

THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 2020

SUPERVISING REMOTE VR COUNSELING SERVICE PROVIDERS

Services provided by: Caption First, Inc.

>> Welcome, everyone, and thank you for joining us this morning for another session with Sandy Hardy-Smith. Many of you were probably with us earlier this month when Sandy gave us a wonderful presentation about working remotely and things to consider. Sandy has graciously come back for us, and today she is going to be talking about supervising individuals in remote VR service provision. So we are really looking forward to this presentation.

To let you know a couple of things, Sandy will have her presentation, and then when Sandy is completed, Beth Gaertner with the SVRI staff will moderate a question-and-answer session with Sandy. So as you are listening to Sandy during her presentation, and if you have a question, please put it in the Q&A box. We will not be answering questions during her presentation; we will do it at the end.

Let's see. What additional pieces would be helpful to know? We will be posting in the Chat box at periodic times during the session a link to the PowerPoint slides that Sandy will be using this morning as well as a link to the general instructions to receive CRC credits. Beth, however, will give a more full explanation about the CRC credits at the end. One piece I will mention for those of you who have been some loyal participants on our webinars, and we very much appreciate that, we have been working probably the last three or four months to automate the whole CRC process. I know some of you have had to wait because of the volume of CRC requests. We have now automated that process. Once you complete the evaluation form, fill in your name and an email, you should receive a certificate in your email box in about ten minutes or less. Now, and the instructions are there. You may need to check your spam or junk file the first time and then identify the CRC email as a legitimate piece, so it will go straight in your box, but it's a marvel. So thank you very much, and with that, I will turn it over to Sandy Hardy-Smith for today's presentation. Thanks very much.

>> SANDY SMITH: Great. Thanks so much. Can you guys see my screen?

>> Not yet, Sandy. Here it comes.

>> SANDY SMITH: Okay. Great.

>> There you go. Thanks very much.

>> SANDY SMITH: Good morning, everybody. I think it's good morning everywhere I am talking to, maybe not on the east coast. I am out of Texas. As he said, my name is Sandy Hardy-Smith. I am the chief operating officer of a small nonprofit organization in

Texas called Imagine Enterprises. It was incorporated in 1995, and I joined them in about 1999. So I have been around for a long time. And what we do is we help people with disabilities be a part of their community and to try to gain some level of financial freedom over their life. All of our money is soft money -- contracts, grants, demonstrations -- and the unique thing about Imagine, while there's many unique things, but one of the most unique things and why I am talking to you today is we have always been home officed since 1995. I haven't been to a brick-and-mortar office for almost 21 years. And so while this is new to some of you, this is old hat to me, and I have had to kind of spend some quiet time really figuring out what did it feel like when I spent those 16 years in a brick-and-mortar. I think I am going to stop saying years now you guys will think I am older than Moses, so I am going to stop labeling how many years I have done things. But we don't use a brick-and-mortar. So all of our staff, including our executive director, works from home. And we don't invite people that we offer services to into our home, so almost all of our services are remote.

Now, we do have partnerships with people around the State of Texas, such as State VR, where they will allow us to maybe use an office or a conference room, whatever is available to meet with the people that they've referred to us, and we do that face to face rarely. It's really when someone needs that extra hand holding. But for the most part, almost all of our services are done remotely.

As I said, prior to working with Imagine Enterprises, I lived in Abilene, Texas, and Anchorage, Alaska, and put in about 16 years in some brick-and-mortar, and I was telling the counselors last month the first day that I worked for Imagine, there is no in-service, there was no meeting. My boss wasn't there to shake my hand. I literally was in my spare bedroom just staring at my monitor, and I just could not figure out how to get started. But my boss is amazing. She does wonderful things. She's taught me a lot. And after 21 years, most of this comes pretty easy.

Also at Imagine, one of the things that's really helping us do such a good job around the nation and the state is that we have little turnover. And I want to spend some time on why I think that is later on in the presentation. This isn't something I necessarily shared with the counselors, but I want to share it with you guys as the supervisors. I want to look at our organization and see how that translates to you. Now, I will preface this by saying I am acutely aware that I am talking to state agencies, and a state agency and a small organization is way different when it comes to budget, when it comes to decision-making, when it comes to policy. So please know outside of a few slides, I really did try to develop this PowerPoint based on general things that really cross over regardless. Now, where it doesn't cross over and where you might need to do some advocating, I put a slide in there so you will know that I want you

to really kind of buckle up and kind of advocate there.

The other thing that I am learning working with Wisconsin is every state's VR is different. So there might be some times when I refer you to look at what your state's VR policies or procedures are, you know, how they are dictated through executive orders or whatever.

But with that little preface, I would just like to say thank you again for having me back one more time. Hopefully this won't be the last. And let's go ahead and get started on the adventure. Now, I am going to tell you when I progress the first slide, it's usually slow, so I preface it with that. There we go. If you guys cannot recognize this slide, you have not been watching the news. I think I am actually here today because of this slide. That's our little COVID-19. And it's kind of a worldwide thing. It's not just a United States thing. And it has sincerely disrupted our lives in so many different ways, especially around business. Now again, at Imagine, we weren't necessarily thrown into the fray of change because we already worked from home, but what changed is our relationships that we have with State VR, with the school systems for pre-ETS, you know, all of those other outside partners, so our referrals have really went down. So we are not affected that we are having to work from home and that's new, but we are having to kind of change up how we do it because our relationship with you -- if there's anybody here from Texas -- our relationship with you, Texas State VR, looks a little bit different right now. Things are a little bit slower. People are losing their jobs. We are spending the majority of our last three months helping people get on unemployment, get on SNAP, help them recognize that the stimulus check can count, how to check if they haven't received their stimulus check. There's so much change.

If you haven't pulled up the PowerPoint, you will see I am a person who likes visuals as I go through this because I try to keep it light because this is kind of a heavy topic. And usually I am talking about Social Security, so to me, this is kind of a light topic. I feel like I am just talking about my day. But you know, the change in business conditions have been not brought before us without people recognizing it. It's gotten pretty intense. Things appear to maybe be slowing down. We'll have to see.

But by the end of this webinar or throughout this webinar, we are going to look at your team members. We are going to look at getting them set up to work from home. We are going to talk about and look into how communication is different, how production is different. You know, what technologies do they really need from a remote site to do their job? So the participants that you guys offer services to are getting those services.

And one of the unique traits about virtual teams is keeping them unified. I often see on TV that phrase "together apart" when they

are talking about sheltering in place. Imagine's kind of been sheltering in place since 1995. So keeping a unified team, it really takes intentional behavior, and I don't use that term lately. But I am proud to say that in my almost 21 years at cap imagine, I have only had two staff turnovers. One woman got very sick, and one person passed away. So it's been -- we've been blessed, but it takes a lot, a lot of effort.

So let's get forward and look at these changes that are ahead of us. So a virtual team. Hmm. I had supervised, as you heard, for 16 years before I came to Imagine, and I thought I had the supervisory thing kind of down. Right? You know the expectations. You convey the expectations. You monitor the progress. You report the progress. Life is good. Right?

Then I was dealt the hand of a virtual team, and this is where my supervisor, who had already done it since 1994, she had almost a five-year jump on me, was really able to help me understand how it's different. So I am kind of conveying, I am kind of channeling my boss through part of this lecture. Or part of this training. Hopefully it doesn't feel like a lecture.

