

Embedding Health and Safety in Your Program's Culture: Safe Foundations, Healthy Futures Webinar Series

Amanda Bryans: Good afternoon and welcome to today's webinar. Part of the Safe Foundations, Healthy Futures series. And, today we have called this edition Embedding Health and Safety in Your Program's Culture. My name is Amanda Bryans and I am the director of School Readiness and Research to Practice at the Office of Head Start. And I – I'm very happy to be with you. Some people might think the culminating webinar but in – in no way is it culminating. I think we have, kind of, finished laying the foundation, and then our work will – will carry on. And I am – I'm very happy to be here with my OHS partner.

Sharon Yandian: Thank you so much, Amanda. This is Sharon Yandian, and I'm the director of Training and Technical Assistance. And I think that's right, we're hoping that the series has been energizing. And we'll – We, certainly, have been very energized by all that we have learned and heard across the many months. So.

Amanda: That's great, Sharon. And as long as you mention that I want to say we originally had a different title for this. It was about, you know, everything you need to know to use this work in your in-service and pre-service training. The idea, kind of, was that, again, we're – we're giving you the ingredients for a recipe that we think needs to carry on in perpetuity. But we changed the name because it's – it's much broader than just in-service and pre-service. However, it is inclusive. And if we don't remember later, we will. But we'll say many times, please visit the ECLKC web page for Safe Foundations, Healthy Futures where you can find all of the resources. [Inaudible] Material in your pre-service mentor.

Sharon: Well, you know that's a great – We're so excited, I think this is my – my favorite part of today's webinar, is to be able to have folks across the country hear from our featured speakers. So, Karen and Cindy can you introduce yourself?

Karen Griffith: Sure, hi. This is Karen Griffith. I'm a school readiness manager with SETA Head Start in Sacramento, and I'm very glad to be here today.

Cindy Huey: Hi, my name is Cindy Huey and I'm Children's Services Department director with Delta Area Economic Opportunity Corporation in Portageville, Missouri.

Amanda: Well terrific. Again, we're so glad that you both could be with us today. I think you have very interesting stories to tell and I think everyone else will be happy to be hearing from people in the field.

Sharon: Definitely, judging from our our practice I know that is true.

Amanda: And we're – we're glad to talk less, too.

Sharon: Yes we are, we certainly are. But before we talk less, let's see. We do want to just let you know that a couple things we learned here at the practice is when you're chatting and you can see here how to use the left sidebar to ask questions, submit comments, or download the slides. We realize that the chat is only coming to us today, not to to all of you. And so, we're going to do our best to bring some of the comments from the chat box into our conversation. So, just bear with us and please engage. And when we're sorry about that, it's how it's happening today.

Amanda: And say something interesting and we'll feature it on today's webinar.

Sharon: Oh, that's a really good idea. So anyway, let's get started, because we do have a chat question. You know. But we'd like to – to hear from you a little bit is, you know – What other Safe Foundations,

Healthy Futures sessions did you purchase in September? So, that just helps us get – get a little feedback. And as you are –

Amanda: I think you can go to the next slide because they might have forgotten.

Sharon: Well, yeah, that's a good point. And I wanted to say, you know, as you look at where we have been we also want to let you know that you can easily access any of the webinars and town halls that we've done across the many months. If you just put in Safe Foundations, Healthy Futures into the search bar on the ECLKC.

Amanda: That's right Sharon, we do not want anyone to feel badly if you've missed any of this great content because it's still available to you.

Sharon: Yeah, and it – And I will say, I know we want to move on to the webinar. The most recent one we did in March was really exciting because we, I think we reached, Amanda, an audience that we don't often reach. Which is the human resource managers. That was a really active webinar.

Amanda: They were very engaged and very engaging and shared a lot of resources with each other, and that's right, Sharon. It was really a good opportunity. I think a lot of directors and direct service staff would also be interested in a lot of the information that was shared at that webinar.

Sharon: Great. So, we do have a poll question now. If people could think about this question. What health and safety topics are most important to your program right now?

Amanda: And do we have a little slide, a swoop in there, Sharon, if you click again on that slide? To give people a hint about the kinds of categories.

Sharon: Sure, you have active supervision, culture of safety, human resources, positive learning, environment, safe and well – staff wellness, and behavior and trauma.

Amanda: But what kinds of things are you addressing now in your program? What kinds of health and safety topics, any of those.

Sharon: We're actually getting some good responses here. We will keep on filling out the poll, and we'll publish the poll so people can see it in a little bit. But we've got quite a few in active supervision. Oh, good to see the staff wellness. We've touched on that, and right now, and I think we've heard this across the country that, you know, behaviors that challenge us in children who are experiencing trauma is quite a topic that people are –are very interested in, as well.

Amanda: Yes. Quite a few on staff wellness, too, which I'm glad to see. And which we think ties to everything else that we're talking about.

Sharon: And I think we can – I think we can close the poll now, Daniel. If you wouldn't mind? And we can share that with the audience. We will be doing that in just a moment. All right. As you can see we have quite – Well, actually human resources, you know, even though that was quite popular last month. But we can see the topics that are really resonating are really most of them, quite honestly, and all ones that we actually, I think, have fairly well addressed on the ECLKC. And hopefully, I know, we're actually going to learn a lot about them from Cindy and Karen today, as well.

