**Innovative Practices: Creating Professional Development Plans**

Donna Ruhland: We are pleased to bring you this topic today on professional development plans. You will have the chance to hear about practices around PD plan and will also be able to see some of those innovative models that will be presented by representatives from Colorado and Iowa as well as some additional plans. Please note that in your resource link, there is a link for a PDF of the innovative practices webinar on PD Plan. So you can download that and follow along if you would like to.

Our first presenter today is Jani Kozlowski, who is the state Child Development Child Care Coordinator with NCECDTL. Then we'll be hearing from representatives from Colorado and Iowa as I mentioned before, Sondra Ranum, codirector of Early Childhood Professional Development System, Early Learning and School Readiness, from the Department of Education, and Stacey Kennedy, director of Child Care Quality Initiatives from Department of Human Services of Colorado.

And then we'll be hearing from Rick Roghair, Professional Development Manager of the Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children. As we proceed with the webinar, you may have some questions, and you are free to post those questions in the Q&A box, but we will hold the questions until the end of the webinar, as they will be answered at the end for you, and then, for the chat box, you can save that for any issues you might be experiencing with the webinar itself. So, the questions you have about the content go in the Q&A, and any concerns that you might have would be in the chat box. And with that, I will turn it over to Jani. Thank you.

Jani Kozlowski: Well, thank you, Donna. I'm excited to be with you all today. As Donna mentioned, my name is Jani Kozlowski. I'm with the National Center on Early Childhood Development Teaching and Learning, and we're really excited about this professional development plans topic because we think that it's a topic that's of interest to professionals from a variety of sectors, including teachers in childcare, Pre-K, family childcare providers, Head Start and Early Head Start. And that is true, given that we have had a great response to this webinar, and so we have a lot of folks on the line and we're excited to be able to share this material with you.

So, here's what we have in store for you. We are going to talk a little bit about what we mean by PD plans. What are professional development plans? We're going to think about how those plans can be integrated into larger professional development systems. Who creates and uses a PD plan, and what should be included in PD plans? And then we're going to hear from, as Donna said, Colorado and Iowa to get some examples of how professional development plans are integrated into comprehensive professional development systems for the early care and education workforce. That's what we have in store, and we hope that by the end of this webinar, you will be able to say that you know what the components of a robust PD plan are. You'll be able to describe how professional development plans should be created and updated, and you'll be able to identify ways that professional development plans can be utilized.

So, let's get started. What do we mean? What are professional development plans? Well, as you may know, a few years ago, the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies got together in this collaborative effort of developing a professional development glossary, and you can see the link to that glossary on your screen.

And as Donna said, you can download the PowerPoint in the documents box down at the bottom of the screen, so you'll be able to access the links that we've embedded in the PowerPoint. So, the NAEYC and the NACCRRA glossary defines professional development plans in this way -- It says that these are documents that are intended to provide connections to various PD experiences and provide alignment to the common core of knowledge and professional standards of our field. They offer a creative way to provide a holistic approach to building an early childhood professional's capacity.

And ultimately, we hope that professional development plans can ensure professional development advancements. PD plans are also important because they assist us in the attainment of career opportunities, with the goal of pursuing different roles or professions in the field. PD plans are not linear. They can go in a lot of different directions, and they intend to be used with support, and so individuals use the plans to map out their own professional development pathway, and oftentimes, that's done on their own or with the support of a supervisor or coach or mentor.

So, how are PD plans integrated into a larger professional development system? Professional development plans have become increasingly utilized at the program level, and they're often integrated into state-level systems as well. Professional development are included as a requirement within the Head Start Act, and in some cases, by state quality improvement and rating systems. We can also find professional development plan requirements connected to different funding initiatives like the T.E.A.C.H. Education Scholarship Initiative. Additionally, teacher training and licensure systems may require professional development plans to be created to show how the professional will meet their goals and complete continuing education requirements. We will look at some of these examples over the next few slides.

This is the language directly from the Head Start Act of 2007, and you can see that each Head Start agency has a requirement to create, in consultation with the employee, a professional development plan for all full-time Head Start employees that provide direct services to children. It also requires that those plans should be regularly evaluated for their impact on the teacher effectiveness.

