

## **Welcoming Fathers: Program Environment and Strong Family Partnerships**

### **Part One**

Brandi Black Thacker: Good afternoon everybody, my name is Brandi. We want to welcome you into the first of a series of three webinars which are on the exciting and all-important topic of fatherhood engagement. Now I want to turn it over to one of my most favorite folks. If you've never had the honor to meet David Jones, you're going to really enjoy your time with him today. And he's going to kick us off this afternoon. And so, David, take it away.

David Jones: Okay. Thank you, Brandi. Of course, you know we feel mutually the same way about each other. Hi everyone. My name is David Jones as Brandi said. I'm the Senior Program Specialist and co-lead of the Office of Head Starts Father Engagement Efforts with Kirsten [Inaudible] On behalf of Ann Linehan acting director of the Office of Head Start and my colleagues from the National Center of Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, we'd like to welcome you to our first webinar, Welcoming Fathers: Program Environment and Strong Family Partnerships.

This work is so important to the Office of Head Start's mission to engage families with a specific focus on fathers. We are so excited about this three-part webinar series for a number of reasons. We have a solid team of skilled facilitators with a lot of expertise in this area. But what is even more exciting is we are including for the first time a number of voices you may not be familiar with. Fatherhood champions from across the country. Our champions are advocates, defenders, promoters, and supporters who are fighting for worthy cause, improving outcomes for children and families by engaging fathers and supporting staff in their efforts to do so. Many are fathers themselves, and one of our champions is a mother. And yet they are all familiar with the Head Start Birth to Five Father Engagement Guide, and they have great stories to tell that can support your implementation efforts. So thank you for joining us, and I hope you enjoy the webinar.

Brandi?

Brandi: David, thank you so much. We really want you to be able to see and feel connected to each of the voices that you're going to have, you know, the pleasure to share time with this afternoon. And I have to tell you guys, in all of our preparatory conversations, I have learned so much from the men that you see before you on the screen, including David who you just heard from Office of Head Start. My name is Brandi Black Thacker, and I work for the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. I have the true pleasure of being the Director of Training Technical Assistance and Collaborations. And as David mentioned, we all have a very big heart full of passion for this topic in particular, and just can't wait to jump in. But before we do, I want to connect quickly with both Jermaine and William. You're going to be hearing from them throughout the course of our hour together. And I know, Jermaine and William, we were thinking about the question that we just asked to the group. If you had that one hour of time to spend doing something in the way of us getting to know each other in this virtual community, but we want to give you guys those 2-3 minutes to share a little bit about each of yourselves. And of course, we'll continue to learn more as we go through the conversation. But Jermaine, would it be okay to start with you to say hello?

Jermaine Evans: Sure, absolutely. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Jermaine Evans. And first off, I'd like to thank Senior Program Specialist David Jones from the Office of Head Start and Brandi Thacker from the National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement for allowing me to take part in this

webinar series on fatherhood engagement. I function in the capacity of a volunteer mentor for over ten years now in fatherhood programs for at-risk youth and teen fathers. I've facilitated some workshops centered on the importance of education, self-empowerment, and life skills. I've also participated in panel discussions and represented the programs I've mentored in to discuss workshop content and practical strategies for engaging fathers. Having been a teen father myself, I have an understanding of what it is to negotiate the varying degrees of joy and confusion, as well as proactively educating oneself, being prepared, and having a willing and capable support system to help create a healthy, loving environment for a child. I gained this knowledge mostly through trial and error because some of those important key things I just mentioned, I didn't have consistently or in an adequate supply.

I also was not aware of the institutional supports that were available to me until my questions were heard by someone who wanted to see me succeed in my role as a father, which actually is the catalyst for me wanting to be involved in this type of work. I am fortunate enough to be the father of two incredible young men. My oldest son Davar is 25, and my youngest son Rafael who is 15. Both are naturally intelligent, loving, and caring individuals who continue to motivate me to be a better person and a better father.

Brandi: Jermaine, thank you so much for that. I'm so glad you're here and we're excited to hear more from you through our time. And certainly, William, how about would you like to take a few minutes to say hello to the group as well?

William Scott: Yes. Thank you. Good afternoon everybody. And I'd also like to thank Mr. Jones and Brandi at the National Center for Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. My name is William Scott and I grew up in – I'm sorry. I was born and raised actually in St. Louis, Missouri. [Inaudible] engaged and I moved last year in July to Dallas, Texas where I am the Region Field Specialist for Region VI, so I love that area. I got in the fatherhood – I was back in St. Louis and first I joined the – I began to work for Head Start. And one of the great things about Head Start is they send you off to professional development. And what I've been hearing lately is remember everybody, take the information that you get back to when you go to these professional development meetings, take it back to your colleagues and your peers and your families and your friends. And that's just what I did. I was a young father in Head Start working, and I went to this conference, and there was a man there presenting. His name was Chester [Inaudible] and he's with the [Inaudible] Father Support Center. And so I took that information back because I was like, oh my boys, you know, we're all fathers. So I took it back to Head Start, but I also took it to my friends. And I said, hey guys, here is this information.