Amanda: That's right, and so that makes us feel hopeful that some of the resources that OHS has been able to develop in response to the many requests from the field are be – useful to you. So. Feel free to comment on that if you want to. Usefulness or lack of usefulness.

Sharon: So, let's get to today's discussion, Amanda.

Amanda: All right, so what we really wanted to talk about today and again, originally, it was kind of embedded in the idea of pre-service and in-service training. Is how do you make sure that health and safety is automatic. It is so fundamental to your program operations that you're not lying in bed worrying at night that you didn't lock something that should be locked in a cabinet, or you know, you didn't do the right safety protocol on the playground. How do you make sure that everyone in the program has, kind of, an equal sense of shared, collaborative responsibility? How can you use the Safe Foundations, Healthy Futures resources to build systems and help you meet these goals? How do you ensure that the communication is open and good? Things happen, human beings are fallible.

When something goes wrong or could go wrong, how do you know people are safe enough to talk about it so that you can seek out the problem and figure out what to do. If everyone is living in a culture, kind of, of fear then they aren't able to talk about how you could do better. How do you think about shared responsibility and leadership. One of the biggest, kind of, Achilles heels can be if everything is a bottleneck at the top. That nothing can be decided or happen without, you know, approval from one person. Again, what we're talking about is this shared responsibility and investment in the services that you provide. And at the same time, how do you know, in an ongoing way that the active supervision, safety and well-being of children and families in your staff are being met? We're going to talk a little more about that.

But one of the unique things about this whole effort, Safe Foundations, Healthy Futures is the recognition that in order to – it's not about basic, simple compliance. Because that is when you end up with this culture of fear where people kind of evade, rather than work together to solve problems.

So, how do you have a culture of support and safety for staff so that you – they, in fact, are able to meet the health, safety, and well-being needs of children, who can be really, really challenging?

Sharon: No, I think that's a really good frame to me. I think that, just to – to remind folks, really. I mean, the culture of safety is a set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize your organization. It's – it's really what you just described, and it's the way things are done in a program. It's not an add-on, it's integrated, it's holistic. So.

Amanda: And you see these two hands lighting a light bulb, which, this is symbolizing again that staff have to have these supports. That the connection between wellness for staff and children and health and safety is that people need to feel like they have resources and outlets so that they can do hard work together. And that can be the ability to ask a question, to go to the ECLKC and find a resource that could help you, to say I need help today.

Sharon: Reach out to a colleague.

Amanda: I can't do this by myself today, it's too much, whatever it may be. That's right, Sharon, reach out to a colleague. We talk about a culture of wellness existing when staff and child health and safety are valued, supported, and promoted through health and wellness programs, policies, and environment. I would add leadership to that. And it's, again, not just leadership from the top but leadership throughout that is aligned with those, those are really valued.

Sharon: That's great, that really, that's a good frame.

Amanda: And again, I mentioned the ECLKC. The coffee break is particularly important to me. I've noted that if someone wants me to spend more money in their store, they offer free coffee.

Sharon: Is that right?

Amanda: That's probably true. It's probably not a good thing, I shouldn't have told everybody here. But it's the idea that you work with people to figure out what they need to have this foundation for a culture

of health and safety. Everybody – This is a specific thing amongst a lot of general things. Everyone needs someone to go to when they feel overwhelmed. I'm not talking – we all have challenges outside of work. And then, we have a workplace that can be joyful and challenging. So, how do you have a chance to reflect with somebody about what's happening? Or when it's really, when you're at the end of your rope who you ask for help? There's some yoga here, that many Head Start programs have found a little way to do. And the – the last graphic is – is really a coaching where somebody is overwhelmed and someone else is kind of helping them spool their –

Sharon: Untangle.

Amanda: – their mental processes, and Untangle them and get them in order.

Sharon: You know, now that you set that frame, let's see – Let's see. Do – do folks in the audience have a colleague to turn to if they feel overwhelmed at work? We're going to do a little poll here, just to get a sense of that and get a sense of where people are and what their needs might be. So, let's just take a moment and it's a simple yes-no answer. And you know, always looking for a little interactivity just to, kind of, get a gauge. And not everybody may. We all have somebody.

Amanda: [Inaudible] just giving you the questions. It gives you a chance to think about whether you do or not. And if you don't, to look around a little. And if you're a program leader, asking. I think about a teacher, I read this story, a lot of people probably saw it, where the teacher would ask everyone who they want to sit next to the next week. She wasn't actually looking to group or tables, she was looking for the name that nobody said.

Sharon: I saw that, too.

Amanda: Yeah, it was powerful.

Amanda: And as a program leader, I would want to think about a similar thing. Is everybody kind of connected? Is somebody getting left out?

Sharon: Sometimes it's just like a little code word or just a look that we have. You know, Amanda and I, we've worked together a long time. So you know, we can just give ourselves a look and it actually feels very supportive.

Amanda: It really does. We're on the same page, we're going to talk later, we can figure it out.

Sharon: Right. So, let's publish the poll. Daniel, if you don't mind.

Amanda: And let me say it's okay if you don't feel like you have someone to talk to. But we hope that you might find somebody. It doesn't have to be a boss, or you know, it may be, you may be a teacher and it might be the cook who you can kind of connect with and talk to. But we think everybody should have that.