The Head Start program performance standards also link back to educational qualifications and competencies, and refer to program professional development supports as well. On the child-care side, the Child Care and Development Fund has some new regulations that link to professional development plans as well. The Child Care and Development Fund requires that states develop a professional development framework in order to ensure that professionals progress along a pathway that will improve their knowledge and skills in order to promote strong outcomes for children.

CCDF provides that states could, as an example, establish a written career pathway that allows an individual to move from an introductory level to advanced level training, and then onto higher education, obtaining a credential or a post-secondary degree such as a Bachelor's degree or even a Master's degree, and all the way to a PhD. The professional development indicated in CCDF is that it should be designed in a manner that builds and accumulates so that training and educational opportunities build on one another to result in certification or an advanced degree that's recognized by the state as demonstrating mastery. And again, we have a link there to the CCDF regulations and frequently asked questions.

As I mentioned, Quality Rating and Improvements Systems also might require a professional development plan. These plans may include goals and professional development requirements set by the entity that administers the QRIS. A QRIS is often relevant to professionals from many different sectors within the early childhood field, including childcare, Head Start, Pre-K, after school programs, et cetera. Professional development plans allow for individualization that's unique to the own professional's needs. No matter what the role is, the plan is going to fit their needs.

So, here's a really good example. In Ohio, they have a QRIS that's called Step up to Quality, and that QRIS requires professional development plans, and those plans are intended that the professional will develop goals and action steps to work toward a desired professional development outcome that will enhance their knowledge and skills. And we have a link there so you can see a little bit more about the Ohio QRIS requirement.

So, who creates the professional development plan? Well, it really varies. In some cases, a plan is co-created with a supervisor, and so, in that case, the staff person would bring his or her ideas to the table, and that might include potential goals or areas that they would like to strengthen, and then the supervisor also brings ideas for areas of improvement as well as areas of strength, developed and determined by assessments or observations or other measures that they've used. Together, the employee and the supervisor talk about those strengths and areas of growth, and they create the plan together with mutual discussion and reflection.

In other cases, a professional development plan could be co-created with a coach or another professional development specialist. It's a similar kind of process that is used with the supervisor. The coach may bring feedback from prior work with the staff member, and the staff member might bring their own ideas of goals and areas of improvement.

And again, that plan is co-created through discussion and feedback. In some cases, professionals will create their own plans to meet a requirement set by licensing or a credentialing body that will show how continuing education requirements are being met. This model may be seen for future licensure or credentialing systems where the professional development planning process is not a supervisory duty, but rather something that's expected of the professional himself or herself.

When we talk about co-creation of plans, what do we mean? What are the important components and things to consider? Well, first of all, we suggest that you use protected meeting time that's set aside and respected specifically for this purpose. It shouldn't be during the time of the annual or semi-annual performance evaluations. It's really more about focusing on the growth of the professional and thinking about the supports that are needed for the professional to be able to reach their goal, rather than evaluating performance. So, this going to allow for reflection within a safe and secure environment, and giving attention to the own individual and their potential for growth. It's an empowering kind of process.

Supervisors should really respect this time -- others, also, that are working on this process. Try not to reschedule the meeting or be late for the meeting because, really, it's an important message that you value the employee's professional growth, and that as a staff person, that you value your own professional growth. So be at the meeting, be on time, and take care to put all of your thoughts and ideas into the development of the plan. So oftentimes, assessment and observation results are gathered, and that can be used as data to inform the planning process, and so that could include class observation or an observation of the classroom such as the ITERS, the ECERS, the THICERS or the THACERS.

These assessments can be completed voluntarily by the program or professional, or they might be completed as a mandatory requirement for the program, either through Head Start or the Quality Rating Improvement System. Using these assessment tools is really good practice because that leads to quality improvements, and the results can be discussed with the professional in a strengths-based way to emphasize the areas of need or opportunity rather than talking about it in terms of deficits or weaknesses.