Now the funny part here is, you know, I went on about my daily life, and one day I see all my friends get into the car, and I said, wait wait wait. Where are you all going? And they said, we're going to the Fathers Support Center. And I said, what the [Inaudible] So it was one of those things where there was a resource there and I got it, and through the years at the Single Fathers Support Center really helped me to become a man and a father and to grow and to learn. Well, there's Head Start, and then also through Head Start, the Fathers Support Center and my hood began to work together. And we began to do community events and things like that. So we got together. So my path then moved on and I also did a stint with another agency, [Inaudible] Agency, and I began to learn about infant mortality. So I also began to [Inaudible] to bring awareness about fathers and how they can be supportive in trying to help [Inaudible] infant mortality. I have five children. My youngest just graduated from high school and I'm so proud. He'll be attending Howard University, and then I will inherit two wonderful daughters July 1 when I get married. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

[Laughing]

Brandi: William, I love your enthusiasm. You guys can see how you're in for a treat, right? Just, there's such a passion and a belief in what we do, and just an enthusiasm. And I can almost guarantee that it is contagious. So let's see where you [Inaudible] We'll check back in. In that vein, let's transition a bit to the intentionality of the question that we asked you in the very beginning, which is: If you had that one hour of free time, how would you spend it? And you guys have been so generous to kind of share what you would do with that, that little slice of a moment. And I was thinking about sort of setting the context and create an environment to just share ideas about our service to sad fathers. We thought, well, I wonder what would happen if we asked that specific question of individual dads, males and fathers that are important in the lives of our little ones. And there were a few things that came up from that, and certainly William and Jermaine, I want to check back in with you guys about these 'cause you have some specific ideas related to some of these follow up questions. What skills and knowledge do you want to pass on to your child? How do you communicate to your child that you care about them or that you love them? And I'm remembering in our conversation, William, that you gave me a nudge and said, "If we had the chance to create the space to ask questions to fathers of how they want to spend time, they may even say that they want to spend it with each other." And that [Inaudible] conversation and support. Tell us a little bit more about that. [Inaudible]

William: Now I honestly don't believe that, but they do. If you give them the space, and sometimes you have to stop and take a pause and wait and listen, and once they get started they grow. And so what I found is that men love to talk. And when they get together they'll share stories, but the most important thing that they'll do is they'll begin to network, they'll begin to talk to each other about how to resolve conflicts and strategize. And one of the things that is really supportive of men is a strong network. Men need to be around other men to see how to have positive interaction with children, and also that's another network for employment and some other great things. So it's good for men just to be themselves and to relax.

Brandi: William, I think that's so important, and I love what you said about -- Well, there are a couple things here, and this is and you guys feel free in general chat to raise sort of your own ideas, your own celebrations, things that you want to sort of list up for the greater good of the group that you found that really work as you're engaging your fathers. But one of the things that we always go back to, William, in that notion of bringing guys together and creating the space is to, you know, sort of lean on their guidance. And David taught me something a long time ago about really being able to watch and connect with fathers as individuals. And this is a judgment statement on my part, but not in the way that we might accidentally assume or assign stereotype to what all dads may enjoy, what all dads may want to be involved or engaged in. So I really like that you took us to the sort of space of, you know guys actually do really like to talk. [Laughing] Let's create some space to make sure they have the opportunity, you know, to do so.

And I want to add another bullet here as well for you guys to consider as sort of we're thinking through some of these. Another one that we sort of offered up together that could really inform us in a deep way is: you know, how do you really want to participate in your child's early education program? In your child's development? We know you're an expert on where your child is and where he or she is going. What kinds of ideas can we learn from you as a dad about what works or where things get hard? Now -- and Jermaine I haven't forgotten about some of the important conversations that we had. I skipped down to this one on purpose and I'm going to come back. But I wanted to kind of offer here to some of these ideas certainly

I'm sure feel foundational because we come to this work with such a heart and a passion for really being beside the families in a meaningful way. But when we think about doing that with dads, sometimes we have to get specific with our strategies and our ideas, and I think – you know Jermaine, you had mentioned when we were thinking through some of these questions together that the importance of communication and dealing with emotion and processing as a father cannot be undersold. Do you want to kind of talk to us a little bit about the third bullet on communication, and specifically the 'L word'? Love.

