects of the trauma
- Ongoing risk of further re-victimization to client and possible threats to health care providers (e.g., work in domestic shelters)
- High suicide risk or risk of aggression against others
- Work with survivors who are also perpetrators

Symptoms of VT, STS, and CF

There is a wide range of symptoms, which generally fall into one of five categories:

- Emotional
- Behavioral
- Physiological
- Cognitive
- Spiritual

Symptoms of VT - Emotional

- Can include lasting feelings of grief, anxiety or sadness
- May become irritable, angry, or frequently distracted
- May experience change in mood or sense of humor
- Begin to feel generally unsafe

Symptoms of VT - Behavioral

Might include:

- Isolation
- Increase in alcohol or substance consumption
- Altered eating habits
- Difficulty sleeping
- Engaging in risky behavior
- Avoiding people or tasks
- Difficulty in separating work and personal life and begin intermingling the two

Symptoms of VT - Physiological

The physiological response to trauma is an intensely somatic experience, which affects physical well-being and can appear in the form of:

- Headaches
- Rashes
- Ulcers
- Heartburn
- Body temperature changes
- Impaired hearing

Symptoms of VT - Cognitive

May take the form of:

- Cynicism
- Negativity
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty remembering
- Difficulty in making decisions in daily life

A helping counselor may also find it difficult to stop thinking about the trauma experienced by the client, even when not at work.

Symptoms of VT - Spiritual

Include:

- Loss of hope
- Decreased sense of purpose
- Feelings of disconnect from others and the world in general

People may lose sight of their life's purpose or come to feel they are unworthy of love or do not deserve love.

Question For You to Think About



Now...do you think **YOU** exhibit any signs of
VT, STS, or CF?

Processing Through the Disaster

Authentic and sustainable self-care begins with you.

- Be kind to yourself
- Enhance your awareness with education
- Accept where you are on your path at all times
- Understand those close to you may not be there when you need them the most

Processing Through the Disaster

- Exchange information and feelings with people who can validate you
- Listen to others who are suffering
- Clarify your personal boundaries – what works for you; what doesn't
- Express your needs verbally
- Take positive action to change your environment

Inner Self-Care

Processing Through the Disaster

Inner Self-Care

- Make a date with yourself. Spend an hour doing something that nourishes you (not work) or things on your to-do list like reading, a hobby, walking around the neighborhood, visiting a museum, etc.
- Praise yourself when you do something awesome
- Read books and watch movies you enjoy
- Paint or write something that lets out your creative energy
- Unplug

Inner Self-Care, continued...

Processing Through the Disaster

MORE Inner Self-Care

- Write in a journal
- Learn something new or research something in which you've been interested
- Meditate
- Take a class for fun
- Take a quick nap. Only 10 or 20 minutes can reduce your sleep debt and leave you ready for action.
- Learn mindfulness or connect with a spiritual practice that vibes with you

Outer Self-Care

Processing Through the Disaster

Outer Self-Care

- Eat something you enjoy
- Have a long bath or shower, sit around in your bathrobe, and read magazines
- Do one thing just because it makes you happy
- Do a mini-declutter. Recycle three things from your wardrobe that you don't love or clean out your backpack
- Help someone. Carry a bag, open a door, or pick up an extra carton of milk for your neighbor

Outer Self-Care, continued...

Processing Through the Disaster

MORE Outer Self-Care

- Get up and move; clean out your garage
- Go for a bike ride
- Hit some golf balls or baseballs or throw a football with a friend
- Go fishing
- Take a long scenic drive

Outer Self-Care, continued...

Processing Through the Disaster

MORE Outer Self-Care

- Stretch. 5-10 minutes to get the kinks out helps your body and your mind
- Run or walk for a few minutes or go up and down the stairs for a few minutes to get your heart rate up
- Touch a pet. If you don't have one, go to the park or animal shelter and ask to touch one
- Give your body some comfort. Pick up something from your wardrobe that feels good next to your skin
- Use lotion or a product that makes you feel happy
- Spend time with **real** friends and other people who lift you up

Self-Care Self-Assessment

Processing Through the Disaster

Self-assessment of VT

Review these questions with a trusted and supportive colleague:

1. How am I doing?
2. What do I need? What would I like to change?
3. What is hardest about this work?
4. What worries me most about my work?
5. How have I changed since I began this work, both positively and, perhaps, negatively?
6. What changes, if any, do I see in myself that I do not like?

Self-Care Self-Assessment, continued...



Processing Through the Disaster

Self-assessment of VT

Review these questions with a trusted and supportive colleague:

7. Am I experiencing any signs of VT? (See the previous list of common reactions)
8. What have I done to address my VT?
9. As I think of my work with my clients, what are my specific goals? How successful am I in achieving these goals?
10. What is my sense of personal accomplishment in my work?
11. What work barriers prevent me from having more satisfaction and how can I address these barriers?
12. What am I going to do to take care of myself?