Okay. So supervising a virtual team really isn't for the faint of heart because you have to be so intentional. This isn't a job where you can phone it in. You don't just kind of get into a flow. So you have to really have that different mind set, and you really have to plan a different way because you are not seeing these people. You might see them on Zoom, but you are not seeing these people. So it's a whole new way of supporting, of leading, and of supervising. So hopefully by the end of today you'll feel like you are reaching out from one computer to another and making a connection that is productive and caring and quality and all of those things that we want a team to look like.

Oh, did I miss -- oh, no, sorry.

So what I am also going to do, because I went over the learning objectives, but this is kind of a more detailed description of what we are going to talk about today. Because if you think working from home is like working from an office, it's the biggest pitfall you are going to face as a supervisor because it seriously is not. If you are not intentional about your communication, it's going to lead to misunderstandings. And you don't know that because you can't see them. You have to be clear about goals and targets and outcomes. So we are going to talk about how do you know that you are being clear. There's usually a lack of clarity and directional instruction. Flexibility in the process because before we were coming to work 8 to 5, 9 to 5, whatever your hours were, and now we are not coming to an office; we are just kind of going to the next room or in some cases sliding out of bed and going to the desk next to the bed. Because you don't see them, we are going to discuss making sure that they have the proper tools and the proper technology. We are going

to have to pay close attention, so we are going to talk about the different learning styles, people different work ethics that maybe become more pronounced when you are not seeing them. How do you recognize when a team member is struggling? How do you know when a team member doesn't have ownership, commitment, or feel supported? How would you check on that when you don't see them? And sometimes as a supervisor, it's difficult is to delegate, so you have to figure out what is the best way for to you delegate.

And this one is not to be light, so I wasn't about to leave it off the list -- recognize when there's really a level of incompetence and not hoping it goes away and kind of just handling it and giving you some creative ways of looking at how to recognize and handle that.

And one of the things -- and this is one that I actually bring up when I interview people. I bring up all of these, but I spent time on this one. Okay? That if I am not making a personal connection with them, if they feel like they are distrusted by me or they distrust me, that we have to talk about those things. Because if I say at 10:00 today we are going to have a conference call, everybody please be on Zoom, and you know, they don't want to, you know, we are kind of losing that personal connection. So we are going to kind of talk about how to communicate to make sure that that personal connection is there.

So I kind of took the learning objectives and broke them more down to things that I am really going to talk about, so I am aging myself bringing this up, but hopefully you guys all know who this character is. And he was always being beat up by Roadrunner. And COVID's kind of like the Roadrunner. It hits you, goes beep-beep, and we are off to the races. We've got to figure out what we are doing here.

So with COVID, I don't know if you guys are to Plan Z yet, but first COVID was here and we kind of knew it was here, but it wasn't really bad. Well, and then it kind of got bad and then some places started closing down and then some didn't. And then pretty much everybody was closing down. And then maybe some people were talking about going back. So I don't know what plan you are on. So plan A, B, C, all the way to Z, I don't know what plan you are on, but I chose this picture because it really talks about the flexibility that you have to have when you are trying to figure out this virtual remote thing. Because it's a real thing. Not only are you thrown into this -- and this is where kind of that personal connection comes in. We have to recognize that you guys now have a team who are working apart from each other, who are working from home, who you don't see, and they kind of have their own stuff going on at home. You know? Like my husband's hours at his job changed. I am raising two grandkids who I had to figure out how to do a full-time job and homeschool. So you know, is this temporary? Is it permanent? Do we start going back? What if somebody resigns? How do I hire

remotely? My goodness, I won't even get to see them. So these are some of the things that are in your brain. But also recognize that it's in your team's brain. It's just the unknown. Because the numbers go down, the numbers go up. In the State of Texas, our numbers are climbing back up again. So you know, we are in a state of flux. We don't know.

So let's say you have to interview someone, that you need to fill this position. It's essential. The caseload demands it. Or whatever demands it. So I am sure you guys are all experts at interviewing. But when you interview blindly, it's still a little bit different. And also when you are making the selection, you don't really have the luxury, especially now with COVID, to kind of bring them to your office or meet them at their office or meet them, I don't know, at the church basement. We've done that a couple times. To kind of train them, to welcome them. So you are kind of hiring with a feeling. So you have to go a little bit deeper than that. And you know, through our years, we've kind of figured out that somebody who is pretty successful at virtual work is self-motivated. Trustworthy. You guys can see it on the screen. They can problem solve. They know how to communicate. They've got good time management skills. Kind of what we look for in everybody. But going a little bit deeper, we want to make sure that they are really clear about what we do. What our volumes are. What their role is and what we expect from that role. We need to really dig deep in their experience, so we are asking a lot more questions than we normally would do. And then we might have some tests for them that they either do remotely online or you mail it to them and they mail it back. You want to verify a lot more. Not that you guys don't do these things, but you are literally hiring a stranger that you may not see for months because of COVID. And I always say as a supervisor, I don't know how many people you guys have hired, but when I hire -- and again, I have a very low rate, and they didn't leave because they wanted to -- there's just that feeling that you get. And I am going to give you an example.

We are currently doing the Promoting Opportunities demonstration with Social Security and APT Associates out on the east coast, and we are doing several counties in Texas, and I had to go to San Antonio to interview because I wanted two people in each of my biggest cities. So I was interviewing, and I had this lady that I was going to interview, and she had a friend. I said okay, well, tell the friend to interview too. Well, the person that I intentionally went to San Antonio to interview -- and I met her face to face -- bombed the interview. Bombed. I mean, I can't even express how bad she bombed it. So my colleague and I -- because I always do joint interviews -- were like should we just go home and kind of blow off this interview? We decided no, let's be professional. We are going to go through the interview process, but

we are going to kind of make it short. Well, this girl came in, and she blew our socks off. She was amazing. Rosemary is kicking me under the table, I am kicking her under the table. We are so excited. And she is golden. We just knew it the minute she opened her mouth that this was it. So it's kinds of that feeling. I don't know if that makes sense to you. I almost didn't put it in there, but it made a lot of sense to me because my gut hasn't let me down in a long time.

So you want to get to the hired. You know, the job offer is on the table. So that's kind of if you have to hire somebody. You know, let's hope you don't, and let's hope that this is short-term and we are going to get back to the offices and life will be normal, but I just felt like if you needed to interview, I needed to spend just a little bit of time talking to you about that.

So your leadership and management. I just love these graphs, these charts. So on one side you are instilling and inspiring a vision, and on the other side, you are instilling good operational processes. But the goal, that middle section, is to always get important things done, and if I were to have created this, I would have said "and done well." And the other thing that you always want to do is be the kind of leader that you would follow. And I can say -- my boss isn't on the phone, I can probably say anything even though it's recorded -- I have the best boss in the world. She gets it. She gets it. I definitely strive to be like my boss every day, even though we've already worked together for 21 years. I still feel like I will never attain what she can do. Her common sense and quick thinking is second to none, and I have had my share of bosses because I was married to a military guy. We traveled a lot. So be the kind of leader that people want to follow.