Jermaine: Yes, absolutely. I think in general on the lines of communication and the ability to effectively communicate during interactions with fathers and with the staff in any of these programs is very important. Men articulate things in different ways, and one of the most stereotypical things that we tend to observe, just like you mentioned a moment ago, is the way that we want to emote our feelings – want to emote. And being in an environment with other men that allows us the confidence to be able to use that word 'love' in the nurturing way that it should be used and the way that it's expected when taking on that fatherhood role is extremely important. And I can't speak to how important it is enough. Just knowing that you're in the company of other people that society has given this role and this title of father, and there's different levels of expectations and requirements things that allow them to be able to fulfill that role, there comes a lot of conflicting emotions when you're not able to fulfill that role the way that society wants you to. And that say the last part in how you interact with your child, with other people, and society in general. And if it's not in a very healthy way, if it's not done in a conducive way, and you don't have an outlet to be able to express those feelings that may normally not be looked at as being manly or masculine or indicative of being a man, then it – again it tends to cause conflict. And then the conflict within the individual themselves, and also it hinders the ability to have progressive relationships with their children and their other family members and you know, just people in general. So, I think communication is extremely important, but more so importantly, being able to communicate demonstratively about your feelings for your child and how much you care for them and that they know that they have a support system within you.

Brandi: I really like that. There's so much richness in what you just offered, but even in the support system within you, within each other, and sort of that [Inaudible] you know in true partnership, and being able to keep this communication lines open, all these are critical ideas. And William, I think that you want to add here. Is that true?

William: Yes, ma'am. I want to start with how do you – the same question. How do you communicate to your child that you care about them or that you love them? And I just wanted to piggyback on what Jermaine said, just add a little bit to say that men show children how much they love them by how they treat their mothers. I think that's an important piece there that we should understand. The second thing I want to speak about really quick was: what skills and knowledge do you pass on to your chap? We all want to pass something on to our child, and it's about who we are [Inaudible] And for myself, it's "We are Scotts". That's our last name. That's who we are. We value contributing to our community and education. And those are some things I hope that [Inaudible] to think about. To pass along to your children your legacy. That's it.

Brandi: Yeah, I think that's important. And a lot of what you guys said about your legacy. I mean that question really sort of ground in so that if I really had to stop and think about it, that second bullet: What skills and knowledge do I want to pass on to my child? What are the characteristics as you said, William, is that if I'm in your family and I'm a Scott, what are the things that I want my child to sort of, you know

exude in the way of our traditions and in the way of our legacy? And how can I go about doing that in partnership? And with the folks that, you know, we really work alongside in the program.

So I'm seeing that some of you are saying in chat that you feel like these questions could be useful as sort of guiding or probing questions to ask for dads. I think they could give us a lot of really great information to get to know fathers in ways that are specific to how they would want to be engaged. And so we don't have to lean, as a few of you said in chat, on the functions because not every dad is a sports fan or a fishing fan, or we hear over and over, if you allow me to build it with you, I will be there, and you know, we'll absolutely be committed to seeing it through in service of and to the benefit of my little one. I see so many of you giving some insight here of fathers who are active, William I'm looking here in the chat, if you can remember as a very young child that your father who only had a third grade education, couldn't read or write, but made sure that you ate together as a family, and that you would share your day so that you could express yourself.

And to have that bond over a meal and the power of being together and breaking bread at the same time, those memories, it sounds like, are still very vivid for you in the way that they impacted that togetherness. We'll leave these up here and certainly you know you guys can have access to these if you find that they'll be useful. And we'll continue to check in on our, the nuggets and the gifts that you are sharing with us in chat. But we also kind of want to give a little tiny nudge here about what we hope to accomplish in our time together today. Let's focus specifically for this webinar you heard David say at the beginning that this is the first of three that we're having over the next few weeks. And this one specifically is focused on the program environment and how we make our space more welcoming to fathers without ever having said a word. To start, how do we make sure that our physical space is welcoming and that our attitudes and our behaviors, our belief in the reverence of the important contributions of our fathers is honored straight away, even visually?

Then we want to look at some relationship-based practices that support strong partnerships and relationships with dads and fathers. And then we're actually going to hear a little bit about strategies and we call them exemplary practices from fatherhood champions, which certainly you've already heard some of them a couple of times. But we're going to hear a little more as we go along. And with that, we want to start with you continuing, actually, in chat a little bit about how you make sure that in your program, if I was a father and I was walking into your space, how you have intentionally created an environment that supports and honors fathers as they walk in the door. So let's work together here in the chat box where many of you are typing, I can see, and tell me: if I were a father or a male who is important in the life of a child, in your program what would I see that I might resonate with? We're going to take a few comments here in the chat, and then we have a couple other follow up questions here that I'm going to mute just a second to give you a little space to kind of tell us. As a father coming into your front door, what would I see? Throughout your program and your classrooms and your common areas, what comes up for you? Alright, I see several of you are typing. Let's see. Let me see if I can scroll down here. Oh, pictures of fathers and sons bonding, pictures of families in the classroom.

