

Domestic Violence: Session 3

Brandi Black Thacker: Hello everyone my name is Brandi Black Thacker, and I'm the director of T&TA in collaboration for the National Center on Parent, Family, Community Engagement. I am so excited to welcome you to the third session of five in a series of webinars that we're partnering with our colleagues and friends at Futures Without Violence on for our Head Start community.

The focus today is really about how to partner with parents to prevent and respond to domestic violence. But before we get too far into the content, let's review where we've been and where we're going to go together in this series. The first two sessions were on an introduction to addressing domestic violence in Head Start programs, and then a turn to supporting healing in families who have experienced domestic violence. This session is going to be focused on partnering with parents, not only to prevent but respond to domestic violence, and then we'll round out this series with the fourth and fifth sessions on partnering with family members who've used violence in their intimate relationships, and then certainly how to make those connections in our local communities based on collaborative relationships.

You guys are in for a wonderful treat for this session. It is my absolute honor to introduce to you Virginia Duplessis, who is going to be your speaker for this session today from Futures Without Violence. So, take it away, Miss Virginia.

Virginia Duplessis: Thanks so much, Brandi. So, this session is really going to focus on a specific tool that you can use to implement an evidence-informed intervention in your program that's going to help you prevent and respond to domestic violence. So, we have two learning objectives today. One is to use the Families Thrive, Zero to Five safety card to promote healthy and safe relationships with all families, and then the other is to use the same card to support parents experiencing domestic violence, with a focus on safety and empowerment. I have a copy of these three documents. The Families Thrive, Zero to Five safety card, Implementing Universal Education Strategies on Domestic Violence in Head Start Programs, and the Tips for Responding to Disclosures. So, if you don't have those yet, you might want to pause the webinar, download them, and take a look. And then we'll also need a pen and paper for a couple of journaling exercises that we have built in.

So, before we get started on the intervention, just really wanted to highlight why we developed ... this webinar series and these resources for your program. It's really because we know that you all play a vital role in the lives of Head Start families and can make a really big difference in creating healthier, safer communities where violence doesn't happen. So, as we move into the intervention, I'll be talking about just a little bit of a preview. The approach we're talking about is strengthening the work that you already do. So, we want to really capitalize on these long, enduring relationships, the fact that you're a trusted source of information and support. We're going to talk a lot about prevention. So, I think historically, lots of domestic violence trainings and programs have really focused pretty exclusively on how to support someone who is

experiencing violence. And this is backing up to take a look at how we can stop violence from occurring in the first place. And along with that, we really want to amplify prosocial messages. So, what is it in our communities, in our families, in our programs that value healthy relationships ... open communication, and honesty because, again, sometimes the conversations about relationships focuses on kind of the negative and the violence. We want to make sure that people have the information and skills to have healthy relationships, not just talk about what's bad and what's negative.

So, the other thing to really think about is what we're not trying to do here. So, first and foremost, we don't want to add any more time or effort to your work. We know that you're already wearing many hats, are pulled in a lot of directions. And so, the intervention that we're talking about is one that can be woven into the conversations and the interactions that you're already having. And then these two last points, I think, are really important. The expectation isn't that you're screening for domestic violence. So, this isn't a checklist of, you know, asking people about their experiences and trying to identify victims. The goal really is to create an environment where everyone in Head Start knows that it's a place that values and promotes healthy relationships, and also has resources available if you are experiencing violence or have questions. But disclosing those kinds of experience is not a requirement, per se.

The Families Thrive, Zero to Five safety card. So, I would encourage you to pull out the card right now and actually pause the webinar to really take a look at it and read through it. So, the safety card was developed in partnership with folks around the country from Head Start programs, we had parents, we had staff, we had domestic violence advocates also taking a look at this. And the format may look familiar. It's basically based on the kinds of informational brochures that domestic and sexual violence programs have used for many years because it is so discreet. If safety is an issue and someone is worried about it being found, it can be slipped in a shoe, in a cell phone, you know, behind the case, it's very discreet. But you'll notice that it has information that's very specific for the families that are in Head Start around parenting young children, resources on the back panel that are specific to parenting concerns. So, we really created a card that had information that's relevant and important to families that you're seeing. The other thing that you'll notice about the front of the card is it actually doesn't say domestic violence, right? because, again, we're trying to really lean on positive, healthy behaviors, right, thriving. And so, we want to make sure that we are not ... discouraging or scaring people off with messaging around violence. They may be a little bit more reluctant to pick up a card that, you know, has something that says domestic violence. But who can resist this card with these adorable, yummy kids on it?