Sharon: Great, so as everyone can see, hopefully, are they seeing this? Yeah great, most of you do have someone to turn to when you feel overwhelmed and some of you don't. And so, I think it's a time to reflect and think about who that might that person might be or how you might find some additional support for yourself.

Amanda: And one idea is, if you really are – maybe you're in a very isolated location, and there aren't a lot of people, or you're pretty new to your work, and you haven't really – there may be an established, you know, network friend group – that's what my daughter calls it – but group of people, and it's hard to break in, we have a lovely resource called MyPeers. There's groups – there are groups for every category of Head Start staff. You can go on there and look at all the communities and that is a way to get some support and help. When you really – if you can't connect with anyone at work. It's not the

same as in person. Some people exchange information and have conversations outside of MyPeers after, kind of, meeting through MyPeers. It's not dating though, Sharon.

Sharon: No, it's not quite the same. Great, well this is our, we're really excited to have set this frame and now we really want to give an opportunity to hear from some of your – two of your colleagues from around the country. Karen introduced herself at the beginning. You're going to hear a little bit about her program and see, you know, what kind of – what got them started in this area. What roadblocks they faced, and what resource they're using. How do they keep momentum in their a program each and every day? So, Karen, can we hear from you?

Karen: Yes, absolutely. Hello everyone, thank you for the opportunity to share our journey. A little bit about SETA. SETA is the grantee for Head Start and Early Head Start in Sacramento County and that's in California. We have five delegate agencies and two partners. Together we serve a bit over 4,000 Head Start preschoolers and just under 850 infant, toddlers in Early Head Start. And as a grantee, we operate 29 centers directly. And – so, next slide. In 2014, we experienced a bit of a supervision challenge which identified the need to strengthen our systems. It was a scary time because we thought we already had safety procedures in place to prevent – system – to prevent problems from occurring.

But we realized we really needed to go farther. So, the first thing we did was we brought together some meetings and trainings, and we identified our key stakeholders. And, the number one stakeholder that we really needed to get on board was our union. So, we met with our union and we identified a common goal. Because keeping children safe, also meant teachers would not face discipline for supervision issues. So, by coming together and at every training, having a union rep that was also present, it really presented a unified team for our safety approach. In addition to teaching staff our trainees included everybody. Family service workers, cooks, maintenance staff, administration, monitors. We wanted to make sure the teachers knew they were not in this alone and that everybody had a responsibility to safety. The small things from, just a cook when they bring in the cart of food, making sure that the door closed behind them. Simple things that everyone realized where their part played.

We raised awareness by meeting with our parent boards. We presented to parents at every site. We made it part of our orientation and enrollment for parents to know what our safety and supervision practices were. We looked at every facility a little closer than we had. We've done safe environment checklists; we've looked at things. But we looked at them a little closer. We painted gathering spaces outside and installed whiteboards indoors and out. And installed reverse mirrors. Just a few extra steps to make supervision easier. And then, with our tools and resources, we looked at how we can align them to existing things that we're using, such as the pyramid model. If we already have expectations of being kind and friendly, being respectful, and being safe and healthy, how could we incorporate those into our new approach. And what was missing, what did we need to also create?

And then last, but not least, we created a system for monitoring. And we created unannounced safety and supervision checklists that are done two times a quarter and tracked for every single classroom. And the thing about these checklists is they can be done by anybody. It can be done by one of our quality assurance monitors. It could be done by your cook, driver up here. It could happen anytime, so the motto is to stay prepared. Then that data is used to provide additional training, support and unfortunately, even counseling or discipline. But it does back, when we do have to take that extra step, but we hope that we don't have to get there through all the other avenues we've put in place.

On the next slide, we started our safety and supervision campaign. I call it a campaign because we knew we had to drum up support and even excitement for a topping – topic that can be a little bit daunting.

So, we integrated in marketing strategies, such as slogans, jingles, mascots, things that are easy to remember. Our super – supervision lapse, unfortunately, occurred during a transition time. So, that was a big focus for us. So, we developed SUPER Vision – and I'm going to say it with – SUPER Vision! Using the letters SUPER as actual steps to be taking during a transition. So, we use the "S" first to initiate stop. Stop what you're doing if we're going outside or we're going inside, stopping the kids with some sort of signal, a stop sign, a whistle, something to get – get their attention. "U" stood for unite and gather. Which meant that there's a designated gathering spot, indoor or out, where children go to prior to a transition. "P," perform a sweep. One of the staff performs a sweep of the outside or indoor area, prior to going outside. "E," doing an exact count of the children and our roll call and recount as the children either exit the classroom or enter the classroom from the outside.

These are not, you know, crazy steps that haven't been done before. But by putting them in this order and an easy to remember acronym, it just made it so that it was a consistent approach across the board. Use consistent and redundant procedures included the Magic Number, which was the exact count you got, was the Magic Number. And the Magic Number is simply the number of children in care. By giving it the name Magic Number it just became catchy. The Magic Number is on the whiteboard. It's verbally confirmed every time there's a change. So, if Johnny came in, our Magic Number is 17 and most importantly, getting the response back from the other teachers. "Thank you, our Magic Number is 17." Or, "Sarah left the classroom for speech. Our Magic Number is now 16. Thank you, our Magic Number is 16." It's not unusual for a monitor to walk into a class and ask the Magic Number and before a teacher even answers a child might say, hey, our Magic Number is 16. Because it is so integrated into practices now. And children have been a big part of our approach.