So, this survey or evaluation result, along with other assessment data, is taken into account when you're trying to look at a holistic view of the professional, and think about all of his or her strengths, interests and areas of opportunity. And staff should also bring their own data to the process because staff have self-assessments and your own reflecting that can go into helping to achieve the goals that you set for yourself through that planning process.

So, what should be included within a professional development plan? So, here are some of the professional development plan components. First of all, it's important to remember that those components may be determined based on requirements that are set either through legislation or policy or just as recommended practice determined by the funding entity. The funding agencies have an interest in making sure that the workforce is prepared to meet the unique needs of the population that they serve.

For example, a teacher who is funded by Part C funds may be expected to show the way that inclusive practices fit within the PD plan that guides her career goals, and so that would be a unique requirement to the Part C professional development plan. Professional development plans may also serve as a requirement for Pre-K programs and expectations to meet teacher or professional licensure requirements.

In some cases, the rationale for these required components is tied to the larger professional development framework that I mentioned earlier that is in place at the state level or the federal level. So, once you have a sense of what those guidelines are and requirements are through legislation or a funding entity, these are some of the possible components that you might see. You'll see short- and long-term goals. Long-term goals have a growth over a year or more, and those are going to be broader in context. A goal may be to complete my BA in 3 years, for example, whereas a short-term goal will break it down, and so they tend to be more specific and measurable, and that helps to ensure success along the way and paves the way for progress.

Goals are broken down even further into action steps. These are ways to take on a goal in smaller increments. They identify what needs to be done, what are the resources that we need, the dates the steps should be completed by and who can assist the professional in achieving those steps. The action steps map out the progress in accountable ways. And so you'll also see, in professional development plans, that there is a place for the professional to include the resources that she or he needs toward that goal. That might include help with completing a scholarship application, identifying workshops to take, it could be a request for coaching, for skill improvement, or it may be something more concrete such as child-care assistance of their own while they're taking classes.

Another component could be that there are measures of success within the plan. Good plans illustrate successes, and they celebrate them in a really visible way, whether it's checking off the action steps or reporting the completion of outcomes or goals, those successes should be closely tracked. Assessment results, as we said, should be part of the process for preparing a professional development plan. Those results should be included in the plan in some way, either by listing them or using them to identify areas of need and growth.

And all in all, the plan should be a place to showcase self-reflection because self-reflection is really the main piece of the process itself. We want to be able to come back to the plan again and again, and if that self-reflection is not in place when you're creating a plan, there's really not an interest or a desire on the part of the professional to come back to it again and again.

So, ultimately, to keep the process accountable, you should also include a timeline and dates that are documented so that you come back and review the plan to see if those activities that are tied to dates have been met. So we think about a good professional development plan as kind of a bulletin board test if it's a real, living document, and if it is, then you're going to see the plan up on the bulletin board. It's going to be a place that's readily available, easily accessible. And even though you might not post your plan directly on a bulletin board for everyone to see because you might want to have confidentiality, you have the plan readily available, and you'd refer to it often.

And the professional would come back to it again and again as they work through those action steps and achieve their goals. Professional development plans should be living documents. They can include a personal vision and goals and also connect to the vision and goals of the program.

Programs and professionals prosper when those two sets of goals are in tandem. Plans should be visited often and updated as needed, and the updates allow for small successes and celebrations. Movement should show the achievement of steps along the professional's career pathway.

So when is it ever done? Is a professional development plan ever really completed? The idea that there is a terminal degree in the early childhood field is not a new concept. A terminal degree means that you've learned all you need to in a specific field to continue to work in that field for your entire career. In early childhood education, we know that more and more is learned about the development and learning of young children every single day. What we know today about the development of the brain is significantly more than we knew 10 years ago.

So, all that to say is professional development in early childhood education in particular is a lifelong process. We never stop learning no matter how many certifications and degrees we have. It is all to help us gain knowledge and skills and competencies that we need to provide the best care and education for children and their families. We're all a work in progress. So now we're going to move on to some examples of professional development plans, and I'm going to turn it over to our friends in Colorado, Sondra and Stacey.