So, we're going to really go step by step, what is CUES? Now I'll admit when you hear the word intervention, sometimes it sounds a little intimidating, scary. I'm going to need a lot of additional training, some different computer, different tools. And really the CUES Intervention is a guided conversation. And conversations are what Head Start staff are really good at, right? Connecting with families, talking, supporting, and that's exactly what this is. So, this intervention is evidence informed. We have many years of experience and other kinds of settings, mainly healthcare settings where a guided conversation using a card similar to Families

Thrive, Zero to Five was used, shared with clients and patients, conversations about healthy relationships, where to get support if you're experiencing violence and warm referrals to domestic violence programs if abuse was disclosed. And we really saw that this really guided conversation, increased safety for people, increased knowledge of what domestic violence resources were in the community and increased people's ... I'm sorry, increased people sharing of resources.

So, here are the steps of CUES. It's an acronym. C stands for confidentiality, where we're discussing the limits of confidentiality and speaking with parents alone. UE is universal education and empowerment. We want to make sure that we're providing universal education about healthy relationships and how to help a friend. And then the S is for support, where there's kind of two different pathways. If domestic violence is disclosed, you want to offer harm reduction strategies and make a warm referral to advocacy services. And if domestic violence was not disclosed, you're still going to provide information about resources. That's pretty different than kind of traditional interventions around domestic violence.

So, we're going to go through each of these steps together. We want to make sure that your physical space is also ready and that really means setting up a Head Start that has a lot of environmental CUES that lets families know that your staff cares about this issue and that you're a resource if folks need help. So really thinking about how you can build out a private place to talk with parents alone when you have these kinds of conversations. Obviously, privacy and confidentiality is really important. Having things like posters and brochures, cards about healthy relationships and domestic violence, having those available both in common areas and in private areas. I'm sure many of your settings already have different kinds of informational fliers and brochure racks in waiting rooms and then sometimes the more kind of sensitive issue information is in bathrooms and other places where people can grab things more privately. And then, also really thinking about adding acknowledgment of domestic violence to your intake and enrollment forms.

As you learned in previous sessions, this is an issue that impacts so many families and it really goes a long way. Again, to create an environment where families trust you and know that you kind of care about this issue if it's acknowledged as something that families may be facing in the different materials and forms that you distribute. So, in order to talk about confidentiality, effectively, you have to understand what your reporting obligations are so that you can articulate that with families. So, you want to make sure that you know your state laws and reporting policies about domestic violence. Domestic violence and child abuse are related but have different laws, right? And then we also know that there are laws that are written in the books, and then there's how they're applied at the local level. So really think about what it looks like in your community when you make a report of domestic violence. And also, where parents can go for those confidential services. So, if someone is struggling, has questions, not sure ... And needs to talk to someone anonymously, you know, how can you make sure that everyone has access to that information? And, you know, you can't do this alone. This is a lot of information to unpack and really understand all the laws and their applications in your community. So really encouraging you to connect with your local domestic violence program

for more training and technical assistance because they have a lot of experience figuring all of these issues out and a later session, we'll actually talk about collaborations with local community partners and that includes your local domestic violence program. You want to make sure that you review the limits of confidentiality and doing that in several ways. So, they say that it actually takes seven times of hearing or receiving information for it to, like, really be processed, for you to really take it in. So, you want to make sure that the limits of confidentiality are on your forms, that you convey them verbally and check for understanding, have the person repeat back to you, you know, what they've heard and how they understand it. And then, again, really those environmental CUES on posters and other materials so that people have that opportunity to know ... what can remain confidential and what would trigger a report.

