

002253-Domestic Violence: Session 5

Brandi Black Thacker: Hello, everyone. My name is Brandi Black Thacker. I'm the director of T&TA in collaboration for the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. We are partnering with our colleagues at Futures Without Violence for a series of five webinars, and you today are joining the fifth and final of those sessions. And it's on building collaborative relationships with community partners. We're glad you're here.

Before we get too far into the content, we want to review where we've been and where we're going to go today. So, in this series of five webinars, we've been everywhere from, really, an introduction on addressing domestic violence, specifically in Head Start programs, thinking about supporting, traveling along on the path toward healing for families who have experienced domestic violence, partnering with parents to prevent and respond to domestic violence. In our fourth session, we thought together about how to partner with parents who have used violence in their intimate relationships. And as I mentioned before, today, we're going to stand in the space of collaborative relationships with community partners. With that, I want to introduce to you again, one of my most favorite folks. I've already had the chance to introduce myself, but I want you guys to meet again, Virginia Duplessis from Futures Without Violence. She facilitated an earlier session in this series. And if you've ever heard us speak across the country, you might have met her face to face or even virtually in this work that we've been doing together on domestic violence and Head Start programs. So, Miss Virginia, tell us what we're going to think about together today.

Virginia Duplessis: All right, let's jump right in. These are our learning objectives for this session. So hopefully, by the end of viewing this webinar, you'll all be able to identify existing community resources that can assist families experiencing domestic violence, and you'll be better able to leverage existing Head Start frameworks, requirements, and systems to address domestic violence. So, again, really remembering that we don't want any Head Start program to feel like they have to do this work alone. Certainly, preventing and responding to domestic violence is important to our families, to our communities, to our programs, and we want to make sure that you have all the information and all the partnerships that you need to do that successfully. And at the same time, you're using the tools, frameworks, vision, and values that are already part of Head Start to advance that work.

One thing that's really exciting, I think, about this session, is applying what you already have in place for Head Start, specifically to preventing and responding to domestic violence. In terms of really thinking about, you know, how all of this work has come to this point, and how domestic and sexual violence has been addressed in communities all over the country, not just with Head Start but with a lot of other kind of social service, education, health systems. For so many years, we have been siloed. I'm a city girl, I don't actually get to see many silos, but really thinking about the services, the funding, the kind of human resources that we have, traditionally, we've all really been separate, which is not very effective or efficient for the folks we're serving because we often share families, right, share clients. So if you think about one silo might be

Head Start, one silo might be your local health center, one silo might be the domestic violence program, and this last silo is... maybe a nutrition program in your community. We're having families, you know, that want access to all of these silos, and we're not working together as well as we might be.

Brandi: Thank you so much for that, Virginia. You're exactly right. In Head Start, we've been at this silo-busting business for a long time. And even in our own right, we've partnered along the way and even at a more macro level in figuring out how to create strong systems and services thoughtfully for families so that as they transition within, throughout, and around that, they have a holistic approach that is really blazed for them, you know, already as they come into those. So, one of the things that we want to do today is review, again, probably because this model has been around for a minute. And as you see at the bottom, this was adapted from the QUILT project way back, and it brought together not only Head Start but child care and a lot of other contributors. This model has been revered for a good long time. And what we wanted to do today is think about how to apply these pieces directly to the conversation, not only that we continue to have in Head Start but with a slant toward the conversation around domestic violence.

So, let's jump in. One of our Head Start hallmarks have always been around partnerships. Certainly, we take great pride in the way that we partner alongside families and each other. And that does not stop with our community partners. So, whether you're seeing this model for the first time or whether you're seeing it again, it's so useful to take apart each piece of this and apply it to the conversation as we're offering it today around domestic violence. So, what we want to do is start with this first one around networking. We're going to go through each one, and then we're going to look at the whole picture together to see how you might apply this into how you're doing, what you're doing in your program. And this first one is baseline, if you will. This is really what we lovingly call the meet and greet. When you are getting to learn about another community organization, you're finding out who they are and what they do. And this is where you're going to decide, right away if this is a partnership that you're going to continue to pursue. You're learning about their services, maybe their eligibility criteria, their hours if they serve the same kinds of populations that we might, so there's some overlap, and you might be exchanging business cards here, brochures, email addresses, things to put in our common areas if you do feel like it's a service that's provided that our families would benefit from. So, this is kind of the baseline, the beginning step of getting to know each other, figure out who does what if you have, you know, a common connection, so that you can use this as a place of springboard, if you will.