I'm kind of scrolling up and down here. I hopefully can catch a bit of all the gifts that you are giving us. Pictures of fathers and children. Oh, family trees, real pictures of the families, father pictures all over, a volunteer board that displays pictures of our volunteers and several of our fathers. That could be encouraging. Other fathers, family fun night, father-child activities where each child has a picture of themselves with their family in their cubby. That's a great idea. Sending mentions of course, not only dads,

but males. One of the ideas of having center fathers on the wall instead of generic posters. Me too, Scott. I think that's an excellent idea. I just saw an idea scroll by, ask for room dads to sign up in addition to room moms, even you know that's a great point on our forms, making sure that we all of our forms, all the things that are just kind of created in the proper course of the function of the program, making sure that they're not 'momma-centric'. Michael, you're saying dad and kid night, math night, cards and dice, science night. Let's see.

Let me scroll back up a little bit here. Oh yea, pictures of activities Christina offers of fathers and their dads, pictures of the adults interacting with the children. I'm seeing happy, smiling faces to greet them. There is a caveat here that I want to bring up, and it looks like a couple of you might have mentioned it. We are talking about the positive pieces of what we can do to create this safe, welcoming environment for males, dads, and fathers. I'm sure you all have an example in your mind of a time when you went into a space when you saw an image that may not have been welcoming to you as an individual. I'll give you an example. I haven't met everybody on the line, I'm quite sure, but I am 6'2", so I'm a pretty tall lady. So when I walk into a program, I'm pretty much like a dad's eyesight line. I remember doing work in a program once where I came in and there was a picture of a dad that had a red circle around his head and a slash, and it basically said: does he owe you child support? Go get him. It gives me chills to this day because certainly I know the folks in the program were well intended and in support of the mothers who may have been struggling with, you know, some specific issues. Imagine the accidental withdrawal that happened just on site without ever even having the opportunity to speak to fathers. Imagine what happens if we don't intentionally think about how we create a space and it looks like several of you are bringing that up here in chat with not only these positive ways that we're making connections and meaningful [Inaudible] with dads, but specifically how to be aware and make sure with our own confirmation that we have purged our environment of things that might feel sensitive or even offensive. It looks like some of you are even kind of thinking about that right now, thinking about what pictures you have available for fathers with their children, and really making sure that everybody is raised up in a meaningful way.

Let me see. Let me scroll just a little bit more 'cause I have a second one here that we want you guys to think about. Michael said [Inaudible] of dads, family friendly, easy to read books available, William offers father game night. We have oh let me see, I see a dude's barbecue, donuts with dad. So all kinds of things that they can see. I'm going to pause for a second here and put up a couple more 'cause it looks like you guys are pushing me to go a little deeper here. What would I hear? And how would I feel? Let's kind of look at a couple of these as well. I'm going to give you a bit of space to type. And certainly Michael is giving us to ask staff sort of just like a little bit about how we treat women when they come in, and then give that same reflection to your interactions with fathers. Is it the same? What could you do to really make sure that your efforts with dads, you know, both are equally as connected and comfortable. Alright, let's see. You hear everyone being included in conversation with the same tone, Kimberly offers. She would want them to hear children sharing their daddy and me oh Lorena, a daddy and me journal with the rest of the class. That's exciting. And I was going to say, William and Jermaine, I know that you guys want to also add in here. So how about that we pause for a second. I'm going to check in, Jermaine, with you first to kind of contribute. There was another little goal up here about how could you tell me about the value of engaging with my child? So one of the things that we're going to teeter with you know before we move on we want to collect more of your thinking in chat. But Jermaine, when you sort of looked at this slide and you were thinking about your journey and your experience as a father and now a mentor, what kind of comes up for you when you think about the sensorial experience of see, hear, and feel?

Jermaine: What resonated with me especially with a common dad, Michael [Inaudible] spoke to is something that I definitely saw as being an aid to the fathers and feeling more comfortable within themselves and within the space when he mentioned about having the pictures of the fathers with their kids and the exclusion of things like the domestic violence, DV posters and things of that nature like you spoke to before with the face, with the father's face circled and the slash through it, talking about child support. We want to have – we want to try to create an environment for them where they feel comfortable because it's not easy to be able to speak to things of such high emotional value to us like our children. And in order to do that, at least in the initial stages, to help create that, we should try to foster an environment physically as well as emotionally, and with the physical presence of the people like the presenters, facilitators, and administrators in the program, having the smiles and the kind faces and the good vocal tones like some of the others have mentioned specifically in the comments. But there are certain aspects to a physical environment that could be conducive to that.