Now, this is where it's going to get dicey, and this is where I am going to say I am an organization, you are a state agency. But that doesn't make it less important. So let's get through the next few slides. That's talking about setting up their office. Setting up your office. You are probably working from home too. The setup needs to off efficiency, they need to be effective. They need to be comfortable. They should have the right tools enough that it decreases their stress because COVID has added that extra layer of stress and whatever is happening in the home.

And the one thing that you cannot remember and that I stress to your counselors is that you have to provide the proper security because there is personally identifying information all over the place, which I may refer to as PII.

One of the things you might be asked or hopefully you've already addressed it is now that they are working from home, are you going to pay for their Internet and their fax line and all those expenses that are now new? Are you asking the staff to absorb it? If you could avoid that at all cost because that does not lead to feeling

good.

Now, I put this slide in just based on the last call we had with the counselor because she said she was working from her bar in her kitchen, and I thought oh, that's where the organization comes in because of the budget. Your office should look like the slide on the left or something similar without the CD-ROM. I noticed that this morning. So this is an old picture I took from the Internet. But if you can avoid it at all costs, please don't work on your kitchen bar or at the kitchen table. Or on a folding table. Try to make them as comfortable as possible.

So I kind of brainstormed a list from when I hire somebody new what I make sure that they have. They need to have a proper desk and chair. They need to have a great computer with great Internet access. They have to have the ability to encrypt documents and emails because of the PII, that personally identifying information. They need a file cabinet that locks for the same reason. I know the State of Texas demands paper files, and unless there's been an exemption to that, they are going to have files. One of the things that we use with WIPA, Work Incentive Planning and Assistance program, is an encrypted flash drive that we keep the information on. Because they no longer have a database through the federal government. So that's an idea. Get an all-in-one, copy, printer, fax. Make sure that the shredder crisscrosses. That goes back to that personally identifying information again. Crisscross shredders can't be taped back together. Make sure they have sufficient office supplies and they have tools to stay organized. That could just be Google Calendar, but maybe they need a date book. I don't know, but whatever it is, they have to stay organized because there's more distractions at home, maybe, but definitely different distractions.

So you know, thinking of it from a state perspective, I understand that budgets are pretty much created and they are in stone. Maybe, I don't know. Your state might be different. Are there any budget items you can switch around to make sure they have the proper tools? Who do you need to contact to advocate to? You know, thinking out of the box, is there something in their office they can take if they haven't already taken it, and maybe they just sign it out or something. I mean, they can't do their job effectively without the right tools, and that is one lesson that we practice with every single person the Imagine. You can be an administrative assistant, you can be a part-time employee, or you can be the executive director. We all have functional, usable, up-to-date, efficient, and working tools. And when something doesn't work, we are able to replace it.

I always put this slide in whenever I am talking to anybody who deals with PII. I am an acronyms person because I deal with Social Security a lot, so acronyms just come flying out of my mouth. So



you have to ensure immediately -- and I can't stress immediately fast enough -- that these guys can protect their paperwork. Be that a paper file, that it's locked, you know, the federal government, every time we have a contract, they want it double locked. The file cabinet is a lock and the door is another lock. There has to be two locks between 20/20 and your file cabinet. I don't mean 20/20 the year, I mean the ones you don't want knocking on your door. So that's paper files.

You want to make sure online files are saved to an encrypted location. Again, that all email correspondences are encrypted if PII is in it. And that it's just not being shared and proper consents are received because you do not want the FBI or 20/20 knocking on your door. And I am sorry if I am aging myself, but when I first started here with Imagine, IRS on an airplane, working for Virginia Commonwealth University as one of the national liaisons for the WIPA program, and I was flying somewhere, and I get this email the night before, carry your computer onboard, and don't forget to take it with you. Because I guess some federal agent had left his computer on the phone and got pretty hacked. So that's not a good thing. So again, make sure they have the right stuff, you have the list on the PowerPoint. Make sure it's working. Advocate, switch the budget around, whatever you have the power to do. But at all costs, make sure that personally identifying information is secured. You wouldn't want your information out there.

Now, I love this slide because the expectation is like oh, yay, I get to work from home. I don't have to come to this office all day. No more meetings. Yeah, then here's reality. And I picked these four slides -- and I didn't explain these to the counselors last month, but I'll explain them to you. So the lady in the upper right just kind of with her headset on with the laptop stirring her food, that was me when I started at Imagine. My kids were grown and gone. I wasn't raising grandchildren. I wasn't married to my husband. So that was kind of me working at home. And then we go to the upper right-hand one. That's when CPS called and gave me David and Lavaya. Lavaya was ten months at the time, and nine months later, David came. So I literally was working with babies on my lap. Then go to the lower left-hand column, and that was me just last month. I had three months of homeschooling a fourth and a sixth grader. And then I always say this is me through retirement in the lower right-hand corner. A little bit older, a little bit thicker, stove on one side, dishwasher on the other, because that's kind of your reality. And I say it all tongue in cheek, but you really have to intentionally be ready to go to work. You have to be organized. You as a supervisor needs to be organized, and you need to help your team be organized. That they have everything done.

I didn't share this with you, but I shared it with the other counselors. When I wake up in the morning, I get my coffee, I empty

the dishwasher, I put in a load of laundry, and I come to work. Now, my kids come in and out, but they've dealt with me all their life, so they kind of know when to stay out. But when I am fixing them lunch, I put the clothes in the dryer. So that way I can stay in my office. You have to intentionally be in your office. So expectations of working at home and reality are two different things.

Now, I made fun of the last slide. This slide I will not make fun of. Imagine spends a lot of time, especially now, on the mental health and the burnout of their staff. Yes, we are not new to working from home, but we are not used to not being super busy because referrals are slowing down. Your staff is facing the new challenge of working from home and figuring it out. Do they have kids? A husband who has been laid off? Are they in financial hardship? What's their personal life going on? Are they feeling the isolation because they are used or they love being around their team? Do their tools not work or they don't have the right things? You know, the fear of the unknown, we talked about that in the beginning. Is this temporary, is it permanent, is it going to be a slow-back, is it going to be a no-back? Just that change. These are real things. So you need to take a deep look at yourself as a manager and say at what point can I help them? At what point can I recognize this? And at what point do I need to go get additional resources?

I have sent one staff of mine to a counselor for three months just to kind of help her. And she is doing great. I was willing to let her go to the counselor as long as she needed to, but she and the counselor agreed after three months that she didn't need to. She figured out some good coping skills, and she is a shining star. So just know don't take a change in behavior for granted because this is hard stuff working from home.

I kind of addressed this a little bit. We are going to walk into communication now because, again, you are not going to sit around a table. You are going to be on a screen or over just a telephone. So everybody, including you, has to plan ahead. You have to be organized. You have to follow through. And we are going to spend some good time here in a little bit talking about your flexibility. And allowing your staff to be flexible. Within parameters. And helping them to come back when they are having a bad day. So we have to figure out when we are talking about expectations, you know, when we are talking about maybe some updates to the resources or federal or state exemptions due to COVID. When we are letting them know you are available. When we are asking them to please practice self-care. We have to be intentionally clear, intentionally clear. We have to make sure that they understand that you are available to them. That they can tell you what the expectations are to get the job done. It takes a team. It takes planning. You can't do the one to the right right now because there is no arms around open other, so everybody is carrying a piece of the team, and everybody is carrying a piece

of the plan. But let's pretend the guys on the right are on the telephone. You can still come up with great ideas. You can still have great successes.