Self-Care Self-Assessment, continued...



Processing Through the Disaster

Self-assessment of VT

Review these questions with a trusted and supportive colleague:

13. How can I keep going as a person while working with traumatized clients?
14. How can I use social supports more effectively? Draw a picture (web diagram) of your social supports on the job (colleagues) and in non-job-related areas (family, friends)
15. For instance, have I talked with other people about my concerns, feelings, and the rewards of my job?
16. With whom did I talk, both in the past and now? What were their reactions? What did he/she say/do that I found helpful or unhelpful?
17. What were my reactions to their reactions?

Self-Care Self-Assessment, continued...



Processing Through the Disaster

Self-assessment of VT

Review these questions with a trusted and supportive colleague:

18. Is there anything about my work experience or other stressful events in my life that I have not told anyone, that is “unspeakable”, that I have kept to myself (a secret)? Try putting it into words, such as, “I haven’t shared it because...” or “I am very hesitant to share it because...”. What is the possible ongoing impact, toll, emotional price of not sharing and working through these feelings?
19. Is there anything about my stress experience that I keep from myself? An area or an event that I have pushed away or kept at arm’s length from myself? Or, about which I say to myself – “I can’t handle that”? What aspect of my life have I not put into words yet that is still lurking in that corner of my mind that I haven’t looked into yet?
20. How will sharing these feelings help? Remember, what cannot be talked about can also not be put to rest!

10 FAQs Regarding Vicarious Trauma



Q1. What is the difference between vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress, and compassion fatigue?

A1. Vicarious Trauma (VT) can be described as indirect exposure to traumatic events through first-hand accounts or narratives of that event. It also refers to harmful changes that occur in professionals' views of themselves, others, and the world as a result of exposure to the graphic and/or traumatic material of their clients.

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) refers to a set of psychological symptoms that mimic post-traumatic stress disorder, but is acquired through exposure to persons suffering the effects of trauma.

Compassion Fatigue (CF) is the condition of emotional and physical fatigue that results when helpers feel compassion for those they help but do not have adequate time away from caring for others to refuel and care for themselves. It differs from VT in that it is not typically characterized by the presence of trauma-related symptoms and does not necessarily involve a change in one's world view.

10 FAQs Regarding Vicarious Trauma



Q2. Why is it important for those who work with trauma survivors to know about traumatic stress?

A2. People in the helping professions — counselors and therapists, rescue workers, police officers, doctors, lawyers, and credit counselors — may be at risk of vicarious traumatization. Any person who has a significant relationship with a survivor of trauma may also come to experience secondary traumatization.

10 FAQs Regarding Vicarious Trauma



Q3. How susceptible are health care workers to the exposure of trauma?

A3. Clearly, client care can be compromised if the counselor is emotionally depleted or cognitively affected by secondary trauma.

Some traumatized professionals, believing they can no longer be of service to their clients, end up leaving their jobs or the serving field altogether.

Some ways to prevent the development of STS are to:

- a. Use evidence-based practices of providing self-care. See the information beginning on slide 24 in the presentation.
- b. Studies show that longer duration of professional experience in the various fields has proven to be an effective barrier for some

10 FAQs Regarding Vicarious Trauma



Q4. Are there other risks of developing VT?

A4. For counselors experiencing symptoms of trauma, a supportive supervisory environment can promote the counselor's ability to acknowledge, express, and work through these painful experiences.

Supervisors of counselors at risk for VT should address the inherent challenges in working with trauma. Failure to provide appropriate supervision, in which counselors are able to address their work with clients, can be considered unethical given the potential harm to the counselor.

[Resources](#) for supervisors to assist counselors in distress is warranted. When wellness is an essential part of the supervision process, the effects of trauma can be prevented or mitigated. Models of wellness address physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual as well as other aspects of individuals' lives.

10 FAQs Regarding Vicarious Trauma



Q5. Will every counselor who works with traumatic material or clients develop VT?

A5. It is important to note that not every counselor who works with traumatic material or clients develops VT. However, a survey showed that “86.9% of emergency response personnel reported symptoms after exposure to highly distressing events with traumatized people” . . . [and] . . . “90% of new physicians, between 30 to 39 years old, say that their family life has suffered as a result of their work”. [AORN Journal](#) :[Volume 68, Issue 4](#), October 1998, Pages 642, 644-645, 647-648.

10 FAQs Regarding Vicarious Trauma



Q6. What should I do if my client become aggressive or belligerent?

A6. Always remember “**Safety First**”. If a client become aggressive, identify the unacceptable behavior and ask him/her to stop. Should the behavior continue ask him/her to leave. If you believe that you are in harm’s way, call for assistance.