We developed a safety mascot, you see our little Paws of the Raccoon on the slide. She is a safety raccoon, and she reminds us all to pause for safety – take that little extra moment to ensure safe practices. And she is on every door of our program, holding a stop sign, saying, "Only adults open doors." It's just a reminder that children will only leave the classroom with a teacher, a parent, a grandparent, et cetera. Of course, it does not replace active supervision, but it just adds an additional layer of awareness for our children and our parents. You know. So, that parents don't sign a child out and say, "Hey, go to the car." We – we – we say the child has to leave with the adult. Paws is just a friendly way of reminding everybody of that policy. So, in the next slide, as we move farther into our supervision campaign, we felt it was important to face what we call is our kryptonite. What were the barriers to our successes? And it – we needed to be vulnerable and let our staff tell us what they thought, and we needed to hear what they were saying.

So, on this – on this slide, I have just a few of their concerns. And these are classroom realities no matter where you are. We needed to make our – sure staff know that it's safe to share their concerns with us. And we're going to hear them and we're going to address them. So, we took time for every classroom staff and every classroom team to create plans and solutions for these concerns that were unique to their locations.

So, in some cases, it did require a change in our staffing patterns. For others, it meant additional intervention support. Some needed more facility upgrades. But we needed to address the things that the teachers felt were barriers to keeping children safe and keeping staff feeling confident in what they were doing. In the next slide, we started with honest communications. And on the slide are some questions that we posed to our staff. And we got the classroom teams together and we said, "How can they communicate better to strengthen safety?" These are the questions that we use to practice these conversations. Because practice is how we get better at having them. It's hard to tell a co-worker or even a supervisor that something isn't being implemented effectively. Or even say, "I need a moment. Can you please step into ratio?" We encourage everyone to – we had this saying, "Which was, say what

needs to be said and hear what needs to be heard," and do that with an open mind, knowing that we're all here to support each other. So, in conclusion, on the next slide. It took – It took us a time. [Laughter] Creating a culture shift took a lot of time. We are five years in to some of these practices now, and they do come natural now. But at first it, was not like that.

We found transitions, all of a sudden we're taking double, even triple, the time it took prior because they were doing all these steps. And they were doing steps that they were not comfortable with yet. And conversations were awkward. But I can say that now that time has gone on, our staff do feel supported and they feel confident in their practices. And through our refresher trainings we – they have become second nature. So again, thank you for allowing me to share today.

Sharon: Thank you so much, Karen. That was really excellent. And it's – I really like that the identifying those kind of awkward conversations, and you know, really – really making sure that staff can feel heard. Sometimes it doesn't feel good to hear that. But that's also about staff wellness and the ability to be present and share their concerns. So, I wonder if we could, as we transition to our next presenter, maybe people could chat a little bit about what could help you have awkward conversations about a safety issue in your program. Karen gave you some strategies about some of the things that they did. We can hear from the rest of you.

Amanda: And I think, you know, Sharon, this is also – I mentioned this earlier that to have this kind of conversation, that you need to know it's safe, that you're not going to get in trouble, or it's not going to sit on your performance review if you say, "I think, based on what happened when we transition to the lunchroom that we need to improve our practices. Because we had a problem." Like, You got to be able to say it in order to get to how can we improve those practices.

Sharon: We got to label it and people need to be – as she said – be heard and and be able to hear. So, great. Cindy, I'm so excited that, you know, we're going to go to Cindy from Missouri. Now, an equally complex rural program. Cindy, can you tell us your story?

Cindy: Yes, thank you, Amanda and Sharon for inviting me to share DAEOC's story. I apologize up front, I sometimes get to talking really fast, so I – hopefully, I won't lose anybody. As you can see on the slide, we've been a private nonprofit Community Action Program, a grantee for 54 years. We do serve six counties in rural Southeast Missouri, known as the Bootheel of Missouri. And you can see that we have Head Start and Early Head Start. We have center-based and home-based, and we serve a total of 1,244 children. Next slide. Our program – I think we really rock. We've got willing staff that we've been on a 13-year journey to strengthen our program through examining processes, and systems, and service provision. And you can see there, some of the regular things that people work on with removing silos, and recognizing how we're intertwined, and challenging ourselves, and formalizing processes.

Also, we've been on a 10-year adventure with Conscious Discipline and that, I do want to mention that that's a social-emotional program that we use to support children and staff. We've been awarded Early Head Start expansion in 2009 and '15. And then, of course, we've – what I really am proud of for the program is that we've had two successful reviews in 2014 in '18 with no findings, and our class scores are on the rise. You know, I really think we kind of rock. In talking about here, for health and safety and foundations for that. I can remember eight, nine years ago, presenting to the staff in a pre-service, back when the first cohort for the reviews under the new DRS system – it's not really new anymore – but were first out.