Let's look at the next one. All right. Well, we talked about networking, so let's transition our focus to coordination. Now this is where you're starting to dig a little deeper, and you find out where you might share common interests and goals with another community partner. This is where you're trading information about each other that could be useful in your partnership. So, for example, you might be figuring out things like, "Oh, gosh, you know, we don't have that said service, but you guys do, so what do you think about us sending you referrals if we get to that place where we feel like our families could benefit from your service?" If I was giving you an

example that's like, you know, a general example that we've used this level before in Head Start, I know many of you create, for instance, like single points of entry. So, when we're thinking about kids who transition to kindergarten, we're working with, you know, our LEAs, we're working with other early childhood entities so that families can come together in one place. And we've partnered around, for instance, our enrollment criteria and who qualifies for what program, so that families don't have to go around everywhere, but they can just come to one centralized location and be filtered to the service that will be most matched to where they are and where they want to go.

So, this is not a foreign concept to us, for sure. and as we're thinking about the concept and the ideas around domestic violence, for instance, and even though we support families and partner alongside them as they might be coming through something really difficult, for instance, in the way of a crisis, we don't actually provide those services on-site but in terms of how we might partner with a domestic violence organization, whether it be a shelter, whether it be a human service agency, we can make those connections ahead of time, so that if we do meet a family who's in a bit of a crisis situation, we've already blazed that trail ahead of time, and we have the avenues that they can travel if they're ready to access that service in real time. So, this becomes a really important piece of the conversation when we're thinking about regular programmatic operations but specifically if we're thinking about how to set up systems and services that support families who may be experiencing domestic violence. Cooperation is the next level of community partnership. And as you guys can see here, it's where two or more programs come together to conduct joint activities that meet their individual program goals. I really love this one because it's like, I'm doing my thing and you're doing your thing, but let's come together and do it at the same time. This results in better use of resources, more exposure, more efficiency, and a whole lot of wonderful for and with our family.

So, if I were to give you a general example of what this looks like in Head Start programming, I mean, over the years, we've met so many groups who've done innovative things this way. And one of the grantees that we talked to said, "Gosh, you know, our local GED program, they are always looking for students to enroll and help them complete their GED." And, of course, we have so many families that put that in their family partnership agreement as part of their dreamscape about where they want to go and how they want to get there. So, what these Head Start programs have done is opened up a space in their building, so that when families drop off their little ones, they can stay and do their GED coursework. The GED folks are on-site, right in the Head Start program, and then here we are, two or more programs conducting a joint activity that made our individual goals because the GED folks get the families that they need to continue their service. We are listening to our family's voice and offering them the space and the opportunity to come together with a service that they would like to have and we're doing it a coordinated way that really supports what they've asked for and where they want to go as we support our community partner.

Now, I love this piece because also when you're thinking about this connection to the work that we're lifting up today around domestic violence, you could potentially think about this in a similar way, right? So, if families know, love, and trust us already, and they come to a place

where they would like to speak to domestic violence organization that's in our local community, we certainly have private, confidential, safe space that we could offer for either the family member to call that organization or even come on-site in a way that really brings them in, not only in a private, confidential, safe space but also so that, you know, we can be there as Head Start programs to offer any other services that might be necessary in the proper course of that conversation. So again, cooperation, when two or more programs come together to meet their individual program goals in service of children and families.