One of the things as a supervisor that I had to learn really fast is I talk to share. And when I am not talking, I am listening to understand. I know that's a saying, I know it's a thing that people throw around all the time. I am telling you with a virtual team, you have to pay attention. You have to watch your tone. Because if I am talking to you like this, they are thinking everybody is in trouble and maybe I just had a bad day with the kids. You have to watch your tone when you are on remote.

You are going to start to see people are grasping what you are saying at different levels because they just have different learning styles. There is no right or wrong to it. It's just different. Some staff might require more of your time. Find those that are thriving, and we are going to talk pretty soon about support teams. Make sure you immediate with them regularly. And I am not going to go over all of these bullets, but this is what your team should look like. It should flow. The one thing I am going to point out is everybody on my team has to contribute. They have to participate. They have to contribute to the conversation. There's no silent partners. If you try to be silent, I call your name.

Keep them up-to-date on any changes because they want to know. Praise more than you correct. And you can see the rest of the list. There's no ones more important, but you know, sometimes when I was first starting out and I would have team calls, two people would talk and five would be quiet. And I thought well, that's not good. It's not building trust. It's not making them feel like they are a part. So we have a simple rule. You don't have to contribute equally, but everybody has to contribute. And everybody has a role in the call. And the calls really follow that same flow. Overall, you just have to trust you have the ability to find the answers. Hopefully you guys have all met your team, you know your team, you already are kind of going into this knowing what their team strengths and weaknesses are. You might be a little bit surprised, but that's okay. Just be ready for it.

You need to trust your team. When people say, well, I don't want them to work from home because I don't trust them, I will tell you -- and I am not the only chief operating officer at Imagine. We have had many, many staff at Imagine, and there's been a very low percentage of them that actually took advantage of it. Most of those were redeemable. The key that you want to do is find their strengths. And I am going to say it again. If you see a weakness, if you think it's a weakness, work on it right away. Don't avoid it. It's only going to get worse. If you feel like somebody is distrusting you, not understanding you, don't avoid it. That's when the individual calls come in that I am going to talk about pretty soon. You never

want to ignore a weakness. And you want to build on strengths.

What's different from seeing somebody face to face where you can keep kind of a very professional distance from them -- some of you do, some of you don't, there's no right or wrong answer. But when they are remote, even before COVID, know their kids' names. Know their husbands' names. Know their birthday. You need to develop that close bond. Every phone call now, I go around the team and individually, they need to tell me how they are doing and how their family is doing, and then I share how I am doing and how my family is doing. You want them to know that you care.

Now, here's one. And if you notice here, I put "HINT: So will you." You need to practice more grace and patience than you ever did face to face. Because people are going to wake up in the morning and not get started. 21 years later, it still happens to me. I don't want to go in the office. It's usually when I am writing an RFP. Or writing a proposal for an RFP. But there are days when you just can't get it together. So don't hover. That's okay. Because you know what? You are going to have those days too. So look at overall performance. Don't hover. Don't check if they are in the office at 8:00 and check if they are still there at 4:59. This isolation is a real thing. You need to watch for it. You need to support them through it. And having a bad day, even having a couple bad days, there's nothing wrong it. The key is not to stay there. So you have to just give grace. Be patient. Including with yourself. And it's the overall performance, it's not the day-to-day. If my boss looked at my overall performance, I would have been fired. But my -- my day-to-day performance. My overall performance is great. So that's what you need to do because my team's performance is great.

I love this picture because literally, supervisors are the frame of your puzzle. So in the middle, you have your staff, your budget, your outcomes, your services, your participants, and you've got to put it together. So you need to stay focused. What is the team goal now that they are remote? And then what's the individual goal? Maybe Sandy's struggling. But you are going to be talking to everybody individually. You are going to have a team meeting, and they are you are going to talk to them individually because some people won't share on a team.

Implement a system and monitor it. And here's the key -- here is a key thing I was sure my boss was wrong, so I went and did it my own way, and I regretted it within the first six months. Do not let the staff each have their own tracking system. There's one way to track. There's one place to document. And there is one report format. Because back in the day when I was doing this and I asked somebody to send me their tracking system, I got everything from a one-sheet PowerPoint to a 15-page Word document. NO!!! It was useless to me. One way. Make sure you identify the dates, and because you don't see each other face to face, don't send out a

reminder saying do not forget. You know, it's hey, sweet reminder, don't forget that the monthly report is due or whatever it is. If you need to go over caseloads, documents, spreadsheets, if you need to do any online training with your staff, where PII, personally identifying information is, make sure that site is secure. I am sure some of you have heard stories about Zoom. If you lock the Zoom before -- once everybody's in, you are not going to get the stuff that's been popping up on Zoom. So know your targets. Be able to clarify your expectations. And leave time for questions. Again, talk to teach; listen to understand. So make sure that you give -- whoops, I went the wrong way. Why is this going the wrong way? Oh, because I pushed up. Ha, see?

All right. So your new product is your remote staff, and I am not going to go over this because it's the same thing I have already told you. When you are hiring somebody, just know even your tenured staff have to display these behaviors to be super-duper productive, but remember the last one that's bold and underlined, that everybody is wonderfully perfect. So this lady in the picture is probably working and doing an amazing thing while her daughter is there chewing the phone line. Nothing's perfect, especially when you work from home.

The one in the middle and the one to the far right are probably me on more days than I would want to admit. Okay? So just know none of these pictures are wrong. These are just pictures of what your staff could be looking like. Or heck, what you want to look like. Because this is some tough stuff.

So you will notice on your PowerPoint that one line is not red, but I made it in red today because I wanted to make sure that I took a breath and I spent some time here because I promise you, through COVID, as long as they are working from home, the number one thing you can do is be flexible -- to yourself, to your team. On the hours you expect them to work. You know, I am of the thought that if you can get your job done, I don't care if you work 12 hours one day and 6 hours the next or you can just get it all done in six hours. We are all salaried. So what's your flexibility? Remember, everybody has their own distractions at home. That's important.

You know, I picked up the phone one day, and one of my staff called me and said I need to be off today and probably tomorrow. My husband died last night. Yeah. Yeah. Or my other staff who called me recently to say my son and brother work at the prison, and there's now 500 COVID cases, and they are being tested. I am not doing good today, so I am going to take off if that's okay. Yes, of course that's okay. Yes, of course, that's okay. Okay? But what's in red has done more good than anything else I, as the person responsible, as the supervisor, could do, and that is implementing a 1:1 peer support system. I talk to Rosemary. My support system is my boss Noreen. So even I have a support system. Before for my team, the team is

broken up into 1:1. They talk to each other. I assign the time. They are flexible to do it as long as it's within that day because one calls on Monday, one calls on Tuesday, one calls on Wednesday, then our team call is on Thursday. So every day somebody is putting their eye on somebody on the team, and then on Thursday we see the full team. I am not a part of the peer support calls. I am not their peer. I am their supervisor. I have seven staff on one program, so I couldn't break it up evenly, so I took my most tenured staff, and she sits in on all three calls. Not as the supervisor, but just as an extra peer. I am not a part. I don't ask what happens. I don't ask what happens. They can talk, they can cry, they can yell. It just gives them time to have that peer support that they are no longer getting because they are home and that peer can't come over right now. So I love the "I've got your back!" And that's what it is. You being flexible about their schedule and you providing them an avenue to say things that they might not say to you because they have to get it off their chest. They might tell you that my husband lost his job and now he is drinking or I haven't paid my mortgage in twomonths. They don't want you to know that, but they have to say it to somebody. That peer support has developed many tears, but they are good tears because they are healing tears. I cannot emphasize enough how much you guys need to do this. Call it virtual coffee. Call it the telephone can communication. But support, help, guidance, advise, assistance, love. That's what's on our peer support calls. And by you being flexible, by you being patient, by you offering grace, you are going to get this through -- you are going to get every one of them through this very unknown time.

