

## Community Partnerships with Child Welfare

Brandi Black Thacker: We're coming together today to think about "Community Partnerships and Child Welfare," and as part of that experience, we've set up a few things for you. And let's look at the set-up of how this virtual environment is organized so that you will be able to take advantage of those things that we put together for you. Also, on the left-hand side, toward the bottom, you've already discovered where you can submit questions and comments, and we'll be tracking those all along our experience together. The other thing we want you to take a peep at is you also have a few things to download over there. We have three brand new documents that are in service of the conversation around child welfare. Now, we already got this question, so I want to address this straight away. Many of you joined us just this past Thursday on the "Head Start Heals" campaign in a conversation that lasted about an hour on child welfare and really thinking about how we make meaningful and keep meaningful connections to families who may be involved in the child welfare system. So, we had a whole dialog about, you know, mandated reporting. We had dialog about, as I mentioned, keeping, maintaining, strengthening those relationships throughout that time with and for families. And so, there's a lot of information that you can find on demand in that discussion from last Thursday.

To directly answer the question that came in the chat, this is actually different because today – I feel like we need a drumroll – we get to think together about the more macro view of this and the connections to community in our partnerships. So, what you're going to see over there is the document that we highlighted on Thursday, that's really in service of relationships with families. And you'll see two other ones that when we're zoomed out – I probably shouldn't use the word "zoom," that puts you guys in a space – that are more macro level with this exploration of the community connection. So, you can go over, you can download those.

The other thing that you guys always know and get excited to ask is, "Will we get the Power Point?" And my friends, fear not, it is over there for you already. So, you can download that at your leisure as well in that same place where you'll find those three other resources. One of the things that I want to do right quick is we're going to do some welcome and introductions, but I wanted to just remind you where we are in this series. I love it because we get to hang out with you guys in longer and more scaffolded ways over time these days, and this is actually the third and final webinar in our community engagement series. Look where we've been together everybody. We have begun with just community partnerships in general. What they look like, how they scaffold, the ways that we can celebrate that we've been doing it for so long but also some new innovative ideas. The second one we came to in April was around family engagement with a specific focus on transitions to kindergarten, and here we are today in the third and final. Again, we're going to hang out for the whole 90 minutes, 3 to 4:30 Eastern Time, and then we're going to hang out. So, if you have questions after or some that we don't get to in the proper context of the 90 minutes, we're going to stay around and see if we can't pull out a few more of those for you, as your time allows, of course.

Oh my goodness, with all of that, I have just the incredible honor to offer this whole cast of experts for you that have come together today to share, to think, to offer, to idea bubble, in service of this conversation. And for those of you that have been in this conversation before, you'll know that, like, some of these faces you're going to recognize. So, the Appalachian accent you hear belongs to me. This is Brandi Black Thacker. I'm the Director of T/TA in collaboration for the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. You're also going to get to meet here in just a second a voice that you have come to know and love as well, Kiersten Beigel from the Office of Head Start. And then, in the order of which you see on the slide, you're also going to get meet Dr. Josh Sparrow, Dr. Cathy Ayoub, and our colleague Francie Zimmerman as well. We're so thrilled to spend this time with you today, and I'm so excited that you get to think together with this group and that we get the collective benefit of teaching and learning together today. With that, one of the things that I thought that we could do, that many of you have experienced not only with us but with other groups that you're spending time with in this virtual space, is to really just take a moment and acknowledge where we are and how you might be feeling and what's coming forward for you, and thinking together about where we're going next. So, we just wanted to create this space for a moment to just get centered, just have a moment to reflect – and I love this imagery don't you, with the water, water is so therapeutic – but to also pay attention to what your body is doing.

Now, I have to tell you guys a secret, not really, but you know, for those of you that I have had the honor to spend time with, you know that I have a 7-year old little boy. We just figured out a new trick to being centered in our relationship, and I wanted to share it with you guys here and see if you can either steal it exactly the way it is or you can adapt it. Those of you that have been doing, you know, education at home and been juggling work and just all the things that we're doing as we've been taking care of each other by sheltering in place. We've come into a whole lot of negotiations in my house with myself and my 7-year old. Just this week he was in a place where he was not excited to transition in the way that I was hoping he would. You know, I said, "Oh, it's time to do this good thing" and he was like, "No thank you." So, we have this moment where we came together in this like, oh gosh, like how do we break this spell of like, "I need you to transition but I don't want to transition." And guess what? He solved our dilemma. Once we all settled down later, and we came back together, and we said, "Gosh, that felt like a hard thing when we were trying to transition. Wonder what we can do next time? Oh my gosh, are you guys sitting down?" I was like, "What works?" He said, "I covered my eyes, and I covered my ears." Side note, that means he didn't want to see or hear mommy, but I worked it for a second. He said, "I covered my eyes, and I covered my ears." I'm like, "Gosh, we should try that next time we get in that hard spot." I got it. We need to choose a word that when we get back to that place, that when we say that word, we know what to do. We cover our eyes, and we cover our ears. And guess what the word he chose was? Oh, my goodness. Oh well, if any of you know me, you know it's gotta be related to food, right? He comes up and says, "Mommy, I know what we do. We say the word cheese." So, sure enough, later on that same day we got back together, we were having a transition, went from something that he really loved doing to something that he didn't really love doing, like brush his teeth, and it got to that place where, no I don't want to do it right now and I was like, "Pause. Cheese." Totally worked.