So in my experience, I find that when an open floor plan for the space is a good idea because men, as we said before in some of the planning meetings and William can speak to this as well if he so chose to – we like to have space. We need our personal space, and maybe a little bit more than that, to make sure that we feel comfortable. So having that little bit of space between us is a good starting point. So with an open floor plan, if you have furniture that can easily be moved so that you can make adjustments depending on how whatever it is, the workshop or the presentation that's being done, is being conducted to increase the level of participation. So I've found that having conference room style seating where there's elongated tables and the fathers are sitting across from each other and next to each other, being able to look at each other as they're speaking, and seeing these varying thoughts they have about how they feel and what they're going through and about their life situations makes it a lot easier for them to engage not only each other, but also the presenter and the facilitator. At different times, the tables and the seating were set up in a U shape or maybe three sides of a square with the presenter standing towards the front or the middle, or even at times sitting with the fathers. And I think that was something that was key because it made everybody feel as if they were equal. Now obviously there's an authoritative figure that's inside the room that's providing, you know, information that they should be paying attention to and allowing each other to actually speak. But when that person assumes the role, assumes the position, rather, as if they're part of the group because the dialogue and the learning, it moves both ways. It's not just one person in that authoritative position deciding what you should learn and how you should learn and potentially presenting an issue where there could be value judgments where the fathers are being talked down to, because they're obviously there because they want to be there. And they want to learn. They want to be better people. They want to be better fathers. So having an open floor plan, like I said before where the seating and the area can be adjusted to suit the topic of discussion, and also allow for a better opportunity for interaction between the fathers and the facilitator would be a good idea.

Brandi: Yea, Jermaine. These are so important. And I see that you're getting a lot of support in chat with folks agreeing with even just the intentionality and the thought that it takes to really physically create a space that not only feels welcoming, but feels conducive to the dialogue, you know, that we want to have with and beside dads. I want to do two things here quickly. William, I want to check in with you on this. And then I've seen a couple of questions. I want to create some space for any of our panelists to answer. So we'll pause here for William and then I'll check back in.

William: Thanks, Brandi, and I'll try to be brief because a lot was covered, which was good. But I've seen some things in the chat, which was father friendly books and family trees, and one of the comments I saw

was asking for room dad. And one of the things is that men need to see men at every level working, having positive interactions with children. So I like the idea of having real pictures of real fathers engaging with their children. The other was we talked about the domestic violence poster. I get that, and one of the things about it is strength based resources. So you can have those financial resources in there, legal resources, GED education, parenting relationship strengthening, employment training. These are some things that would probably be good. And as Jermaine says, space is crucial because sometimes you get and you can get that champion father, everybody has that. Most of what you see is dropping off and picking up. So you get that champion and you allow him to be your ambassador and give him that space and the men will come. And if they don't, you just keep chugging at it. This is not the easiest population to work with, but we're not going to give up on them.

Brandi: Yea. Well said, William. And I – well there's so much to add here with the ideas that we're making connections. Exactly what you mentioned with the strength-based resources, and taking a step back to really assess the program. Have we done that in a minute? Are we really reflecting the current set of families that statistically fathers in this conversation that we are partnered beside today? And we do have so many things to juggle, but these are the pauses that we get to make in relationships beside our fathers that really make a difference in the long run. There are a couple of questions that have come up in chat, and there's one in particular that we sort of want to go back to. And David, I wonder if you would like to jump in here. There's a great question about how we respond or engage, encourage fathers to participate, specifically when they're the breadwinners. What would you say to that?

David: Thanks, Brandi. Yea, that was Lynette Rodriguez, I believe. You know, my gut reaction and response to that is that fathers are so much more. I think when you're doing effective professional development with staff and you're getting them to be a little bit more sensitive to the way in which they engage fathers or ways in which they want to improve engagement, they need to see fathers or they need to create opportunities to help fathers expand their definition of their role. They're educators, they're mentors, they're protectors, they're teachers, they're advocates, they're spiritual healers. Yes, providers is one of those roles, but it's not the most primary role. Because that's not, you know, where they spend most of their time. In fact, a lot of times when we're sort of engaging these families, they're on the trajectory of sort of finding careers and completing education and getting to a place where they can be, you know, providers, but they're doing other important things as well.