10 FAQs Regarding Vicarious Trauma



Q7. What are some of the symptoms of trauma?

A7. Trauma can and does affect our entire being — emotional, behavioral, and physiological.

Emotional issues can present as anxiety symptoms, which could include obtrusive/obsessive/worried thoughts, confusion and difficulty concentrating, pacing or restlessness, irritability, frustration, and despair.

These and other emotional upheavals can wreak havoc in the workplace.

Behavioral issues can present as isolation or being separated from others and can result from the perception of being removed from a community, such as when a person feels socially or emotionally isolated from others due to feeling overwhelmed. The person will then socially isolate him/herself by staying home for days, not talking with friends or acquaintances, and generally avoiding contact with other people.

This behavior creates absenteeism from the workplace or low motivation, increased errors, or decreased quality when in the workplace, which can negatively affect an individual's performance.

Physiological issues presents more in the body. Dealing with body memories in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) recovery is one of the most difficult symptoms.

Body memories differ from flashbacks. A flashback is a sudden, vivid memory that makes you feel like you are experiencing your trauma all over again. It's a physical feeling of being there, not just a normal memory where you are recalling what has happened.

However, body memories are another type of way we relive trauma that, while far less intense, are still upsetting. Body memories are not so easily identified; they can cause mental problems for years before you recognize them as a body memory.

10 FAQs Regarding Vicarious Trauma



Q8. Will my stress level effect the way I think and what I believe?

A8. Some people find that there is a shift in their cognition and spirituality. Cognitively, it has been report that cynicism has been called the “hallmark” of compassion fatigue and vicarious traumatization. You may express cynicism towards your colleagues, towards your clients, and towards your family and friends.

Negativity is often fleeting, occurring when an individual experiences a period of difficulty in life and resolving itself once matters improve, but it can also take root in a person, affecting personal relationships and daily activities.

In the workplace, it can present as a lack of flexibility, conflict with staff, blaming others, poor communication, lack of collaboration, or impatience. This thought process can make for poor relationships in the workplace.

Most individuals’ spirituality is based on hope and when this emotional concept is lost, it effects one’s purpose for living.

10 FAQs Regarding Vicarious Trauma



Q9. What can I do to protect myself?

A9. Self-care is very important during any crisis.

Research supports that cognitive-behavioral strategies and mindfulness-based methods are emerging as best practices for methods to prevent and minimize the effects of VT, STS, and CF.

- ✓ Be kind to yourself
- ✓ Enhance your awareness with education
- ✓ Accept where you are on your path at all times
- ✓ Understand that those close to you may not be there when you need them the most
- ✓ Also, it is widely considered to be essential for those who are frequently exposed to traumatic material to receive appropriate training and supervision.
- ✓ Many mental health professionals also recommend connecting with other professionals who understand the experience of working with trauma.
- ✓ Self-care is important to maintain a healthy relationship with yourself, sometimes called self-love. It produces positive feelings, which improves confidence and self-esteem too.
- ✓ Use problem-solving techniques that have worked for you. Remember that the long-term stress caused by disasters can reduce your ability to think clearly, be creative, and tackle problems.

10 FAQs Regarding Vicarious Trauma



Q10. Are there long term effects of trauma?

A10. With any sustained crisis there can be some residuals, whether they are emotional or physical or adjustments to the new circumstances. Therefore, check in with individuals you know and trust and ask them how they think you are doing. Talk with your doctor if unfamiliar health problems creep up. Speak with a therapist if you believe you are depressed.

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- (www.melissainstitute.org)

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Resources



"Online Training Done Right"

- Vicarious trauma fact sheet (copy link or type URL in your browser address bar) -
https://www.counseling.org/docs/trauma-disaster/fact-sheet-9---vicarious-trauma.pdf?sfvrsn=f0f03a27_2
- Building a trauma-informed workforce -
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK207194/>
- FEMA counseling assistance and training program -
<https://www.fema.gov/recovery-directorate/crisis-counseling-assistance-training-program>
- FEMA crisis counseling assistance toolkit -
<http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/healthprep/programs/behavioralhealth/Documents/FEMA%20CCP%20Toolkit.pdf>

Resources



- Mental health reactions after disaster - <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/pages/handouts-pdf/Reactions.pdf>
- Children show PTSD signs two years after disasters - <https://psychcentral.com/news/2011/01/17/children-still-show-ptsd-signs-nearly-2-years-after-natural-disaster/22704.html>
- Crisis intervention after major disasters - http://www.thecjc.org/pdf/benveniste_crisis.pdf
- VA disaster mental health treatment - https://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/treatment/therapy-med/disaster_mental_health_treatment.asp
- Disaster response resources - <http://www.div17.org/resources/disaster-response-resources/>