And here we are at collaboration. Now, according to this model, collaboration can be the most intense of these levels. It involves programs coming together to work toward a common goal that could not be achieved by any program acting alone. Now, I actually really appreciate this level because it brings the service coordination to a whole another level. For instance, over time grantees have taught us about models that they've used that really fall into this space. For instance, like working with incarcerated mothers in the prison system, where they've been able to go into the prisons and continue services with the moms through, like a home visiting type model, something similar where we go into high schools and actually provide our Head Start services on-site right there for teen parents. And within the context of this domestic violence conversation, we've had folks really thinking meaningfully about, well, with all confidentiality and safety protocols in mind and lift it up in a specific and intensive way, couldn't we also offer services within the construct, for instance, of a domestic violence shelter? If we have family members who are there and the DV group would allow us in and all of those pieces are in place around confidentiality and safety, wouldn't it be such value add to have families have connection to us, whether for the first time or as a continued service? So, this level is really important in that. we work together to get toward that goal that neither one of us could reach alone.

I have to say, this is one of my favorite slides of this series because this part is when we really get to think about the unity in community. It takes all of the layers that we've talked about already, networking, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration, and it takes them to the next level where we can think about how the combination of these things impact our communities overall. Now, you can see some language at the top of this slide where we kick this up a notch. And when we're talking about the unity in community, this takes it to the next level. And I have to say, my shortcut for this one is when people who don't ever walk into your building, benefit from your services, where we're doing things like, there's this reciprocity of relationship, we're increasing social capital, we're thinking about this in a systemic integrated kind of way with community outcomes in mind. I mean, this is where the ripple out effect becomes real. Where things like, you know, as our littlest ones are getting off the bus, the neighbor knows who they are and knows the family's story. That's kind of like the nudge toward social capital. This is where Miss Johnson who might get Meals on Wheels but doesn't meet her driver at the door because she doesn't feel safe in her neighborhood. But in Head Start, we come and we put a new playground on the corner, where we've cleaned off the space, there are now street lights, there's an increased, you know, presence for security, there are kids and groups that are now milling around, where she starts to come down on to her porch when her Meals on Wheels driver brings her food, and she's interacting in a way that's new and different

because of our impact on her street corner. I mean, this is where we're always hoping to go, right? People that never even step into our building who benefit from the services that we have the honor to provide every day. That's where we're driving. So I hope you guys are excited about either being reminded or seeing these layers for the first time, and how they connect to where we're going not only in Head Start overall but certainly as we specifically think about Head Start services, prevention, and, you know, how we address together, domestic violence.

Virginia: There are so many other organizations and resources in your community that you may want to consider collaborating with to really address domestic violence in the community. So, the previous session on engaging parents who use violence in intimate relationships talked a little bit about these battering intervention programs. So, certainly, if you have a program like that in your community, that would be a great potential collaborator. Other programs and services that your families could benefit from or are already engaging with, like parenting programs, certainly, health centers, community clinics, child welfare if you have families that are engaged, systems engaged with child welfare, thinking about ways you can partner with them, other kinds of recreation programs that the kids may be involved in. And just, again, kind of thinking creatively about where services are, where your parents and families are going outside of Head Start, and how you can really build stronger relationships with them. Relationships are hard, right? Interpersonal relationships are hard and building these kinds of formal partnerships can also be hard. And so, thinking through how you want to set yourself up for success. So really building trust, you know, having some transparency and communication is a really important first step. You want to get off on the right foot there. Understanding each other's mandates, right? So, you're going to have some program outcomes, values, principles that are in alignment, and others that aren't. And I think that from the get-go, really understanding where each organization is coming from is important to potentially avoid conflicts, you know, in the future.

And really finding those mutually beneficial goals and outcomes. What is it that you both want or all want to accomplish together? And really focusing on those rather than the things that maybe you have differences about. Establishing an MOU, a memorandum of understanding. So, this really will outline in a formal way what you'll be doing together. A memorandum of understanding does not necessarily mean money has to be exchanged. But I think, having a document that really outlines what the roles, responsibilities, and outcomes are... helps really keep you focused on your work. And if there's confusion or conflict that comes up later, it's a document that you can fall back on and really look at to remind yourselves of why you got into this partnership in the first place. Having cross-trainings, so valuable and important. We don't want these relationships to be one-way streets, right? So, for example, in the past maybe we've seen partnerships between domestic violence programs, and, for example, health care centers, right, where the health center will have a domestic violence advocate come in and do a training, and then that's kind of it. And then in these new models, really thinking about how can you educate each other. So, in addition to an example, I just gave, a domestic violence advocate doing a training for health care providers about, you know, what domestic violence is, how health care providers can help. The health care providers can also do a training for the domestic violence program on what services are available at their health center, how to make those

warm referrals. So really, you're valuing each other's roles and you're getting, really, a sense of the work that's happening at each other's agencies.