Brandi: David, it looks like your comments and your response relate to several other comments, you know, that we saw in the chat here. Amanda, I'm thinking about yours. And we'll try to pull a little bit as you continue to give us comments and sort of share what you're doing and these great ideas and websites. And we'll also try to capture some of those questions as we keep going through some of these ideas and the content, so that we can list up several of these as we go. So thank you so much for that, David. You're welcome. What I'd like to do is transition a little bit because so much of the dialogue you're offering us now, like questions around: well how do we really engage our fathers sort of in their child's development? How might we honor the different ways that men and women come to the dialogue. And sort of – how do we even start to begin the exciting conversation around why it's important to engage fathers in the first place? What we've done here is just put a liter I mean we could do a whole day-long session on the research that you could consider about why it's critical to make sure dads are engaged in the life and the development of their child. And side note, even if they're not in the home currently, what we know about science and the research, you know, very, very reminiscent of what you see here on the screen is that



engaged fathers prepare children. It can be for school: stronger cognitive and motor skills; for interactions with their peers: that social emotional and social development; for addressing

challenges: we have improved problem solving skills. And you can see here: children with engaged dads enjoy elevated levels of physical and mental health, are more – look at this confident, curious, and empathetic, and show a greater moral sensitivity and self-control. These are just a sliver of the benefits that we can offer in this dialogue. And I wonder, both William and Jermaine, are there other things that you would add here from your personal journey about what you've discovered in terms of the benefit of your own engagement in the lives of your little ones, or how as mentors and leaders in the field that you've used what you learned to really convey that to other dads?

William: Absolutely. Jermaine, did you want to go first? Go ahead.

Jermaine: Oh no. You can go right ahead.

William: Okay. One of the things that I've learned is that engage early, as early as possible, prenatally, for a deeper engagement with your child and to build that bond, and it will serve you through life. The other thing I've learned is that rough and tumble play that some people don't like, but it's a good social and emotional regulator. It helps the children to understand, hey we're playing. I don't have to kill you if you step on my shoes or if you bump into me. So there are some really good things here when dads become involved and engaged early.

Brandi: So, William, you're saying the earlier the better. And Jermaine is going to add in?

Jermaine: Yes. So sorry [Inaudible] Yes, I definitely agree with what William was stating. And again, just personally, my experience has proven to me that as William said, the earlier you get involved the better. Because the important thing is – I would like to add another piece to that. When it's not only just that you get involved, but also how you get involved. There are a lot of identities and roles that society has placed on people, and the fatherhood role is no different. So when you are a father, and you're taking on that role, and you're trying to teach your child something, they're going to another one of the socialization agents is society itself. So when they start to put this add these definitions and these attributes to the different roles that may be, that potentially could be based on, you know, your social class, your ethnicity, your culture, your nationality. They can sometimes be hindrances to your positive development. So when we're in that fatherhood role, it's up to you as being one of their primary teachers to your child to be more informed about the way society works and what it's going to try to teach your child, so that you can combat that effectively so that they can grow up with a healthy attitude and not have self esteem issues, health issues, cognitive development as you mentioned before. If stigmatization plays a role because of your background, then those are hard things to overcome without the help of your parent, specifically in the role of a father, just like David said earlier, you know. Fathers are so much more than just the breadwinners. They are so much more than a source of financial support. And it becomes really necessary for fathers to become more worldly in their view in how they want to try to increase the likelihood of their child being successful in life by being more aware of what they could be potentially involved in because of their environment, the support systems that are in place, the way that society is actually functioning, and their position in it.

Brandi: Jermaine, you're bringing so many things to my mind. And I can see in the chat box that you've stimulated a little bit of [Inaudible] to around some of the curricula that are available out there, and I

know this is a topic that's really prevalent on the mind of the Head Start community, specifically right now because of the performance standards. It gives us a nod toward utilizing a parenting curriculum. So what we've been hearing sort of as we've been on the road and interacting with programs is that folks are choosing to explore and compare curricula to offer specifically for them. And not stop there.

You know, making sure that they are able to offer opportunities for all families and all family constellations to take part in a curriculum, but they are choosing at least one of a couple curricula. There are several programs we've met that are using more than one time to really honor the constellation and the makeup of the family structures that are within our program. And it just to me I'm wondering about how and what that looks like, and sort of what you guys just [Inaudible] about many ways to connect and honor fathers' connection to their child's development, but also specific to creating the space for them to teach us about their child's development and how they want to be engaged and how they can ask us to build on the great things that they are already doing, you know, with their little ones. So this is great. Thank you guys so much. The chat is so rich. I'm just very, very grateful for all the sharing that you guys are doing today. And just a side note, I want to check with my team off to the side here. There's such richness happened.