Stacey Kennedy: Great. Thank you so much. As mentioned earlier, my name is Stacey Kennedy. I work at the Colorado Department of Human Services, and we are very pleased to be here to talk about how we support professional development planning here in our state. I want to mention that we have had a great opportunity as one of the states that received a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, and wanted to start out to really illustrate how we've looked to technology as a means to support both the quality rating and improvement system with the professional development activity being a key quality indicator within that rating system.

So, the diagram that you see here are all of our different technology systems, Colorado Shines being the new rating system, but licensing being that first level within the ratings system, and with quality improvement and professional development being another key area.

For today we will be focusing on the Professional Development Information System, which is the technology solution in Colorado that actually acts as a hybrid system. It operates as both a learning management system and a workforce registry, which is, you know, by design because we really want to be able to support the professional development activities, at the same time supporting the individual to develop their own plans and goals around their current role in what it is that they can and should be doing in the various roles, and planning toward that future professional goals as well. A key foundation within the Professional Development Information System is tied to performance-based Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators.

So each of these bubbles that you see here on the screen represent content areas or domains that describe knowledge and skills that early childhood educators need in order to work effectively with children birth through age 8 and their families. These are important to increase knowledge and skills, and professionals are expected to participate in quality continuing education opportunities.

So, in addition to these eight domains, we do have three competency areas that are interwoven throughout the eight areas noted on the slide, and those include social-emotional development, cultural competence and children with special needs. These competencies were approved during year 1 of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, and really were key as we were developing the technology and the other closely tied foundation pieces for the workforce effort happening here in our state.

We have a video that we'd like to show. It's just a couple minutes. I want all of you to know that in order to hear the video, you'll want to listen to the audio from your computer, so I'm going to give everyone a moment to be sure your speakers are turned on and turned up, and we'll transition to the video now.

[Video begins]

Woman #1: Rose works in an early childhood program as a preschool teacher. She wants to continue to grow as a professional, and she dreams of becoming a director someday. In the past, Rose took trainings and collected certificates to document the number of training hours she completed. Rose chose her trainings largely based on what was available and was affordable in her community.

Rose has her own goals as a professional, but it was hard to identify what to do to achieve her goals. Training opportunities were fragmented and didn't always meet Rose's needs. She received good information and networked with other early childhood professionals at trainings, but when she returned to work, nothing changed. Sometimes the training content wasn't what she needed, and she felt like she was just spending time to meet training requirements. Rose kept her training certificates in the bottom drawer of her desk and rarely looked at them.

With Colorado's new Early Childhood Professional Development Information System, or the PDIS, these things are changing. This competency-based system helps professionals like Rose realize their goals. Competencies identify what early childhood professionals need to be able to do in order to be successful. They provide early childhood professionals like Rose clear guidance on the knowledge and skills required to be successful in  their early childhood careers.

The early childhood program where Rose works is participating in the Colorado Shines Quality Grading System. As part of that, she signed up for a PDIS user account. Now, Rose is using the PDIS to help guide and identify her professional development choices. She began by completing a self-assessment in the system based on the early childhood competencies. Using her self-assessment results, the PDIS generated professional development recommendations for Rose.

Rose reviewed the recommendations and chose her professional development goals. She identified trainings and activities to help her accomplish her goals from a catalog of offerings that includes things in her community and across the state offered online and face-to-face.

As Rose takes trainings, the system automatically records her completions on her online transcript. Her training completions for licensing, QRIS and credentialing are all documented in one place. She can still print out training certificates when she wants or needs them. Rose automatically receives credential points for the trainings she completes through the PDIS. She no longer has to scan her certificates and upload them. This has saved Rose a lot of time.

Now Rose has confidence that the training she invests her time in will provide her with the competencies she needs to make progress on her goal of becoming a director. Periodically, Rose reviews her self-assessment and individual professional development plan to update and adjust what she's working on. It has been rewarding to watch the progress on her transcript towards realizing her professional development goals. Her professional development information is safe and secure in the PDIS.