Somehow, I had received a copy of the listings of grants and we – that were re-competing, and the reasons why they were re-competing. And so, I had made several copies of that to pass around in our pre-service session. I had asked them to spend a little bit of time looking at the reasons for the re-competition. I'd asked the staff to tell me what the reasons had in common. We came up with the usual

answers of not following policy and procedure, and people not paying attention. But at the end of all that conversation, we really came to the conclusion that the reasons we're all related to human error. And so, you know, we had a big discussion about how to mitigate human error and what can we do. And we talked about being on high alert when the children were on site; helping our peers to follow procedures and being on her game; and fighting complacency.

All those things that we all, you know, think about. And you know, at that time, I gave that staff – gave the staff that big pep talk, and I just was like so sure. "Guys we, you know, we got this. We're – It's not going to happen to us. We're well on our way." And then, of course, as you see on this screen our "oops" happened. And it happened around lunchtime on October 27, 2016. And we had a center returning from a field trip for a parade, related to Head Start Awareness Month. And three staff failed to do what they had been trained to do on many occasions. And my heart sank when I heard the words over the phone from the Center Director saying, "We left a child on the bus." Her words, they kind of, blurred in my mind for just a minute because I kept seeing the word re-competition flash like a neon sign in my head.

Then I quickly got back in the game, and I tried to offer empathy, while I was trying to squeeze every bit of information out of our conversation. And we discussed who we needed to notify: parents, the state hotline, licensing, Office of Head Start, and the staff that would be placed on administrative leave, pending the investigation outcome. And I think I remember saying, "I know it's terrible, I know it's tough, and we're going to get through this." We suspended field trips until we examined all our processes. And you might wonder how did we get through that? So, I would liken it to a grief process. And our actual grief process looked less like a linear path with neat little stages, and it was more like a roller coaster, loop-d-loop of emotions. And of course, you bring your own experiences to the table when you're going through a grief process.

I already mentioned that I'd been on the phone call with the staff. And so, we were kind of going through shock and denial, but we also had to shift to partial acceptance to start working on some things. But you know, really, that shock and numbness, it lasted most of that day and, you know, a little bit longer, too, and moved through some anger and frustration, and even some trying to find meaning. And I know our team kind of stayed there for probably a week or two. We probably had some of that depression where we had that overwhelming kind of feeling of helplessness, like what more can we do. But we're a resilient kind of bunch, you know. And we help each other a lot. We – we all have, I think, we have a good team, and we have our person to go to, I think, for most of us.

So, we pulled together, and after some venting we started picking apart our processes and what else could be done. When I say that, we had a lot of, "Geez, what else can be done? They're supposed to walk the bus, that's our policy. Come on, just walk the bus and this won't happen." You know. But after about week two or three, our group started, you know, continuing to pick apart things and look at our processes, and we tossed around several ideas about tweaking our existing policy and procedures.

We also analyzed it from a variety of angles, talking about, you know, the camera on the bus and why the bus alarm didn't sound at that particular time, and all kinds of stuff. Because some of y'all are probably saying, "Oh, we got an alarm, that solved that." Well yeah, it didn't. So, tweaking some of the PNP included, revisiting existing forms to add the – some redundancy. We added the signature of the center director or her designee, to those of the driver and the center aide to affirm that they had walked the bus, checking for children, after the post trip inspection. We revisited our existing form related to bus monitoring tool to update it for the observation of watching somebody walk the bus. We revised some processes to ensure the classroom was divided when, if a classroom was divided, when they were loading the bus for a field trip, that at least one of the staff from that class rode the bus. And that the staff were not just counting heads but recognizing children.

And then some new things we added were that the agency senior staff, not just direct program staff, started doing random bus monitoring rides. And then, the center director and the bus driver would call the deputy director prior to a field trip. And I had – and they would do, what I guess I would call, a safety pep talk. And that would include that they would call when they were loading and give us the count. And us, I mean central office, either the deputy director or a designee. Or, and they would also call when they returned safely to tell us how it all went, that all were safe. And then, this is also where Operation Elsa, Where's Elsa and Friends, joined our program. And when I say Elsa, yeah, I mean Elsa from the movie, "Frozen." Our team had left one of our strategy sessions, thinking about an idea that our program design and management specialists had tossed out about hiding prizes under the bus seats for the staff to find. And being the fiscally-minded director that I am, I kind of said to everybody, "Well, I'm not sure we can spend money on that, and I'm not sure we get that kind of in-kind, but it's a good idea. We need to figure out how to make something like that work." And then along came our deputy director and decided that replacing the small item from the original idea, the prize, would – would actually be better to have a child-sized doll maybe under the bus seat for them to find.

So, we ran with that idea. And his twin granddaughters volunteered their three-foot-tall Elsa doll, and we were in business to pilot our idea. And so, if you've seen an Elsa doll then she's kind of, like, really bright, and blingy, and stuff. And so, we went ahead and dressed her in black and put a black scarf on her blonde hair, and we were trying to make her not easy to spot. So we explained to the center directors about Operation Where's Elsa at a management team meeting. And they were to go back and explain to staff what would soon be happening. And then, we set on the implementation of it for a week or so, since we figured everybody was going to be ready. And so, our deputy director began hiding Elsa randomly on buses in the following months. There was really no rhyme or reason, or pattern. Sometimes she was in the morning run, sometimes the afternoon, sometimes the preschool. But the staff were to notify their supervisor when they found Elsa so that she could be returned to her deputy director dad at central office. And Elsa went on several bus runs the first year.