We do actually keep track of all of the chat that happens, so if it's helpful to kind of keep that for others for you to review later as well as all these great ideas are being shared, I believe that we can certainly do that. So I'll check back in with you at the end for some confirmation, and how you can find it again if that's been official for you and you're interested. With that, let's look a little bit here at another resource that we created at the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. And some of you may have seen this. We love this resource, and it's helpful in so many ways to really support [Inaudible] families, but specifically for the topic in focus on program environment today. We thought it would be a great idea to bring up our positives, our building partnerships, guide to developing relationships with families. If you guys know this document, and we actually have it. Let me show you where it is so you don't have to run off to the ECLKC to find, but we do have the link here for you on the slide. But on the left hand side of your screen in the middle pause, there is a little tiny box that says 'Resource to download', and you have two there. So if you click on the phrase that says 'Building Partnerships', it's going to open up the button at the bottom that says 'Browse to', and it will take you right away to that link on the ECLKC. So if you don't know this resource or you haven't seen it before, you really want to explore it more deeply or print it for you and your colleagues and your families, it's right up there for you for free to do. There's also the father engagement guide that's there as well, so if you guys want to go to those on the left hand side, you click them individually and click 'Browse to'. It'll take you to those on our website, and you'll be able to reach them there. But one of the things I want to guide us to, the two really big concepts, ideas within this purple book are related to attitudes and practices. What you see on the screen before you here are the four specific attitudes that we believe must be embedded in your wiring, in your toolbox, for engagement beside any family. But for the purpose of this conversation, we have taken out the word 'family' and we've inserted 'fathers'. So we want you to kind of try these on for size 'cause a lot of these are not new or different based on how we interact with families. Let's take a look. Fathers are the first and most important teachers in the lives of their children. They are partners with a critical role in their families' development. They have expertise about their child and their family. And they're certainly contributors to our [Inaudible] their child's development, and they're important and valuable. So William and Jermaine, if you guys have specific ones on this slide that reach sort of spoke to you, and if you'd like to address anything that you see here about either your journey as a dad or your journey as a leader in the fatherhood field of work. And let me start this time Jermaine with you.

Jermaine: Yes. One of the ones that stood out to me about – on the slide: fathers are partners with a critical role in their family's development. And for me, it goes back to communication. Communication is so very important in these types of situations, but being able to personalize and communicate holistically offers a better opportunity for increasing the level of trust and encouragement during a challenging time as being a father or learning that you've become a father or realizing that maybe you don't have the skill set you believe that you have, that you need to have in order to assume that role effectively. The highest level of communication can definitely help that, help ease the tension during that time. So when program leaders make it a priority to become knowledgeable about a father's life circumstance and potentially what impediments they may have to successfully fulfilling that role as a father, it can help improve their interactions and enforce that level of trust that's necessary in order to gain that progressive interaction. Assuming that fatherhood role, that father role, with the desire to do it well can be a hard enough task.

But when other stresses are associated with their age group like maybe attending school, neighborhood and peer influence, employment or stigmatization, can potentially make them more susceptible to making decisions that could undermine their ability to fulfill that role appropriately. Physical, emotional like for instance, they can become physically and emotionally distant. They may isolate themselves from other people and their older family members. They could potentially go to drug or alcohol abuse, or even sexual promiscuity as an outlet to relieve some of the pressure that they're experiencing because they're not fulfilling their roles in the way that society is telling them that they should. So even when they have some level of success, if they're not fulfilling that role in the way that's being projected to them, then they often feel as if they're not doing anything. So when a young father starts to see that value judgments aren't being made about them because of their lack of confidence or their lack of knowledge or their ability to fulfill that role as it's prescribed by society, then when they interact with the staff or the program directors or other fathers in that setting, again it just relieves a lot of pressure, and it allows them to be able to communicate how they actually feel. And that's the only way that you can actually resolve any of the issues of the problems that they're going to have or that they may be encountering. Which after all, the bottom line is that they're going to be evolving themselves to be better people and better fathers.

Brandi: Jermaine, I love what you say about the evolution and, you know, really being there to support and, you know, kind of travel that journey together in whatever that looks like. And I think, you know, I always think that the hour together that we have is a little bit of a blessing and curse 'cause it goes so quickly and there are so many points that we want to go much, much deeper on, especially [Inaudible] to the real. You mentioned sometimes there's conflict resolution, there's fear, there's these big emotions that come with, you know, being a parent specifically. And in the dynamic of a relationship if you're in a relationship, and that you know is a consideration where we're trying to support those ideas, and so there are complications that we really need to be in the real space about to support, you know, each other in service of and benefit for the child. So I loved the nuggets of wisdom that you offer there. And William, I'm thinking a little bit about, if it's okay with you, clicking over to the next slide 'cause I see we're getting really close already on our time. And with the attitudes that are sort of like, you know, the how we are in our interactions with families, we have some very specific practices that are sort of like, what would we do here? Like, how do we really do this in a concrete way? And we offer these six for you. They're all in the purple book that we showed you there before, and so you can find these again. And we have specific details about each one. We have ways to have reflective practice sort of before you as an individual in your role. We have some reflective supervision [Inaudible] in this purple book. So it's a really, really rich opportunity to think specifically, though, with these practices in mind as we think about dads and males

that are important in the lives of their children. But William, I know we've talked about this before. There's one here that you're specifically drawn to, and it's the fifth one down: the value a father's passion. Tell me more about that.