When I had to support this woman whose husband just died randomly. I mean, it wasn't expected. I mean, I was like you can take as many months off as you need. And she didn't, of course, but I still talk to her regularly. I sent her cards. We sent her flowers. We sent her cookies. You have to make it personal. You have to be flexible. You have to have grace. You need to let the team talk to the team. Keep your nose out of it. And I mean that with love.

So technology. Whoo, technology! I am not going to waste a whole lot of time going through this. You can see the slides. But you definitely want to put your eyes on your staff, not to see what they are up to; to see how they are doing. You want to have a place to share tools. Where am I sharing these documents that they need? Is it encrypted? Try to limit chat rooms and emails. Try to call as much as you can. Make sure there's always a line of communication, that they always have that link to talk to. Because this is new.

Here's just some of your options. I tell you at Imagine that we use Zoom Meetings, evidently, because we are here now. We use GoToMeeting. We use Microsoft Team. We have used the Cisco Webex with some of our funders. I am not a fan of Skype, but that's just

my personal thing. I have never used Slack, so I don't have a comment. But we also use both of the sharing tools of Google Docs and Google Drive because we are always writing proposals. We have an encrypted website where we talk about like our VR referrals or our WIPA referrals or our pod referrals. Everything is secure that needs to be secure. That's the point. You want to make sure it's secure. You want to make sure it's shareable because that's important.

I just fell in love with this. I have no idea why this is on here except I liked the picture, so I am just going to say don't have the desk look like this because if you can recognize any of those things, you are as old as I am.

(Laughter)

Anyhow, so supervising remotely. You also are responsible for outcomes, so you've got case reviews. You've got peer reviews. You are tracking outsourced services such as vendors, assessments. You have invoices going out. You have invoices coming in, payments going out. You've got a lot of moving wheels. Some of them affect your staff, some of them are yours personally. You need to figure out a system that works for you. You need to determine what quality assurance is based in our new things. Make sure the staff have the tools for it. Do ongoing training. Do it consistently as far as following up and offering feedback back. They need consistency or they are going to look just like this guy right here.

The other part that we talked about that I was going to talk about last is making sure you have that true team feeling. We are together alone, so we have to be mindful. We have to make an extra effort to solicit their ideas, stay connected, be flexible, praise and recognize, be open. And I would also add to this keep them informed on what the future is looking like. Keep them informed. Don't wait till you have the final answer. Some people need to know the step-by-step. Maybe you do that in individuals if you have people that you know absolutely can't handle the step by step because it causes more anxiety. That's you knowing the team. Talk about nonrelated work topics. Again, keep the team informed. Get everyone on your team involved. Remember birthdays, special occasions. When's their anniversary of being hired. Maybe you don't have it in the budget to send flowers, but you could send a card or a note. Don't send an email. Again, that's planning. Anything that helps them feel special and that they are part of the team. I don't have it on here, but I am going to say it again -- everybody participants on the team call. Everybody has an individual call. Because if you think Sandy's doing fine and you don't need to talk to her because you are kind of busy, well, maybe Sandy's not fine this week and you are going to miss it. Individual calls. Because it's a team.

And then I am just going to say phew! I went through a lot of

important responsibilities you have. I am sure I missed a ton. One of the things I know is I have confidence you guys got this. This is general. You guys still have to deal with the state part of it, all those rules and stuff. I didn't go there. I tried to keep this manageable over both organization and a state agency so that you guys can support your staff but also remember to take care of yourself. If I don't take care of yourself, you are not good to anybody. I don't care if you are brand-new at this supervising. I don't care if you've been around forever, you are older than me -- which is doubtful. This is tough stuff. So be kind to yourself. Like I said, it's okay if you can't focus. It's okay if you are unproductive too. It's okay if your child or husband or mother needs you. The key is to not stay there. Walk away. Take a shower. Whatever. Give the kids the attention they need for 15, 20, 30 minutes, an hour, whatever. Call somebody to help you refocus. That support is important.

You know, I look at this NOPE girl, and I think when the riots -- I am not getting political, but when the riots hit after being isolated for three months, that was kind of me for a day. Nope, can't do it. Can't do it. But that's okay because here I am and I am trying to be productive. Because when you take care of yourself, there you are. You are juggling 100,000 things, and you are just like can I help you? While all these other things are in the air. And you are really showing the super heroes that you guys are. So know that I think you are super heroes. I know the people in Texas are super heroes because we adore you guys at state VR.

In closing, explain, clarify, repeat. Train, train, train. Give them supplies now. Make sure they are effective. Communicate, communicate, communicate. Support, support, support. You can read this. But the last one: Breathe! It's a whole new way of supervising.

This is a we thing. I use today say this to my biological kids growing up. This is a we thing. So thank you so much. I hope I am on time. It looks like I am even four minutes early. It has really, really, really been an honor sharing some of my tricks of the trade in supervising remote. So I think now Beth is going to take us into a Q&A.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Yes, that's correct.

>> SANDY SMITH: I am ready.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Thank you, Sandy. And before I jump into Q&A, just a couple of quick notices for folks. First of all, I am having tech issues today, so if you get some close-ups of my fingers it's because I have had to switch to my phone, so I apologize in advance.

>> SANDY SMITH: That's why my screen is not on.

(Laughter)

>> BETH GAERTNER: Yeah, but people are just kind of stuck with my fingers today.



(Laughter)

Also, if you are in need of the CRC for today's webcast, Heidi is going to post into the Chat box the link for the steps to request that CRC. You can also find it on our webcast page within our website, and our website is [projecte3tc.com](http://projecte3tc.com). Additionally, you will receive an email tomorrow about these questions. If you have any questions about the CRC or the CRC process, please feel free to email us at [Projecte3tc@Gmail.com](mailto:Projecte3tc@Gmail.com). Again, if you have questions, email us, [Projecte3tc@Gmail.com](mailto:Projecte3tc@Gmail.com). That's my quick note about CRCs. Terry did mention that the process should be faster moving forward, so thank you so much for sticking with us.

>> SANDY SMITH: Can I ask you a question before we start with the questions, does Beth need me to start sharing the screen? I am sorry, Beth, you are Beth.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Yeah, if you stop sharing your screen, they will be able to see both of us without having to switch the view.

All right. We are going to just jump into questions here. Again, sorry about any finger close-ups. All right. Sandy, the first one comes from Lawrence, and this question is asking about communication with teams and individuals. So should we touch base with our team daily individually, or as a team to see how things are going or continue meeting weekly? So I guess the question is should it be individual, team, how often, things like that?