All right, so once you've had that conversation, you want to move into universal education and empowerment. Oftentimes, those conversations would only happen if we suspected something was, you know, going on in the family. And this is really an approach where every family has an opportunity to talk about relationships and receive resources. So, it's not just someone who discloses that they are having a hard time, or they're scared or feel unsafe in their relationship. Everyone gets the information. So, the two elements are really thinking about how to normalize this conversation. You don't want anyone to feel like they are being singled out, you know, like they have a big, like, something it written across their forehead, domestic violence. We want it to be a conversation that is with everyone, right? So, it's universal.

So, here's a little bit of a sample script. We've started giving this card to all our parents so they know how to get help for themselves or so they can help others. Something just really simple to open the door to offer a resource, again, that Families Thrive, Zero to Five resource. You know, there are some connections between experiencing violence, parenting, and child development. And for many parents, they may not know about those connections. And so, in the card, it speaks specifically to that. And sometimes it's an aha moment for parents, inspires them to think about their relationship and their parenting. And then, again, really ... sometimes it's that first opportunity to talk about healthy relationships. In doing this work and training lots of folks over the years, you know, we'll hear from grown people who, you know, have been in many relationships, have multiple children. And they will say, "You know, no one's ever actually talked with me about what a healthy and safe relationship, what I deserve in a relationship." And this can be really powerful educational tool. This panel, called Good Days, and just to say, you know, there's a lot of information on the safety card. It's not the expectation that you would go over every panel, go over every bullet, but having all the information there, certainly, people will be able to read through it, take it with them, pick out what's going to be relevant to them. And as, you know, the Head Start staff person ... thinking about one or two bullets that are going to be your go-to that you want to talk about. And just a reminder that the intervention is really about the conversation that you're having about the card, it's not just handing the card over.

Where we see the positive impact is the interaction between the family member and the staff person. Of course, making the cards available, you know, widely in your welcome packets or in

bathrooms and all that, that's great. But again, where we see the positive impact of reduced violence, of increased reaching out for support, increases in helping a friend is after a staff member has actually talked about the card with them. So, all of that to say, starting with healthy relationships. And as I spoke to a couple minutes ago, really concrete information on what that might look like, right? So, starting out with big messages about, you know, what people deserve in a relationship and some concrete examples, like being treated with kindness that makes you feel love ... Being able to take space when you need it. Those are the kinds of messages that we found really resonate with folks. And again, if you take a look at the bottom, where it has a couple of closing sentences, healthy relationships are good for parents and help children grow to be healthy and happy. So, we're really tying it back to, you know, the main goals of Head Start as well. Sharing the card with a parent and framing it as an opportunity for them to also support friends and family. So, we always encourage giving two cards and ... letting them know they can also be a support to someone who may be experiencing violence, right? So, sharing it with friends and family.

And what we've really heard a couple of, there's a few reasons that we frame it in this way. One is for folks who are experiencing violence but may not feel able to talk with you about it. You know, they're scared, they're isolated, they're ashamed, embarrassed. By giving the card and saying, here, this is for a friend, they can still take it without feeling like they're disclosing what's happening. And I really believe that folks who, you know, are really scared and isolated are less likely to share what's happening in their relationships anyway. So, this is a great way to still get information to them. And we know that this card actually does get shared with friends and family members. We've heard through, you know, multiple studies that we've done, where we've interviewed people who've received the card from a provider, you know, that they carry it with them, they share it with people in their lives, and that that feels really good and really important. You know, helping other people is good for the soul and especially, if you yourself have experienced violence or abuse, helping others who have been in a similar situation can be part of your healing and kind of building back your power and resilience. Again, we've done multiple focus groups and talked with, especially, people who have experienced violence themselves and they say that this is a really key part of why receiving the card from a provider and having this conversation feels really important and special. You know, having those right words and some guidance if you want to help a friend.

All right. All right. So, we've gone through the universal education and empowerment portion of the intervention along with the introduction and that includes disclosing the limits of confidentiality. So, let's journal for a couple minutes, and think about these three points. What everyday interactions can you introduce the card? So, what is it that you do ... already as part of your work, where you can see naturally integrating and weaving in these conversations? Also, think about a short script for yourself to quickly introduce the card. What we really learned over the years is you don't want a lot of build-up and making it this huge deal that you're handing over the card. So, jot down maybe two or three different sentences that you could use to introduce the card that feel natural to you. And then, of course, you know, in this session, we're providing a lot of information. But we're also probably bringing up questions for you as well. So, jot down any questions that you still have, that you would need answered before

you'd feel comfortable incorporating this into your work. So, take a moment to pause, you can pause the webinar, and then come back when you're done with your journaling. Support and this is again going to cover both if someone discloses to you that they've experienced domestic violence, what you can do then and if someone says, "No, I'm not in a relationship or my relationship is healthy," how you can respond in that case. So, first, we're going to watch a video on empathy because we know that having these conversations and responding when someone may share, you know, really hard experiences ... They're making themselves vulnerable. The most important thing that you can do is offer empathy.