And it was, oh happy day when she was found as expected. And the center director reported her finding to the deputy director. And then, of course, there were some not so happy, few occasions, when poor Elsa was stuck on the bus longer than she was supposed to be, and it was a really big wake-up call to the staff that left Elsa. It was one of those moments like, yes, it can really happen to me. And so, just a side note here, Elsa kind of, was involved in a few mishaps and became disabled that year. Her left leg had to be amputated and she probably needed neck brace. Although she was disabled, she didn't require an IEP. So, we decided to let her move on to Kindergarten, and go there, and actually retired her.

So, we did identify three friends who were more flexible to survive being placed under a bus seat. And we decided to name them after special people at Regional Office who had always been supportive enough through the years, during what I usually call the good, bad, and ugly. When you have stuff happen good and not-so-good. Also want to share about, quickly, another "oops" we had in 2018. Because there were lots of things that we did then, too. Kind of went through the same thing about, you know, the grief process, trying to analyze the idea. We had been concerned for a while about staff reaching their limits with challenging behavior. And we've kind of mentioned that earlier in our presentation. And how to deal, how to help them with that. We'd even been tossing around some ideas, but unfortunately we had not implemented them before our next "oops" occurred.

But from that oops, and from all that analyzing, and – and looking at things really deeply, we came up with some more practices that I wanted to share. And so, we decided to start an SOS and a Reboot. And we call those a drill monthly. And we practice those, just like we do our fire, tornado, and earthquake. The SOS drill relates to having an emergency in the classroom, to where we actually practice that and pretend somebody is actually injured some way, and so, that we want to be able to call SOS and have

people go to the classroom, versus people are leaving the classroom, and then you might be concerned about ratio, and upset children, and all kinds of things that can happen. The other thing would be Reboot, practicing that. And reboot is just that. The staff might need an opportunity or have a time where they need to step out of the classroom. They need some help, they've gotta regroup themselves so that they that can then go back in and be of service to the children in the classroom.

And so, when they need a break, we try to have them practice and for a time for that, and – and have someone from the office or if there's an extra staff person, go in and give them about 10 minutes to regroup. We also have been looking at having the staff do self reflection on some video monitoring of themselves in the classroom and what they could have done better. What went well, what didn't.

And then, we've also looked at having education coaches and supervisors also do that monitoring, video monitoring, so that they can discuss with the staff individually. There's training on all of this. There is a challenge related to recognizing that some staff, maybe up their game when they know somebody's watching, and how to balance that against maybe, their perception of Big Brother's watching all the time. Trying to have that trust, that we're really out for making sure everybody is safe and doing the best they can. Lastly, I hope everybody realizes that you never fully arrive, it's definitely about the journey.

And on the journey we've found that we're constantly tweaking, as I say, and we don't usually throw something out we just – and start again, we usually just keep tweaking. Just like all programs, we aren't ashamed to borrow ideas from others and make them work for us. I always tell the staff, that communication is hard, you go first. And hopefully, I hope everyone realizes that communication is what is heard and understood, it's not just what is said. And so, there's lots of work that goes into ensuring that our staff understand the "why," as well as "what and how." And our "why" for what I've shared with you today is, of course, the safety and well-being for children and staff.

So, thank you for letting me share and we wish you well on your journey.

Amanda: Well, thank you. We are so glad that you were willing to be so forthright in talking about what happened. You know. This is Amanda, and I was – I was a Head Start director, and I belonged to a cluster of 12 counties. And we used to meet monthly, and all of us have things that happened. All humans can make mistakes. Doctors can make mistakes, people we depend on for life and death can make errors. And what – what you are describing is a system that recognizes that, figures out where you have vulnerabilities, and make sure that you have supports in place. So, that when people do make errors it doesn't result in a tragedy, or a child being either emotionally or physically hurt. So, I commend you for that. And I know many, many, many program staff throughout the nation are saying, "Yes, it happened to us, too." And some of them also went through competition and used that as an opportunity to shore up the culture of wellness, health and safety. And some, maybe, were not as able to do that. But, I think what you both really describe well was what we mean by culture. This kind of ongoing examination or assessment, as it says on the slide.

The – the responsiveness, where you think about what happens, you make a plan, you train people, you get input from – from all quarters. You implement what you decide to do. You're constantly reassessing and evaluating. And you're continuing to improve. I have recently been known – you know, heard to say, if you are – are in Head Start because you think you're going to get finished, and it will be easier, it just doesn't work that way. We're a learning organization, and we demand, you know, constant improvement around doing a better job for children and families. And it – I've been in the program almost 30 years and I am certain, I know, that that's part of our mission and part of what will be ongoing for us. So again, I am so happy that you were able to share all that. I would say that – I mentioned doctors make mistakes too, Sharon.

Sharon: Yes.

Amanda: And you know many hospitals – we talked a little about risk and safety. Many hospitals have groups. They may call them M&Ms or Morbidity and Mortality. If they have a bad outcome, they sit down and – and everybody is expected to speak honestly. There may be repercussions from another place in the system but not from that place, that is where everybody talks about what happened and what went wrong, and – or what went right and how it can be either prevented, if it was a bad outcome, or taken to scale if it was a good one.

Sharon: Right, and Karen described some of that within her program.