>> SANDY SMITH: Yeah, I think it really depends on the makeup and number of your team. I have small teams. I've got several projects but small teams of each one. So what I do -- because remember, we are in this for the long haul. What I do is I have a weekly call with every team member on Thursday at 9:00. That time doesn't change. Okay? And then they do their peer support calls at 9:00 Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, but I am not a part of that. And when I meet with everybody individually is on Fridays and Mondays. And why Fridays and Mondays? Because I just had a call with them on Thursday. So I picked up on nuances of maybe they are not doing good. Maybe I could tell by their face they didn't understand this new thing. But I didn't want to call them out in the team. So I kind of hope that helps. It's really a feel thing. But like I said, there are certain support times that I don't touch. I don't schedule anything else for the teams during their quiet time with their team. Always on Thursday. My teams vary on times on Thursday. And then Friday and Saturday, I spend a lot of time talking to individuals. Some calls are 10 minutes, some calls are an hour. It depends on how much support I am giving. I hope that helps.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Yeah, and I know everyone is different, so it depends on how many people and exactly the makeup of their teams.

So Sandy, we have a couple people that actually popped into the Chat, and most of them were asking questions about paying for equipment. So you did talk a little bit about people setting up their

home offices and, you know, like I, for example, am at a bar in my basement, so that's not idea.

>> SANDY SMITH: Yeah, you are at a literal bar, though, which makes me very jealous.

(Laughter)

>> BETH GAERTNER: So the question is do you have any suggestions or ideas for how to pay for that? A lot of people are working on restricted budgets or there's the question of is this just a temporary thing, so should we worry about changing setups, things like that? So do you have any suggestions about how to pay for these kinds of things or how people should approach that issue?

>> SANDY SMITH: Yeah, and again, if you remember, I prefaced this by saying we are an organization. You guys are state agencies. So how you buy things are different. I just go out and buy it because I am an organization. My funders pay for it. You guys are in a different boat, and it's an unexpected boat, so the budgets are probably set in stone.

I really -- if you don't have the money in your budget and you cannot move money, I really think the computer, the security, and a comfortable place to work and encryption are things that are a must or 20/20 will be knocking on your door. I say that to be funny, but I am deathly serious. When I interview people, I ask them: Do you have a door that locks where you will be working? Because I can give you a file cabinet that locks. So some of your options are advocate. Advocate to the higher-ups. I am sure you have bosses who have bosses who have bosses. But been that strong, proactive one.

The other thing too is get permission to see if you can tag the furniture and stuff, if it's not already, and figure out if somebody's got a pickup and can take the desk and chair. I mean, I don't know. Maybe you are working in cubicles, but on the last call, somebody worked on a bar in her kitchen. Her neck hurt. Her back hurt. I mean, everything's hurting. Of course it is. Because it's not an ergonomic place to work. So I don't have one because this is out of the blue and you guys are a state organization. The best thing I can do is I know here in Texas, Texas is making a lot of exceptions to their rules. Let's see if we can make an exception to some budgets.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Thanks. This one is kind of in a similar vein, this next question. It says: Due to COVID, my staff was placed on remote work with only a laptop. It took weeks for all staff to have VPN access and work out all the kinks with their Internet providers. And more recently, all of my counselors have cell phones, but the secretaries do not. We definitely lack in equipment. Looking at our data, we see that our production goals are very low, and administration sees this as our staff not producing and gives us feedback that working remotely is not working. How can I better support my staff knowing they are doing a good job but the production

is just not telling us such.

>> SANDY SMITH: Okay. So I am assuming that this person is still on the call. So I would like you to answer this question, then I'd like to come back to your question. Do you send a written report to your supervisor, or is that supervisor just looking at numbers? And then I'd like to come back to that, Beth, if I could.

>> BETH GAERTNER: That question came from an anonymous attendee.

>> SANDY SMITH: Do you want me to just try to -- okay. Let me just throw this out there.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Wait, I think they already responded, Sandy. It says looking at numbers

>> SANDY SMITH: Oh, Yeah, that doesn't work. What I would do, when I worked at a mental health/mental retardation -- sorry for the old term, that is what they called it then -- in Abilene, they looked at numbers too, but they didn't have COVID. What I did is every month or every two weeks, I wrote my boss a letter or email, depending on which decade it was, about why my numbers are low. Sir, I know my numbers are low. Here are the reasons why it's not working. So he either needs to lower the expectation or help you find money. But we work with people who need us. To me, we are an essential worker just like everyone else because people with disabilities are depending on us to do this right. So numbers don't work during COVID. Numbers don't work during COVID. As I said up front, our production numbers are way down. You know what I am doing for staff? Giving them vacation because they got nothing to do because we don't have referrals. You need to take it upon yourself to write letters, emails, friendly. You don't have to be mean, but you do have to offer direct facts about what they don't have to do their job.

I hope you are not from Texas.

(Laughter) or send me a private email. I will help you.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Thanks, Sandy. The next question comes from Amy talking about when you mentioned earlier those peer-to-peer interactions and those partnerships that you really highlighted as being really important. So the question is do you assign those partnerships or those pairings?

>> SANDY SMITH: I do, and thank you, Amy, because that is great. I am sorry I forgot that. Before COVID -- and I am sorry, I am not going to try to use this acronym. As I said, we work for Social Security. We've got lots of contracts with Social Security to do benefits planning. And we write what's called a benefits summary and assistance analysis. Okay? I screwed up that acronym. But it's a BS&A. So before COVID, we already were in teams to review each other's benefits letters. We'll just call them that. So we already had teams established. But when I developed those teams, I put somebody strong with somebody still learning or who learned different. I don't put two who are learning together, and I don't put two strong ones together. So yes, you want to assign the teams

because you want it to be complementary. And you need -- don't assign two unempathetic people together. Because if somebody is like I didn't pay my mortgage this month and somebody says what does that have to do with VR, that's not a lot of team support. Luckily all my team has that empathy. I would be in charge of assigning the teams.

Then if the teams don't work -- because I have shifted the teams around -- but you are kind of in charge of who talks to who. Don't put two people who love you together. Then they have a chance to say Sandy was awful today on the call. Assign and then stay out of it.

>> BETH GAERTNER: The next one, Sandy, is just a comment from John. He says please do more supervision education. There is such a need for it, and you do it very well.

>> SANDY SMITH: Oh, my gosh. Thank you. I am telling my boss because I pretty much mocked her because she is very good at her job, so I will tell her now I am very good at my job. Thank you so much for the compliment. And my grandkids haven't busted in yet to say they are hungry for lunch, so we are doing good.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Yeah. Maybe we can get through them all before they do.

>> SANDY SMITH: I am good. They have already been warned.

>> BETH GAERTNER: The next question is can you talk about the questions you pose in the weekly staff meeting that spark conversation and engagement with the team?

>> SANDY SMITH: Sure. Okay. So number one, we go around the table. I think I said this during the presentation, so apologize for being redundant, everybody has to say how they are doing. First of all, everybody has to be on a camera. Is that against the law? They can sue me. Because I am not asking them to be on the call for an hour. You know? You can go off the call or only show your picture when you are talking, but I need to see you, and they know why. I have explained why I need to see you. I have no resistance. So how are you doing? How is your family doing? Everybody every week sets a small goal, and they kind of talk about that goal. What are some barriers that we can maybe help them with? What are some success stories that they can brag about? What do they need as far as their equipment? And some suggestions of what's not working now that we are under this COVID thing. You know, they often talked about the number of referrals. And is that okay? Is management mad? Does that sound familiar? That our numbers are down. You know, sometimes they just want reassurance. And then oftentimes they'll ask me have you spoken with Social Security? Have you spoken with APSE? Have you spoken with the state VR? Are referrals going to go back up? So it's kind of the same categories that I put on the PowerPoint.