[Video begins]

Brené Brown: So, what is empathy and why is it very different than sympathy? Empathy fuels connection. Sympathy drives disconnection. Empathy, it's very interesting, Theresa Wiseman is a nursing scholar who studied professions, very diverse professions where empathy is relevant and came up with four qualities of empathy. Perspective-taking, the ability to take the perspective of another person or recognize their perspective as their truth. Staying out of judgment, not easy when you enjoy it as much as most of us do. Recognizing emotion in other people and then communicating that. Empathy is feeling with people. And to me, I always think of empathy as this kind of sacred space. When someone's kind of in a deep hole, and they shout out from the bottom, and they say, "I'm stuck. It's dark. I'm overwhelmed." And then we look, and we say, "Hey!" And climb down. "I know what it's like down here, and you are not alone." Sympathy is, "Ooh! It's bad, uh-huh? Uh, no. You want a sandwich?" Empathy is a choice, and it's a vulnerable choice because in order to connect with you, I have to connect with something in myself that knows that feeling. Rarely, if ever, does an empathic response begin with, at least. I had it ... Yeah. And we do it all the time because, you know what, someone just shared something with us that's incredibly painful, and we're trying to silver lining it. I don't think that's a verb, but I'm using it as one. We're trying to put a silver lining around it. So, "I had a miscarriage." "Oh, at least, you know you can get pregnant." "I think my marriage is falling apart." "At least, you have a marriage." "John's getting kicked out of school." "At least, Sarah is an A-student." But one of the things we do sometimes in the face of very difficult conversations is we try to make things better. If I share something with you that's very difficult, I'd rather you say, "I don't even know what to say right now. I'm just so glad you told me." Because the truth is, rarely can a response make something better. What makes something better is connection.

[Video ends]

Virginia: It really talks about how empathy is different from sympathy and how ... You know, even though the examples aren't specific to domestic violence, you can see how, you know, a lot of the principles would still apply. So, let's take another opportunity to reflect in journal ... And really taking a look at these two points. So, recall a time when someone supported you empathetically during a difficult time. So, think back to a situation, it could be at work, could be in your family, among your friends ... And really reflect what about their support was helpful. So just take a couple of minutes, you can pause again the webinar recording to do your journaling. And even if, you know, your situation may not be specific to domestic violence or trauma but

what are those elements that you would want to take with you, as you consider supporting someone who may disclose that they're having troubles or they're scared in their relationship. You learned a little bit about in the previous session is that violence, you know, can have an impact on parenting and a child's well-being. And so, you have an opportunity in the conversation to really to dig into that a little bit. And again, because this is, you know, folks are at Head Start because they are parents. And so, you are able to talk about parenting issues and it doesn't seem out of left field. And then when you get into the parenting and maybe they're having some parenting difficulties or conflicts, that's when you can, you know, really make this connection between experiencing violence and some of their parenting concerns, responding when someone may share, you know, really hard experiences.

So, we do have a couple of panels that are specific to domestic violence and parenting, how is your child doing, and helping children. So again, it has some very concrete information about, you know, when kids are living in environments where there's fighting and stress. It just points out some of the behavioral ... Issues that may come up. And again, that final message of, you know, it does list out, you know, here are some things to watch out for, but it has that message of hope at the bottom. Things can get better. You and other adults can help turn things around. And then that next panel has very concrete, very specific strategies. Have fun with them and show them they're special, calm voices, calm hands, hugs, and cuddling helps. So, you know, right here in this resource, it gives parents some great information and things that they can do at home to support their children if there's violence in the home.