Setting up a referral system. So this idea of having warm referrals, it's not just, I've Googled this organization and seen, they are in my community, and I'm going to make a referral, but really being able to say, here's a program that I know about. They're on this bus line, these are the hours, maybe even here's a specific person that we can call together and just have it be more of that seamless transition when referrals are made, again, to make it easier for families and you'll also be able to follow up and find out what has happened with those referrals. So, in relationships, you know, there's got to be a lot of care and feeding of relationships. So, celebrating your successes, you know, no matter how small they are, really acknowledging work that you've done together and also processing if there are tough incidents, right? You don't want there to be a conflict that festers and no one talks about, really having an open conversation about how things can improve. And again, I think having that memorandum of understanding to fall back on as kind of your guiding document can be really helpful. And revisiting that relationship regularly. Sometimes, partnerships run their course and that's OK. You know, when you want to say, you know, it's been a great partnership, and I think we've accomplished what we set out to do in ending it or let's add new partners to the table or perhaps we need different staff to come to meetings. You know, just regularly processing and assessing what's working about the partnership and where you might want to make some changes. A resource for this webinar module. So, you can take a look at that.

This is specific to creating one between your program and a domestic violence program. And it can be adapted, you know, some of the language changed, as you think about creating partnerships with other organizations as well. So, why are we so excited about and invested in making sure that these collaborations are happening? We know that when there are partnerships between Head Start and domestic violence programs, we're promoting family well-being. So, these kinds of partnerships can really increase safety of families, you know, having easy access to domestic violence services, by those warm referrals through Head Start programs is an important element of increasing safety. We want to promote health. Again, one of the earlier sessions, we talked about the CUES intervention and really making sure that folks have access to information on healthy and safe relationships. And your Head Start program can, you know, through this partnership with your local domestic violence program, get more training and practice on how to make those conversations seem or flow seamlessly into the work they already doing. It also supports educational advancement and economic mobility and additional access to services. And these two last points, you know, remember, are in your framework, and so it's directly tied to the kinds of outcomes that you're trying to create in Head Start. So, this isn't just a nice bonus to have for your Head Start program, but it actually aligns very closely to the work that you're all striving to do with your families. Readiness to partner with community organizations.

A couple of first steps you're going to want to make. You want to find out what policies and protocols your program already has in place to address domestic violence. That's going to be an important first step to really see, you know, where your program is on the continuum of

readiness. You definitely want to connect with your local domestic violence program, set up some time to talk about the kinds of services they can provide to community members, see if there's a good fit to engage in a partnership. And then we're just really encouraging all Head Start programs to be a champion for domestic violence prevention and response. So, we've talked throughout this webinar series about how important Head Start programs are in communities because of the close, long-term, trusting relationships that you have with families, you really have a unique and important role in helping to end violence and create healthy and safe communities. Remembering that partnerships with community organizations, like domestic violence agencies, can strengthen your program's response to domestic violence. We don't want you to feel like you're doing this work alone. You have resources in your community that can help you with this. Engaged partnerships should build on forming positive, respectful, and mutually beneficial relationships with community partners. So, just as you have these kinds of relationships with families and individuals in your programs, we want to see the same thing in your formal partnerships. It extends kind of to that macro and systems-level thinking. You can visit the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, and there is a page specific to preventing and responding to domestic violence. A lot of the information that we've presented on this webinar series and some additional resources are located there. I want to thank you for joining us for this session and all the webinar sessions on preventing and responding to domestic violence.