I do not let the call go over an hour. If I need to do a training,

I may substitute that call for a training call. I never have a team call and then go into training. Nobody can listen that long. Nobody can listen that long.

Next.

>> BETH GAERTNER: All right. Next one is wondering about Wi-Fi. Tammy asks with everyone working from home and whether that's new or they have been, does the company provide the Wi-Fi?

>> SANDY SMITH: We do. We do. Even if they had Wi-Fi before you sent them home, because they are using their Wi-Fi for your business. You know, we have to install because of security fax lines. We need a land line for our fax machine. Nobody who works at Imagine has a home telephone anymore, so nobody had a land line. So Imagine installed the land line, bought the fax machine, and pays for the monthly charge to have that line. And we pay for their Internet.

>> BETH GAERTNER: This is just a follow-up question for me personally. Do you pay the entire monthly Internet bill, or do you pay a percentage of it?

>> SANDY SMITH: If I were the state, I would say we would pay the percentage because I understand the state is stricter than we are. Imagine pays all of it. And we provide a cell phone where we pay all of it, but we don't restrict personal use of it because it's unlimited. It doesn't really matter. It's not like the cost is going to go up.

Can I say one more thing? Going back to the anonymous person who I hope isn't from Texas? Because I just thought about it. When you were talking about finding money in the budget because you sent them home with a laptop or whatever it was, I don't know how state VR does it. I don't even know in the state of Texas, so excuse me if I am talking out of turn. But if you paid them mileage to go visit with consumers or vendors or whatever, maybe that money could be freed up to pay for some Internet. So you know, looking at those expenses that are no longer expenses. Like my financial officer called me yesterday and said, okay, the budgets are now screwed up because you are not doing any mileage. You are not doing any postage. It's like I know we have no referrals. So can that money be used for those things? Because were they paying the bill before COVID? Yes. But as a supervisor, you have to say but we are benefitting from that. You are benefitting from that.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Sandy, just so you know, I did control to the bottom, and they did reply that they are not from Texas.

>> SANDY SMITH: Oh, thank God. I am so happy.

(Laughter)

Sorry, I probably should be more professional.

>> BETH GAERTNER: No, that's all right. Oh, shoot, sorry.

>> SANDY SMITH: Thank you, Beth. Now I feel right at home.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Yeah, perfectly timed.

(Laughter)

The next question comes from Angie. They are asking what is 20/20? You mentioned it with the FBI.

>> SANDY SMITH: Oh, you are so young. Bless your heart. Back in the day, Barbara Walters and some other people, it was kind of an investigative one-hour show, and it was called 20/20. 20/20. In other words, 20/20 vision. Okay? And they would always investigate corrupt things. And when the government official left his laptop on the phone, there was literally a picture of 20/20 knocking on his door. And so because I was new to virtual offices, that sticks with me. So I am sorry because I know this is the year 2020, and I know that I am old and I need to quick using old references. But yeah, 20/20 was just a show where they did investigative reporting when people broke the law. So sorry.

>> BETH GAERTNER: I feel like it might still be on. I am not positive, but it might still be on.

>> SANDY SMITH: Is it? Now we have 24-hour news, so who needs 20/20?

(Laughter)

>> BETH GAERTNER: This next one is something that I have noticed a lot, you know, not just with people in VR, but just generally. It comes up with my husband as well. Suggestions when you know team members are struggling but they are also voicing a lot of frustration about meeting overload. Like there's been a lot of meeting overload lately.

>> SANDY SMITH: And the first thing -- because this question has come up to me, especially with new staff. They will be like oh, so you like are checking in a lot. I ask them why? Why do you feel that this is too much? And if they tell me that they are busy, you know, that they have calls that they need to do, they have intakes that they need to do, they have these benefits letters that they need to get out, whatever it is, I don't not do the call, but I listen to them, and I do maybe a 10- or 15-minute call, and I just talk about the big stuff.

I have done some meetings when we have been inundated before COVID where I sent out my agenda and my comments ahead of time and all we did was discuss my comments. And I solicited their input. That makes a meeting go faster.

If somebody is angry, is that what the word was, Beth? Was it angry? What was the word?

>> BETH GAERTNER: No, you know that the team members are struggling, but they are also voicing a lot of frustration about it.

>> SANDY SMITH: Frustration. Okay. So I would get to the bottom of frustration and struggling because if my 21 years of working at Imagine, nobody's ever actually been fed up with the call. They either feel like they are not heard on the call, they are not asked to contribute, they don't have a role, they are always listening to

the same voices. Because I keep my calls at the same time, they know how to do their schedule. And I have had team members call to say hey, you know, my cat needs to get to the vet right now or, you know, my daughter broke her thumb. You know, there are emergencies, so I am not like a tyrant, like you have to be on these calls. And since we've started the support calls, I would probably be more apt to let people go, like one of the people called me last week and said hey, you know, with COVID, you can't get in to see the doctor, you know, you have to wait, but my doctor just called and can get me in. Do you mind if I miss the meeting? And I say no, but she calls me after the doctor's appointments, I give her the highlights.

But there's an underlying meaning to frustration and whatever those other words were. There's something else going on. It's not the meeting, I promise you. That would be one of those things where I say don't ignore it because you might have an unproductive staff. If they are that frustrated.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Uh-huh.

The next question is actually one that I can answer really quick. Judith, you are asking about training certificates for this training or how to verify with the CRC credit, and yeah, you'll have to figure out it's like a one-page eval, and Heidi I believe already put the link into the Chat box for how to go about getting that CRC credit, and you will get a certification to verify that you attended. If you have more questions about CRCs, feel free to shoot us an email.

All right. And back to you, Sandy.

>> SANDY SMITH: Yay!

>> BETH GAERTNER: How do you communicate with the team remotely if you have a visual or a hearing impairment?

>> SANDY SMITH: Oh, that is a great question that I technically don't have the answer to because I do not have one at this time. I would look at using Relay or one of those other services to see if they can be on the call too. Up to and including put an interpreter in my budget to be available during the call.

>> BETH GAERTNER: And I know we have worked with interpreters on Zoom before, so it is doable. It takes a little bit of logistics and figuring things out in advance.

>> SANDY SMITH: The first thing way do is ask them what they need, though. Some people are lipreaders. So I would start with them asking what they see the solution to the problem is because they know themselves better than I do.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Another question from Amy. Does your staff all share their calendars online with each other?

>> SANDY SMITH: Yes, yes, we do. We have a Google Calendar. We have one for each program. And then we have one for vacation days. So that people know who is taking vacation.

I try not to dictate vacation. You know, if you want to take a vacation, cool. One of the things I did say to my staff recently,

though, is because people who have children -- and I wasn't talking about me, although I could be talking about me -- and who have been kind of homeschooling and self-isolating right now, they are kind of at their wit's end, so if things get lifted before school starts, I'd like to give them the priority to have the vacation first. In case there's hope of going back. And they totally understand that and are taking vacation in September. It's just a matter of communicating clearly on why you are saying something.