But we do have to get down to the real, right? So healthy relationships do exist. We want to make sure that we're acknowledging that and really asking questions to help parents assess relationship safety and relationship quality. So, some questions about, you know, behaviors that a partner might be engaging in, that are unhealthy and unsafe. Are there times when a partner, for example, controls where I go, who I see, and how I spend my money, tells me I'm a bad parent, and threatens to take away my children. So, we tried to include some things that folks may not understand as ... Abuse or unhealthy. I think that it's a little bit more clear cut when we're talking about, you know, physical violence but some of these other elements, we want to make sure folks understand, you know, they deserve better than that. And so, we did list those. And, of course, you know, making sure that folks understand, if these things are happening in a relationship, it's not their fault, and they're not alone, you know, there is help available.

We also wanted to make sure that we talked a little bit about violence and trauma that may have happened when parents were children and how that can affect their parenting. You may have heard of ACES, the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study. We know that many adults grew up in homes where there was violence or abuse, and that can impact their parenting. And also, again, you know, there's help and support. That's not the end of your story if you've had this experience. So, wanting to acknowledge that and encourage people to get the support that they want, need, and deserve. The most important thing that you can do is offer empathy. We also know that disclosures do happen. So, we want to make sure that you're armed with information and resources. So, if someone does share, "Yes, I'm scared in my relationship. I

need help," what you can do in those situations. So, what now? Someone says those words, even through just, you know, a larger conversation about relationships. Maybe by seeing the unhealthy relationships panel on the card, you know, it triggers something in them, and they share that that's happening in their relationship. So, what you really want to do is make sure that you thank the parent for sharing with you. It's a big deal, right, to share something that and make yourself vulnerable in that way and so really acknowledging that. Making sure that they know domestic violence is an issue that you can help with, right? So, you've done your homework, you have some resources, it's totally in your wheelhouse to connect them with some additional resources. You want to let them know that you'll support them without judgment. A big piece of the dynamics of domestic violence is people being judgmental. And so now you can be that person who listens and supports them without blaming them, without, you know, questioning their every move.

Of course, you want to address any immediate safety concerns. So, if it's a matter of the person that's hurting and harming them in the other room and they're scared to leave, those kinds of situations, "Is it safe for you to go back home?" You know, "Who is with your children?" Those kinds of things, making sure that there's nothing really any immediate danger. Now here's where you want to use your warm referral skills, right? So, you can ... connect folks with a program in your community that can offer additional support. So again, this intervention is not about you becoming a domestic violence advocate and having, you know, all that additional training and extra skills. We want you to have some information, and the ability to connect parents who may want and need additional support with those in the community that have that specialized training. And then scheduling a follow-up. So you don't want to be in a situation where someone discloses, they have experienced violence, you know, talk about it a little bit, make that referral, and it never comes up again because it might give that person the sense that they did something wrong, they shared too much. And in that follow-up, you know, you don't need to get all in their business and find out everything that's happening but just maybe a question or two about how they're doing ... Were they able to, you know, connect with the person that you made the referral to, if they have other questions or need additional support. And what we've really heard over the years is, you know, that kind of recognition and validation makes a big difference. To have someone take the time to talk with them about these issues, listen, nonjudgmentally, and make that warm referral is very impactful.

We do have these panels on the card, one about safety planning, which is very specific strategies that folks can implement in their homes if they're in situations where they're worried about safety, and then hotlines and different numbers, national hotlines that folks can call. So, when you think about safety planning, safety planning is a skill and an art that domestic violence advocates have many hours of training on. And so again, if you can connect a parent with an advocate, it's really helpful. So, this safety planning panel, it just has a couple of quick tips. And what an advocate can do is have a much longer conversation with lots of questions and prompts to come up with something that's a little bit more comprehensive. But this really gives you the basics of safety planning. And then the resources on the bottom ... They're all national, confidential, 24 hours a day. I would really encourage you ... as you're going to be making referrals to these hotlines, to call them yourself to get a sense of what the flow is like,