When she makes a role or job change, she can use her transcript and credential to demonstrate what she knows and is able to do as an early childhood professional. If Rose decides to become an early childhood trainer, coach or administrator, she'll continue to use the PDIS to guide, track and recognize her professional development.

[Video ends]

Stacey: So that's just some insight into the individual experience within the Professional Development Information System. We wanted to highlight a few other uses for the competencies and how we've used that as a foundation here in Colorado. On an individual level, individuals use the competencies of the self-assessments to create a professional development plan. And through this process, they identify strengths and growth areas and then create their individual professional development plan to make informed decisions about careers in early childhood. Program administrators also are able to use the competencies to clarify and communicate knowledge required of staff, identify training and staff development needs, formulate staff development plans, assess current staff strengths and identify knowledge gaps for the purpose of recruiting additional staff with higher or even different levels of competency and link level of competency to the compensation level. Training providers are able to use the competencies to organize, identify and advertise training within the PDIS, align offerings across all content areas and levels of competency to better support skill development.

And then, finally, at both the state and local agency level, competencies are used to develop policy initiatives and funding that will increase the level of competency of early childhood professionals, guide the development of policies related to teacher licensure, the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System, higher education articulation, professional development and supports for educators working in a variety of settings and to develop and implement a credentialing system that supports authentic evaluation of the acquisition of the competencies.

Colorado currently is focused on the training approval process. This is an important process because it's a process that aligns trainings to competencies and allows us to, in a more data-informed way, assess the needs of the professionals, identify areas where we would want to create more robust offerings and really allows for a more coordinated approach, leveraging the learning management system component of the Professional Development Information System. Now, my colleague Sondra Ranum is going to provide a little more detail for Colorado's experiences supporting professional development planning.

Sondra Ranum: Thank you, Stacey. As we saw in the video, all components of the professional development information system connect to Colorado's Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators. Online and face-to-face courses managed in the system are aligned to competencies. The early childhood professional credential recognizes formal education, training and performance observations aligned to the competency.

Registered individuals can complete a competency self-assessment and develop an individual PD plan based on the results of this assessment. I'm going to walk through these components to discuss how the system functionality connects all of these pieces. When professionals create an account, they select their professional role. Each professional role in the PDIS aligns to specific competency sets within PDIS.

Colorado's Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators details specific competencies organized across four levels of mastery. The competency sets for each professional role are the competency level combinations that have been determined to be most relevant for individuals to know and be able to do in that role. There are currently seven professional roles available in the PDIS with associated competency sets.

The roles of teacher and director are aligned to the competency levels determined to be most important for entry-level teachers and directors. Teacher leader and director leader align to the competencies typically demonstrated by more experienced individuals in these roles, who take on more leadership activities.

After creating an account, professionals are encouraged to complete the competency self-assessment. This online assessment walks individuals through the entire competency set, and asks them to reflect on their current level of skill for each competency. Again, the competencies are organized into four levels of mastery. Once an individual completes the self-assessment, they can set goals in their individual professional development plan. The system has six goals the individual can choose from, or an individualized goal can be created.

Action steps with start and due dates can then be associated with each goal. Over time, the individual can update the status of each action step. These are the goals available from the system. If improve my skills in my current role or prepare for a new professional role are selected, the system prompts the individual to select which role the goal is associated with. Since individuals can connect their account with more than one professional role -- for example, director and trainer -- their goals can be customized for each role. Based on the goals the individual chooses, the system compares the levels of their competency self-assessment to the competency set level aligned to the roles  selected for that goal.

For example, if they choose improve my skills in my current role for the role of teacher, and the individual assessed themselves at level two for a competency that is associated with level three for that role, the system will recommend the courses that are aligned to the level three competency.

When goals focused on academic or alternative pathways are selected, the system provides links to Colorado institutions of higher ed with programs specific to early childhood, or agencies designated as approved alternative pathways.

As Stacey mentioned, course alignment is established when clock hour trainings are entered into the system through the training alignment and approval process. We've also partnered with higher ed faculties to support the alignment of college courses to the competencies.