>> BETH GAERTNER: And actually, there is a second part to Amy's question. Do you have the ability to edit staff's calendars?

>> SANDY SMITH: We have the ability to edit each other's. That's where the trust comes in.

>> BETH GAERTNER: And I would imagine that's more doable depending on how big your team is and how many people you have.

>> SANDY SMITH: Yes. And like I said, because we have multiple programs, we have multiple team programs. I have a WIPA program, a POD calendar, we have different calendars.

One of the things that's funny about this calendar we share that everyone can edit, you know the first thing they do every January? They go through the 12 months and they make sure that their birthday and anniversary are on it so we don't forget it. So the calendar can be fun too.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Uh-huh.

The next one is what suggestions do you have for supervisors to evaluate their own performance in adapting to a virtual environment?

>> SANDY SMITH: Wow. Huh, now I wish I had Noreen here. Can I tell you -- I mean, and I know you guys can't do this at the state, but I am just going to tell you at Imagine -- I will just say for 21 years, I have not had an evaluation. We don't do paper evaluations. We self-evaluate ourselves, and there are times where I do have to sit down with people, but it's with the intentions of helping them get better, not to fire them. Okay? I do take notes. Let's face it, I am a supervisor, and there are some disciplinary actions that occur. But for the most part, I try to give them the benefit of the doubt.

So hmm, how do I self-evaluate? Yeah, I think for me -- and this is just for me because I'll have to ask the team how they do it -- but I have the calendar online. I also keep a piece of paper because I am 60 almost. I need paper. I am sorry. This virtual stuff is cool, but I need my calendar on paper too. But the other thing I do every day religiously is I take my to-do list, and I add to it, I take it off as I get things done, and every night before I leave, I have my to-do list ready for the next day, and the only thing on my desk -- and I don't really deal with PII too much -- the only thing on my desk is what I am doing first. So it keeps me focused. So I don't know if that answers your question, but kind



of my to-do list tells me that I am being efficient.

Now, as far as the numbers go and the budget goes, our financial officer sends me a copy of my budgets at the end of every month, and she will put comments in an email for me to focus on in case I miss something so that she wants to discuss something with me. So there's that.

As far as the numbers go, I look at the numbers quarterly. You are going to say as supervisors you are crazy. I can't look at my numbers quarterly. Remember, I have had my team -- I think the last person hired was six years ago. So I have that trust. They'll tell me. Also, those sharing documents, I do have a tracking system that was created for each program during COVID so we could track who lost their job, if it was reported to Social Security, did they get through to unemployment, did they apply for SNAP, so that was -- that's a sharing document that they all can go in and see their numbers. And all of my POD people, all of my WIPA people, can see their numbers. And when they write a BS&A -- because we have to write a certain number of those benefits plans -- I decided last year to post those numbers, and I was told not to because it's kind of making a competition, but I knew my team, and I am telling you they even got better. They are actually now number one in the state under POD, which is a demonstration site through Social Security. Once I posted that number, that competition was on. I literally had one person say to me I've got to get seven more in so I can beat Robin. So I mean, I don't know if that answered your question, but I self-evaluate myself by my to-do list, I look at my budget, I look at my numbers, and I talk to my team. And you kind of have that internal clock of knowing if you are organized or not.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Uh-huh. Quick follow-up to an earlier question. Thank you, Laura, for posting this in the Q&A. Regarding the resources and working with people with hearing loss or deafness, it says the National Deaf Center has lots of resources about remote work, also Hearing loss Association of America.

>> SANDY SMITH: Can you say that again?

>> BETH GAERTNER: National Deaf, Center, Hearing Loss Association of America.

>> SANDY SMITH: Thank you. We are coteaching.

>> BETH GAERTNER: That's what's great about these, people chime in with resources, and it's nice to be able to bounce off one another.

(Sorry, this is Beth.)

The next question is how to approach management who is inflexible regarding work time.

>> SANDY SMITH: I am being recorded; right?

>> BETH GAERTNER: Yes.

>> SANDY SMITH: What I want to say but I am not saying is how do they know? Are they going to call them at 8:00 and 5:00? Are they going to know if -- I mean, I don't know how to do that because

I am happy to say that even when I worked in an office, I didn't have an inflexible boss. Again, it goes back to your ability to proactively advocate in a manner that's not threatening to the boss. And that's by just offering facts. It really is, especially when you work from home, it is about the overall number. And they need to understand it's the overall numbers. It's the overall outcomes. It's not the day-to-day. It's not the 8:00 to 5:00. It's 12:30 right now here in Texas, and I don't know where my staff are. But I am also not worried about it. Maybe they are taking a two-hour lunch. I don't know. But I know at the end of the month their work is going to be done. So I don't know how to deal with an inflexible boss except to just advocate. But this guy or girl or woman sounds like you need to do it kindly and, I don't know, just advocate. But you can't -- (deep breath) -- you can't -- mmmm. I am trying to figure out how to say this. You cannot let upper management kill the spirit of the people doing the hard work. If I were you, my main job would be to worry less about my staff and be on that boss to help him understand

You know, I have worked with funders before who are numbers people, and they don't get advocacy for people with disabilities. I literally will spend 90% of my monthly report to them teaching them to advocate. Like they don't care who is on unemployment, but I tell them every month because of COVID. I want them to know. So I am sorry you have an inflexible boss. I know you are probably thinking, well, then my job is going to be on the line if I do this advocacy. But when the team sees you advocating, when the team knows you've got their back, you'll be surprised how hard they work.

>> BETH GAERTNER: And Sandy, actually, on that note, I think I am going to leave it there. There were more questions that we didn't get to, so first of all, thank you, everybody who popped a question into the Q&A. Feel free if you have another one that's come up, go ahead and put it in there. The questions we didn't get to today during the broadcast, we'll email them to you, Sandy, so that you can respond, and we'll post them with the archived webinar so people can still get those answers.

A couple of quick notes I just want to make. Our upcoming webinars, we have a two-part miniseries on June 11 that focuses on reentry, so part 1 is Engaging Partners and Students in the Juvenile Justice System. Part two is Connecting Returning Citizens to Employment Resources. And then additionally we have the final webinar in the Trauma-Informed Care Series on June 18, and that's titled Creating a Trauma-Informed Environment. So if you are interested {OOPS/} registering for the upcoming webinars or you want to go back and revisit this one or the first one with Sandy, feel free to check out our previous webinars and what's coming up on our website, so that's [projecte3.com](http://projecte3.com). The webcast page is where you can find both upcoming and archived. That's also where we will post the

answers to the questions we didn't get to today.

I think that covers all of my housekeeping bases. Sandy, anything else from you want to share before you wrap up here today?

>> SANDY SMITH: This was fun. It's always weird talking to supervisors and telling them how to kind of think about their job, so thank you guys for making it a friendly environment.

>> SANDY SMITH: Yeah, and thank you so much for sharing your expertise. This was great, and I am glad we were able to snag you for multiple webcasts here.

>> SANDY SMITH: Yeah, anytime, anytime.

>> BETH GAERTNER: All right. Well, thank you, everyone. Have a great rest of your day, and we hope to hear from you again in the future.

>> SANDY SMITH: All right. Thank you.

>> BETH GAERTNER: Bye-bye.

>> SANDY SMITH: Bye.

(End of session, 1:30 p.m. ET.)