what kinds of questions they ask. You know, just so when you're making that suggestion of the hotline, you can let them know, you know, what that experience might be like. The great thing about the National Domestic Violence Hotline is they have the capacity for, you know, I think it's over 200 languages. They have advocates who can offer that support in the language that people feel most comfortable with. They do some immediate, kind of, crisis counseling and support and then they refer to the local domestic violence program. So, they will ask, you know, for the person's zip code, so that they can connect them to somewhere that is a local support. And, you know, just to remember that when you call these hotlines, it's not necessarily because someone, you know, wants to call the police or, you know, have police involvement or go into shelter. It's really, you know, all kinds of different supports that hotlines can offer. And so, again, you know, thinking about how to offer these kinds of referrals in a whole ... When people have had a different range of experiences. It doesn't need to be, you know, immediate emergency situation. In fact, we don't want it to get to that point, right? So, if we can catch relationships before they get to that level of dangerousness and fear and isolation, perhaps we can help prevent further harm.

And this is really thinking through if you receive a disclosure from someone because I know that is what can feel really scary. What do I do if someone says to me, "I am afraid of my partner," right? You don't want to say the wrong thing. You don't want to make things worse. I know that those are two of the biggest fears that people have. And the more that we can think through what we can do in that situation where we can make referrals to how we can respond, we'll just feel better equipped and more confident. So, let's take a couple of minutes to think about that. So, you have one of the handouts, Tips for Responding to Disclosures, right? And take a look at that and really draft out what you might say to someone who shares with you that they're afraid. What are some of the ways that you can incorporate the messages that are in the safety card into that response? And then of course, where can you get more information on how to respond to disclosure? So, we've given you, again, a little bit of information, you probably have more questions. Where in your community, online, with your supervisor can you get more information so you can feel confident in responding to a disclosure? So, take a moment to pause the webinar, write out some of these thoughts and ideas, and then come back. All right. There may be situations where the disclosure that has been made will require you to make a report to the police or to child protective services.

Earlier, we talked about, you know, understanding what your limits of confidentiality are. So, you want to be clear on what situations require report and when it doesn't. Even if you have articulated that very clearly to a parent, you may still be in a situation where you need to make a report. And so, you want to make sure that you're doing that in the most trauma-informed way possible. So, here are a couple of tips for doing that. You want to include the parent in every step of the reporting process. So, making sure that they have a sense of who you are calling, what forms you're filling out, what might come next. So that they don't feel, you know, scared and out of control as much. There's no reason for you to hide what's happening. You don't want to force the parent to provide any information or details they don't feel safe sharing. I think it's helpful when the conversation starts, you know, and you share with them that you're going to need to make a report that they can decline to answer any questions that

they don't want to, right? Again, you want to assess for immediate danger and any safety concerns that could be caused by making the report. We know that there is increased danger when the police are called or Child Protective Service is called. So, it's really important to talk through some of that. How is your partner going to ... How do you think your partner might react when they find out that this report has been made? You want to provide that Families Thrive, Zero to Five safety card, of course. You know, it's entirely possible that the parent is going to be really mad at you, and they don't want to talk to you anymore. You want to make sure that they still have that information about resources and strategies that they can take with them and maybe get support from someone else or just use the card, you know, to guide their decision making on their own. You want to offer to let them use a phone, computer, or meet with an advocate at your program for support and safety planning. So again, you know, you may not be the right person in this moment moving forward to offer that support. And if you can have a domestic violence advocate available by phone or in person, they can, you know, do that safety planning and that kind of crisis counseling. And then, again, that follow-up the next time you see them is really important.

So, this is the end of the module. And hopefully, we've met our learning objectives today. And really thinking about how implementing a universal education approach in your program is an effective way of ensuring all parents have access to information about healthy relationships and resources. We've really moved away from identifying red flags or screening for domestic violence to having conversations with all families, where we share what healthy and safe relationships look like. And we offer the resources and support to everyone regardless of whether or not they disclose they've experienced violence. And just remembering that this Families Thrive, Zero to Five safety card is a tool developed specifically for Head Start and Early Head Start programs. So, the messages and the resources that are listed there are, you know, really relevant and hopefully important to the families that you have in your programs. There is a page on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. It includes a lot of the resources we've talked about today, including some additional ones. Thank you so much for viewing this webinar and considering how your program can integrate the Families Thrive, Zero to Five safety card, and CUES Intervention. Families Thrive, Zero to Five safety card, and CUES Intervention.