Amanda: A similar process. After the second "oops," I think what Karen is talking about is really similar. Like, we're really going to have a very careful examination of what happens and how we can change things.

Sharon: Amanda, I'm wondering now I would love to just give voice to those that responded about what could help you have an awkward conversation about safety issues in your program. And then, we can also ask Karen, and Cindy, and you, and me to answer any questions that have come in. And the listeners should continue to send questions because we love to answer questions.

Amanda: We do. We look to try.

Sharon: Well, we do, we love to try. And we, you know.

Amanda: Sometimes we channel other people.

Sharon: Or we just – if we can't answer, we may not – may not read it out loud.

Amanda: Or we might put it out there, and ask someone else here.

Sharon: But anyway, people give some really good thoughts about what could help with the awkward conversation. You know. Fay, in Tallatoona, she said, "Having supportive examples and materials "as evidence-based can smooth the awkwardness." I love that. And Connie, with Miss Connie Family

Childcare: "Just make sure staff feel comfortable." And you know that's – that's very, very important. People aren't going to share if they don't feel comfortable, if they feel threatened, and so, there's lots of strategies that I'm sure Connie uses to – to get that done. And Lucy at the NCSRE1J Early Childhood Center, she says, "Not feeling defensive, not taking it personally." Absolutely, and that's hard, sometimes, that's hard.

Amanda: You have to be confident in your own work to not be defensive about, you know, maybe something that didn't go as well.

Sharon: Absolutely, and she's

saying: "Remember our focus is the safety of children and families is first, not the fear of being fired over a mistake, and being criticized, and that type of thing." So that was – was important. And Kimberly at First Start Partnerships for Children and Families says, "It's important to remember they are necessary conversations to create safe and quality programs. And it is easier to avoid the conversations than to have them." So, she's absolutely right this is necessary. And great, there's a few more but I think maybe, Cindy could answer. Cindy, you have been answering some questions in the chat, a few questions, and I think it would be great for others to hear what some of the questions were and for you to – to give some responses.

Cindy: Okay, so did you want me to go ahead and read the questions as I have them or whatever?

Sharon: Yeah, because, you know – secretly, only the presenters can see the questions, so we want to just share out with everybody as we can.

Cindy: Okay, gotcha. All right, I've got one here that says, let's see, "Can you repeat what SUPER stood for?" I think that would be Sharon's, for in supervision. Maybe if you can go back to that slide you'll see those.

Karen: I can answer that, this is Karen.

Sharon: Karen, why don't you take that. Yeah. So. The question that came to Karen; Karen can answer, and Cindy, great, thank you.

Karen: Right, so yes the SUPER. The "S" stood for stop. The "U" stood for unite and gather, in the gathering spot. "P" was perform a sweep of the area. "E" was an exact, get an exact count. And "R" was roll call and repeat. And that kind of ties into another question that another viewer had, which is, "What is the transition sheet?" The transition sheet we use is a sheet that has all the children's names. As the teacher does the roll call and recount they actually do a check mark on that sheet, physically, as the children go from one area to the other.

Amanda: Great, so that's the answer.

Sharon: Go ahead Cindy. Go right ahead, Cindy.

Cindy: No, I was – one of the questions that had been on there was, "What does SOS stand for?" Actually, it's pretty simple. It's – it's that universal, international code about extreme distress. Usually, it was more about ships at sea. So, SOS is actually Save Our Ship. And so, when you think about a classroom in distress, you know, or the center – something's going on in the classroom, SOS, they need some help right away. The need all hands on deck, kind of thing.

Sharon: Great, any other questions for Cindy or Karen, or we can move on to some of these other questions that we might answer and share? Amanda?

Amanda: So we have a very tough question here, and I bet it's on the mind of more than one person. And the question is what can be done if the lead – and I'm not going to say who asked this – "What can be done if the leader on top fails to address staff needs that have been brought to management's attention through self-assessment and meetings?" That can be a really hard problem, and you can – you can get in – very quickly, get in, kind of, an adversarial tug-of-war situation where the staff keeps saying, "Hey, we need more, we need help." You know. And the manager keeps saying, "No, you guys have everything. You shouldn't have the asking for more." And nobody is going to get anywhere.

One thing Dr. Bergeron strongly believes is that there can be leadership throughout an organization. Leaders of Head Start programs actually want the programs to be successful, in most cases. I think that you need to think about how to present ideas for solutions and things that will help when you go to the leader to – That it's not all, maybe – I'll give you an example. One common, you know, very serious concern is that people are not paid adequately in this field. There is just no question about that, it's true, it's hard. Very rarely can a Head Start director fix that problem. Right? They may get defensive and frustrated.

But if the problem is that people are feeling burned out and overwhelmed, going to the director and saying, "Hey, we want to suggest, we want to offer that we have some different kinds of pre-service and in-service that include staff wellness. And you know, One of us is yoga instructor and she offered to do a session on yoga at each in-service. Or, you know, we need to have an hour to have round tables just to talk about some of the work we do. Or we need time to reflect together and work on curriculum together. So, we would like to have, you know time set aside for that and a little bit of help with that."

So, that you're trying to go with some solutions, as well. And then talking about how it's going to make it better. "We think if we have a stronger staff wellness program, we will not – You know, we lost five of 10 teachers last year. We want to try this. Would you let us try this? And we think it might reduce the staff turnover." I know that it is hard, and you probably wish I could just say, make that dir – make that director or leader do what they're supposed to. But is usually, it can't usually be done that way.