The courses shown in the options area of the PD plan are those that are aligned to the professional's competency gap. Over time, as more courses are entered into the system, these recommendations will become more robust and even more individualized. In addition to the options listed in the PD plan, individuals can search for courses aligned to specific competencies in the course catalog. You can see the competencies listed for this course here at the bottom of the screen. Courses completed in the system also automatically award points toward the individual's credential. College courses specifically aligned to the Colorado competencies earn more points than general early childhood courses.

As we saw earlier, individuals can also set a goal focused on increasing their credential level. When this is selected, the PD plan shows them their current credential level and the points needed for the next. While the system walks individuals through the creation of a PD plan, we always encourage professionals to work with their supervisor, a coach or an advisor to develop goals and action steps that align with program goals, the program's Colorado Shines rating and/or other higher ed requirements. You can see our contact information here. Feel free to contact either Stacey or myself if you have questions or would  like further information. And at this point in time, we'll now turn it over to Rick, with the Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children.

Rick Roghair: Hi. Thanks. My name is Rick Roghair. I'm the professional development manager at Iowa AEYC. We are excited to share the Iowa ECIeducationpathway.org online interactive career pathway resource that we developed for our early care and education workforce in Iowa. Our goal was very basic. We wanted it to be user-friendly, simple and intuitive. Two highlights of the tool was an emphasis that we placed on acquiring formal education through college credit and the ability for each person to build a personal -- We call it in Iowa personal rather than individual -- professional development plan.

Currently, the tool provides information for the teacher role. We're soon going to include the program administrator role so that it moves horizontally across, and then we'll add the consultant role. Moving forward, we're also considering pathway information for other careers within the field, so beginning at any level or moving forward, people can use the same site. We developed the site 15 months ago with volunteers from dsmHack, which is a non-profit that builds technology solutions and relationships here in the Des Moines community.

They give time and skills to non-profits who need help but can't afford it. It all happened in 48 hours. We worked two late nights and early mornings with six of their volunteers and four of us, a representative of the Iowa Department of Education, the Iowa Department of Human Services, the Iowa Head Start Collaboration Office and myself.

The tool continues as a collaboration between Early Childhood Iowa and the Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children. ECI is the Iowa statewide initiative that brings individuals, communities, agencies, state government to actually work together for results that improve the quality of life for children ages zero to 5 and their families.

So every child in Iowa, our goal is to be healthy and successful. Iowa AEYC is obviously a state affiliate of NAEYC, and our mission is similar to that of ECI. All children thrive and learn to reach their full potential. The foundation of our online tool brings to life and clarifies the teaching role and administrator role career pathway linear documents that you see in front of you, which were first developed in 2009.

The online tool provides organization and additional direction for individuals to progress along their career pathway, but what we added was the capability to develop a personal plan. The linear documents and our online tool integrate both career options, training and education specifics, competency levels and WAGE$ levels, and soon will include the newly revised Iowa QRIS levels. Updates and revisions to the documents are uploaded to the online tools as we make those changes.

Moving horizontally across the top of the opening page -- But you don't see that right here -- users of the tool can click on a variety of buttons. One allows them to select access to approximately 100 languages, which is a free app that we found through Google. We recognize that computerized translation isn't perfect, but as more than one provider recently commented to me, "It gives me the stuff I need to know in order to get started."

Another clickable button is Learn about. That was very critical from the beginning. We wanted to provide concise descriptions for approximately 35 positions and provider types, so anyone, possibly a 15-year-old who's a sophomore at school that's considering a summer job, maybe in early care, can look at a variety of positions and go, "Oh, yeah. This is really what I want to do." Within the definitions are links for other embedded resources, including licensing information. Soon, we will upload our new Iowa Core Knowledge of Child Development documents, and we are in the process of revising our Iowa Early Learning Standards, and those will be included as well.