Resources



- Mental health services for victims of disasters - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1489840/>
- The trauma that arises from natural disasters - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/somatic-psychology/201004/the-trauma-arises-natural-disasters>
- American Red Cross disaster training - <http://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/disaster-training>
- American Red Cross Disaster Distress Helpline - <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services/recovering-emotionally#Emotional-Responses>
- Natural disaster PTSD treatment help - <http://ptsdtreatmenthelp.com/ptsd-after-a-natural-disaster/>

Resources



- Secondary traumatic stress children and families - <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/trauma-toolkit/secondary-traumatic-stress>
- Faces of natural disaster PTSD - <http://www.facesofptsd.com/natural-disaster-ptsd/>
- PTSD due to natural disasters - <https://www.harleytherapy.co.uk/counselling/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-as-a-result-of-natural-disasters.htm>
- American Psychological Association > Disasters - <http://www.apa.org/topics/disasters/>
- Helping victims of mass violence and terrorism - <https://www.ovc.gov/pubs/mvt-toolkit/victim-services.html>
- Secondary traumatic stress - <http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/secondary-traumatic-stress>

Resources



- Workplace stress - <http://www.healthadvocate.com/downloads/webinars/stress-workplace.pdf>
- Compassion fatigue self-care - <http://www.compassionfatigue.org/pages/Top12SelfCareTips.pdf>
- Overcoming compassion fatigue - <http://www.aafp.org/fpm/2000/0400/p39.html>
- My Personal Stress Plan - https://www.healthychildren.org/English/Documents/BR3_My_Personal_Stress_Plan.pdf
- Family Safety - <https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/coping-in-the-aftermath-of-a-shooting>

Resources



- Workplace tools:
 - <https://www.newharbinger.com/ptsd-workbook-third-edition>
 - <https://psychologytools.com/ptsd.html>
- HUD disaster and emergency resource page for housing counselors - <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/housing-counseling/topics/2017-hurricanes/#california-fires>
- HUD disaster recovery flyers - <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/housing-counseling/housing-counseling-works/#disaster-recovery-flyers>

Resources



Certified Financial Counselors

- Accredited Financial Counselors (AFC®) - <https://www.afcpe.org/>
- Certified Financial Planners (CFP®) - <https://www.cfp.net/>
- The National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC®) - <https://www.nfcc.org/>

U.S. Department of Agriculture

- Rural Development – www.rurdev.usda.gov
- Farm Service Agency – www.fsa.usda.gov
- The National Institute of Food and Agriculture – www.nifa.usda.gov
- Extension Services – www.extension.org

Resources



- Catholic Charities - www.catholiccharitiesusa.org
- United Way 2-1-1 - www.211.org/
- National Disaster Legal Aid – www.disasterlegalaid.org
- The Salvation Army - <http://www.salvationarmyusa.org/>
- FEMA - <https://www.fema.gov/>

Military Resources



"Online Training Done Right"

- Military One Source – www.militaryonesource.com
- Help for homeless Veterans – <http://www.va.gov/homeless/>
- Veterans Crisis Line – <http://veteranscrisisline.net/>
- SCRA Public Law December 19, 2003 – <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-108publ189/pdf/PLAW-108publ189.pdf>
- Armed Forces Legal Assistance Program Office – <http://legalassistance.law.af.mil/content/locator.php>
- Freddie Mac – <http://www.freddiemac.com/singlefamily/scra/>
- Fannie Mae – <http://knowyouroptions.com/news/help-for-military-homeowners>
- CFPB – <http://www.consumerfinance.gov/blog/servicemembers-you-have-new-mortgage-protections-in-2014/>

HUD Certification Exam Resources



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THE FINAL EXAM IS OPEN!

- HUD Housing Counseling Certification Requirements Overview – <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/housing-counseling/certification/>
- HUD Housing Counseling Certification Final Rule – <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5191/housing-counseling-new-certification-requirements-final-rule/>
- HUD Housing Counseling Certification Press Release – <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5193/hud-press-release-hud-announces-new-housing-counseling-certification-requirements/>
- HUD Housing Counseling Certification Requirements FAQs – <https://www.hudexchange.info/housing-counseling/faqs/>
- HUD other Programs Covered Under Final Rule – <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5192/other-hud-programs-covered-under-huds-final-rule-for-housing-counseling-certification/>
- HUD training and certification exam website – <http://www.hudhousingcounselors.com/>
- HUD Federal Register Exam Notice – <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/05/31/2017-11213/housing-counseling-certification-examination-availability-and-change-to-certification-examination>
- HUD certification final rule key provisions and dates – <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Housing-Counseling-Certification-Chart-of-Key-Provisions-and-Dates.pdf>
- HUD Stakeholders December 19, 2016 recorded conference call on the certification final rule – <https://www.hudexchange.info/trainings/courses/stakeholders-conference-call-on-the-final-rule-on-housing-counseling-certification/>

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