William: Absolutely. As a former head start teacher in the classroom, and I found that all of the children loved the dramatic play area, including the boys. And what would happen is the boys would go into the dramatic play area, and they would put on high heel shoes and the little gowns and they'd grab the babies up and they'd hold them, they'd walk around, you know. And what would happen is when men would drop off their kids, if they were coming to pick them up they would walk in the center and they'd walk straight to me. "Hey, what are you doing? What are you trying to pull? What are you running in here?" And so we got the [Inaudible] And aside from explaining to the men that these children are learning to nurture and they're learning. And I told them I don't know what they see at home, but the other [Inaudible] I got an opportunity here 'cause these men are passionate about something. So I said, okay guy. They are wearing the high heel shoes, but now I need you to bring in the boots. Bring in your hats. Bring in your jackets. Bring in the things that you will work with, and then the boys will have some alternatives to work with. Also really, if I could Brandi, I really want to say one thing that [Inaudible] your own perspective. One of the things that I don't think we [Inaudible] talk about was other people in the children's lives. And the paternal side is another side that loves this child. And I will tell you that paternal grandmothers love their children. We [Inaudible] And children can benefit from positive male interaction, whether it's their cousin, their brothers, the uncle, the boyfriends. So we have to be aware of their abilities and capacities as well. And I think about my own children who my sister who has no children, but let me tell you she played a major part in helping to grow and raise and develop my own children. So I just wanted to throw that out there.

Brandi: That's well said. And actually, it's such a great segue to sort of – reflecting on our own perspective, what you said, and specifically in the context of the program with a supervisor, during a reflective practice if you have that model. We very rarely as staff folk take advantage of the opportunity with our mental health consultants. I mean, we certainly offer them up to our families, but often we don't take as deep advantage as maybe we could as staff folks to kind of think through and reflect on our own perspective, and as you said, William, with each other in the construct of a family so that we are even all of one accord in what we bring to the interaction with fathers, and what that really means in a concrete way as we're pulling these pieces apart. I know – I can't tell you guys, this hour has flown so quickly. I don't even have the words to describe the excitement of not only Jermaine and William, you have offered, and certainly David with you as always. The chat that's happening with the resources and the ideas, the excitement. It just makes my heart very full. And I just kind of want to talk a little bit, 'cause a few of you have asked questions about logistics and next steps. So let's start with surveys and certificates. We will send you right after the webinar a little survey, and if you fill it out for us it will go right to the email address that you registered with probably today or tomorrow. If you fill it out, you will get a certificate. So for your own professional development efforts, we know that you keep records of all those things, look out for that to come to your email, and then we can make sure that that goes out. I'm getting some word over here that it will be today, that you'll see that coming.

The other thing that we want to remind you is that we did not even touch this very vaguely, the father engagement birth to five programming guide. It is also off to the left-hand side in your resource pad. So we want to make sure that if you haven't had the chance to see it yet, there's some incredible resources. And actually if you're even more interested in pulling apart more of the ideas around program

environment, the guide is actually organized by the elements from the PFCE framework. And you guys might know that in the pink column of the framework, we have a specific element around program environment. In this guide we give you all kinds of ideas, tips, and tricks about expanding and extending a little bit on the [Inaudible] we're having today with that specifically in mind. And then certainly, please don't forget, come back and see us. On June 8 we'll be back together on leveraging community partnerships to support fathers' well-being.

And then we'll close up our three-part webinar series on June 22. So several of you who had those specific questions around fathers' engagement in their child's learning and development, it's the focus of the whole webinar at the end of June on the 22nd. The survey will come to you guys in your email, and you can respond to that, and you'll get your certificate. [Inaudible] The webinar is recorded and yes, we can certainly make the PowerPoint available, usually in a PDF version so there aren't size restrictions. And then also we're going to stay on. We're going to close out the audio, so you'll hear silence, but don't be dismayed by that. We're going to stay in the general chat room for a bit. So if you still have questions and you want to talk a little bit more about any ideas, feel free to hang out with us here. We're at least going to leave it open for about 15 minutes. And then don't forget, you can also sign up for our resource class, which is the quarterly newsletter called the Fatherhood Connection. And you can do that through the ECLKC.

Before my good southern graces get going at this late hour right at 4 o'clock, I want to make sure that William, Jermaine, from the depths of my heart, thank you guys so much for all the time you dedicated to the prep for this, all the time you gave us and the gifts that you shared with the country today in our early childhood world. David as always and Kiersten as our leaders at the Office of Head Start, thank you for the opportunity to really resurrect all of the important ideas around these topics. Thank you to our team at PFCE, Nina and Shella, and certainly Jackie, Maureen, and all of our leaders for just working together to pull this off today. And most importantly, all of you. So enjoy your afternoon. We're going to hang out and chat and we'll see you next time.

Thank you so much.