Moving on, as you can see in front of you, the I want to, the three orange rectangles -- know where I am today, know my next steps and develop a plan. We wanted to develop three options for people. If they just want to know where they are on the step today, they can go there. They can know next steps, so just this is where I am, this is where I can go next. Or if they want to immediately develop a plan, they can do that as well. They can use those three buttons to explore career opportunities within our field, especially in Iowa, to understand the variety of credential and degree options that are available, discover the types of positions that are available at different levels of training and education, identify home provider and center licensing requirements through the Iowa Department of Human Services, locate community college and university early care and education website pages that are specific to each diploma, credential or degree --

So, you don't have to take 30 minutes to search one of the university sites. You look at a diploma, credential or degree offered by that institution, click there and you immediately go to that specific page. Another option is they can access e-mail contact at each college, and our intent when we requested that information was somebody in your institution who will respond within 48 hours, even during the summer. Users can also find information about local and regional agencies, specific service programs for children and families throughout the state, state departments, state agencies and state associations such as ours, Iowa AEYC, and another important topic is how users can learn about T.E.A.C.H. and the availability of WAGE$. Even though our print documents existed, we listened to our fast-paced information hungry users, and they said, "We want something online and we want it to be mobile-friendly and we want access to everything."

So we tried to develop that within the site. For those in our field, as you know, there is often an unmet need for career planning information to make those decisions that they need to move from "It's just a job" to "It's my career," and then to consider that personal development plan. For the vast majority of those in our workforce, we tried to address three issues. The first one is that child providers and staff often lack the early childhood training and education specific to their position.

There is an inability to access accurate information on an as-needs basis, and often there's a lack of that personal support that we all want, and we want it when we need it and when we identify. When we've got a problem, we want a solution, and this is a way that people can contact directly a variety of people to get the kind of support that they need, and additionally the people within their agency.

Those in the workforce, as we all know, generally only have time to consider career and education questions late at night or during the weekend, then their personal family tasks are finished. We recognize that a growing number of languages are spoken throughout our state, and additionally, we wanted the tool to serve as a resource for people to begin conversations, to continue conversations and to provide and receive that individual support between staff and center directors, individuals and consultants, professional development providers and others, so that they can work with individuals throughout the field. The tool changes.

It's quickly evolving to provide the kind of access that people requested to make important career decisions, and, of course, to build that personal professional development plan, which we believe is the most important component of our site. It is not a one-size-fits-all. By answering basic questions, the site determines the unique entry point of each person as they enter the career path. When we envisioned the tool, we wanted every user to enter the pathway wherever she or he is, and to provide decision-making facts that they need to provide the ability, then, to exit the pathway for a while, but also to re-enter the pathway at any time.

Our goal remains that users can actually visualize the next steps in their careers. Through collaboration with the Iowa Department of Human Services, users of the tool can upload their personal professional development plan to the Iowa Child Care Provider Training Registry. The Iowa registry offers them a single location for each person to retain completed clock-hour training and semester credit coursework.

Our next goal is to make the option as interactive, so that as they complete training and college credit, they can enter that information immediately rather than, as now, they upload a PDF document. After answering basic questions, each user is sent to his or her current level and receives information regarding career options at that level -- We call them tiers --Training and education details necessary to move forward on the path, quarter to semester hour conversion, CDA and other competencies, T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE$ information, ability to explore the next step in their career path and the ability to upload her or his personal plan onto the Iowa Child Care Training Registry. Other decision-making resources are also embedded into the site. As each user determines their current level, she or he can identify steps to move forward with training and education, develop goals, work towards goals.

Anyone can choose possibly to earn a CDA or an Associate or a Bachelor's, Master's, PhD. When it's time to reenter the pathway after achieving a goal, the person can reenter and continue to make their decisions regarding their career. Kevin Pokorny, who is a colleague of our work here, recently said, "Every one of us can always improve with effort, good strategies and help." We believe the ECIeducationpathways.org is an important strategy to help Iowa Early Learning and Care Education Workforce to develop their personal plans as they continue to acquire knowledge, and to practice their skills to ensure that every child in Iowa reaches her or his potential.

We encourage you to explore the site. We thank you for the opportunity to summarize this segment of our work, and feel free to contact me at  any time with questions and I will answer those at any time. Thanks again for this opportunity.