So, I would really encourage you to try to work together and to – to approach the person with some ideas of things that you can do that might make it better for everybody there.

Sharon: Right. I think you took a complex question and you're going to work there. You know, One of the other – one of the other comments that – and I know this is one of your favorites that I, you know – is teachers don't understand that routines help to make classes safe. How do we teach teachers that this is important?

Amanda: It is a hard one. Routines, children learn routines. You can tell when a classroom has a routine because children know what to do. We heard, you know, that the children might know the Magic Number. Children tend to like routines. That does not mean they like rigidity. You always need flexibility. But you need to have things in place, the kind of framework, and routine is a framework, so that children can do the really interesting learning things safely and in an ongoing way. It's just – it's essential to making sure that it's safe, and predictable, and children can do the big job of learning and in a place that supports them fully.

Sharon: I do know that we have, I mean, is the foundation of any, you know, happy and well-managed classroom. And we do have lots of resources on the ECLKC. You know, in this particular case, you know that teacher may need some extra support. Maybe there needs to be additional coaching or maybe the, you know, mental health consultant might want to come and observe the classroom and offer some other suggestions.

Amanda: Absolutely. We have a question, Sharon, again, about when this campaign came out, the notice of this webinar said it would be information about pre-service and in-service. We did decide to do a little bit more expansive presentation today. But I want to emphasize there are excellent, packaged resources available on the ECLKC at the Safe Foundations, Healthy Futures page. So just, you know, Search SFHF, when you get to the ECLKC. You'll get the page, and then there are resources there that were designed so that a facilitator like an ed manager or health manager can use them with staff at in-service or pre-service to build your own effort similar to what Karen and Cindy have offered. We are not – Karen and Cindy described their process. By no means think their programs would work for everybody. We happen to have a rural program and an urban program.

But what really, they each went through was a process and during the process they got a lot of engagement and buy-in from all of the constituents in their system. That, we think, is necessary to making this really work. We think that the resources you can find ECLKC can be used for pre-service and in-service to start to build your own system.

Sharon: I mean, in each of them, depending on the focus, you know, of what the program's data is telling them about what the focus of the in-service in pre-service should be. You know, I would say that, I know that September Town Hall that focused on creating and enhancing a culture of safety, had used it as a basis, an excellent resource on 10 actions to create a culture of safety. In-kind is true of the different, featured town halls or webinars, there were always particular resources. So, I think you also have to think about how we would tailor, what it is that we would like to offer staff, based on what we know about, you know, the need. So.

Amanda: Absolutely, and somebody here from Lutheran Services gave us great idea for anyone to use. Start with a think tank of parents and staff. you know, bring together a group, call it a think tank, leave it really open-ended and say, "What can we do to improve the culture of wellness, health, and safety in our program?"

Sharon: Yes, and Karen and Cindy, I mean, we're not in the same room, so I just want to make sure that anything that you'd like to share, any other additional insights based on the questions, that you'd like to share with the group I want to make sure that space is available.

Karen: This is Karen. I would just say, just give it time, know it's a process, and just make sure you're working with equal voices across your program. That management, teachers, cooks, drivers, parents, children, have equal voices in the process.

Cindy: This is Cindy. I would echo what Karen said, also. You want to make sure you've got good input. Sometimes you have to ask the questions, you can't just think everybody's going to volunteer the information. I did have one question related to how did I work with Policy Council and board through the process. You have to kind of be pretty transparent. So, we contacted board chair, Policy Council chair, and then, of course, at the regularly scheduled meetings or a specially called one, explained different things related to the incident. Explained processes that we were currently looking at. What we had put in place so far. What we would be examining and then, of course, constantly an update on where you're at in the process with all the different particular parties that you're dealing with when you have things like that.

Amanda: That's a really good point, I think, about the transparency. I think nobody would want to be doing this kind of – in a way that could seem covert. Because nobody tends to like that. So I think – One other very important piece of information – and thank you Steve Truman – is that it doesn't work to search for SFHF. It should, but you need to search for Safe Foundations on the ECLKC to get to the page that has the resources. Now, I want to, again, thank everyone for being with us today. I'd like to see the one slide, there we go. We are so grateful that you participated today. For those of you who were able to be with us for more than one of these webinars we are especially glad.

And we're also glad for the people who are accessing the resources. I think it's important to know this is really not about webinars. The webinars were a way of delivering some information and ideas. But what really counts, is what you do to implement in your local programs. Head Start is an extremely scrutinized organization and it should be. We spend nearly \$10 Billion and we're charged with providing the very best the country knows for children and families who are eligible for our services. It is a huge, huge responsibility. I feel like we've gotta do it better and talk about transparency. We are extremely transparent.

So, it is in everybody's interest to get the health and safety and wellness under your belt and part of your regular operations. It makes people feel better about their work when these are taken care of. I think that it helps us really deliver on our higher priority, which is really about, school readiness, but remember that it is about ensuring that children are exposed to the joy, curiosity, and humor of life and learning. And that they are engaged in a way that will launch them through the door of opportunity when they leave your program. So, you got this Head Start. Thanks for being here.

Sharon: Thank you.