Jani: Well, thank you, Rick. We appreciate you joining us, and thanks so much to Sondra and Stacey as well, for sharing the Colorado example. As you can see, these are two examples where the professional development plan in the state is woven into a larger professional development system, including the use of core knowledge and competencies, a workforce registry in Colorado, there's links to courses and trainings available, connection to the Quality Rating and Improvement System, and clearly, the use of innovative and creative technology.

And so, as you all are kind of thinking through the material that you just heard, please keep in mind that these are not products to buy. This is not for sale by Iowa. I'm sure that Rick would agree that it's primarily for Iowans, but it is creative examples of how states might support the early care and education workforce through professional development plans. And so, visit the websites and get creative, and you'll see some very innovative ideas. So thanks so much to both states for sharing.

I'd like to now share a local example. This is an Early Head Start Child Care partnership, the Maricopa County Human Services Head Start, and they have an initiative that's called the education navigator initiative. They fund education navigators that are based at the local community college, and those folks evaluate transcripts and training records.

They help students with scholarship applications. They help with college admissions, and most importantly, for this piece, they help to develop a professional development plan. And so we found that this program in particular hooks that support role that was needed for a lot of different reasons across the program, and they'd apply it using the professional development plan as kind of a basis for that work. So you can find out more about the Maricopa County Human Services Head Start program if you go to – We'll send you a link to it later. I don't think I have the link to it right now. So that's one example.

And then here's another example, the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood program, which is a comprehensive national strategy that provides scholarships to address the need for a well-qualified and fairly compensated and stable workforce. And so, T.E.A.C.H. is a program that provides a cost-share model so that employers buy into the program, and they have demonstrated success and effectiveness.

One of the components of the T.E.A.C.H. model is the requirement of an individual professional development plan. The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center provides a PD plan template and support and guidance for T.E.A.C.H. counselors to use it with the scholarship recipients. They have found that this strategy is really helpful for scholarship recipients because it helps to clarify their goals and identify needed resources as well.

We've also noticed that you have had some questions about sample professional development plans, and so here are a couple of examples that you can access. I'm glad that you're able to connect with each other as well. These two sample plans were developed by agencies in North Carolina and Vermont, and you can also get to the Early Childhood Education Professional Development Training and Technical Assistance Glossary, as well as a link to the T.E.A.C.H. National Center.

Okay. So, we have a few minutes and I'm wondering if Sondra and Stacey or Rick, if there are questions that you received that you'd like to be able to respond to at this point. Sondra, did you receive any questions that you're able to respond to?

Sondra: Hi. Yes. We did receive a number of questions about who can use the professional development information system. The state of Colorado purchases the license for that system and makes it available at no cost for Colorado early childhood professionals to use.

Jani: Great.

Rick: And I received a question about Iowa, and it's available to anyone. It is quite Iowa-specific, but the definitions are probably pretty basic nationwide, and other states have used it. And if anybody has any further questions, they can certainly e-mail me and I'll answer anything that they have.

Jani: Great. Thank you. It's important to remember that these are just examples. There are ways that these two states have taken the issues and needs within their state and tried to respond to them through these system-wide programs, and in your state, you might have a different program available, or you may be in a state that's in development as a project that can support professional development plans in this way.

So if you're with a Head Start program, it's important for you to find out what's happening at the state level so you can access those resources. And if you're in child care, and maybe you probably know about those resources that are available, but it's making sure that teachers have access to those and can use them in their work. So now I'd like to close and point your attention to the fact that you're going to be getting an e-mail with an evaluation, and you'll see that Renita has posted a box that has the evaluation link, and so you can click on that text in the box and then click Browse To, to access the evaluation. And if you can't get to it that way, you'll be getting a link sent by e-mail.

But your feedback is really important to us. We really value your perspective, and so please take a moment to complete the evaluations. So at this point, I would just like to say that for all of the team here at NCECDTL, and for our partners in Colorado and Iowa, I'd like to thank all of you for joining us today and for participating in this innovative practices webinar. I hope you all have a wonderful afternoon. Goodbye, everyone.