So, I offer to you, not only from, you know, the vulnerability of my own home, what might work for you as you're navigating waters with your littlest ones, but for each other because fully what Colton taught me in that moment was he wanted to honor the relationship but he needed a minute, and we still got to come back together. So, anyway, may we all continue coming back together and finding the ways that work for each of us to do that. Thank you, guys, for letting me share all of my business today. With that sharing of the business, Kiersten, then I believe you get to do a little OHS sharing of the business with a connection to the context of why we're here and why this is important, and the federal perspective on how we bring that together. So, let me turn it over to you.

Kiersten Beigel: Cheese. Hi everybody! Good afternoon, welcome, and I'm just so glad to be here with you. I do want to ... You know, this is child welfare is a tough topic. We did it last week, we're doing it again today. But I really ... I can't start without acknowledging what is happening in our communities and across our country right now. You know, there's just so many feelings and a lot of pain and fear, and there's so many things to say, and there's so much to do. But I guess I just want to acknowledge, you know, before continuing that Head Start was born during a time of civil unrest, and I think that in Head Start, as a larger community, we can continue to be a place where we can channel healing and goodness and right action for children and families. Given, you know, how vulnerable so many people are feeling today and knowing that our families and our grantees are having difficult moments too, it's hard to dive in to a topic that's kind of fraught with vulnerability. But I do want to assure you that we have such a wonderful, as you've already noticed, such a wonderful cast of people who are both experts and knowledgeable and kind as well. So, as we kind of walk through this today ... My job is super easy, which is really just to acknowledge a little bit about the standards and why we think that these partnerships between Head Start and child welfare are so very important. I think we have a lot of standards. For those of you who are newer or are just kind of wondering about that, we have standards in our ERSEA section, right, our eligibility where we prioritize children who are in foster care for Head Start. We have standard of conduct laid out for staff for reporting child abuse and neglect. We have health and safety standards for ensuring that children are safe and protected. We have background checks and standards related to child abuse registry for all new staff, which, you know those are wherever those are available.

So, why do we have so many standards on this topic? Because we want to ensure the protection and safety of children, but we also really want to ensure that children in foster care, as many as possible, can receive the benefits of Head Start and an Early Head Start. And we'll hear more from presenters about why that is so important in a bit. One final set of standards I wanted to just point out, because, you know, they're extremely salient for today's topic. These are important to keep in mind but generally speaking, it is encouraged to partner with child welfare in our community engagement standards, which are in the "Family and Program Services" section of the standards. And also, there are some requirements related to coordinated systems of care, systems including child welfare, that really do try to acknowledge the importance of communication, attention to privacy issue, protection of records, but working on behalf of families. So, just wanted to point those things out and ground us with the

performance standards as we always like to do, and then let's move on into our learning objectives.

Brandi: Oh gosh, Kiersten, thank you for that, and I just have to say to you guys too, well Kiersten to you personally, first of all, thank you for acknowledging what we're all feeling and the sentiment in which we get to stand in this work, not only today, but every day. I'm reminded from a call I got the honor to sit in on earlier this morning of why and where we were born in Head Start, and I just have to tell you guys, I mean, I've never been so proud to be part of this set of communities, and I just am grateful that we can be real with each other in exactly those sentiments Kiersten that you offered. And I'm so grateful for the leadership, for each of you at OHS, and the ways that you take such good care of us. So, anyway, I know I don't just speak for myself there, that I speak for all of us, but I feel like I would be remiss if I didn't say that today, and you know, as many days as you'll let me but today for sure.

With that, Kiersten, as promised we want to go over some learning objectives. Now, you guys know how we do this. If you've ever been in a session with us before, this is what we built before we got into this exact space and time with you. So, we will offer these as a bit of our road map, but what we also love to do, and we'll be looking at in your questions is following your lead. So, if we get to a place and you need to hover a little longer, we're going to do our best to do that. And especially, the reason we put that Q&A at the very end, those extra 15 minutes, is so that we can come back to those things, and we really drive this conversation based on your interests and what you would like to do. But here's what we have for you today. You know, we can't hardly say anything without talking about the PFCE Framework. So, we're going to kick off with that as per usual. We're going to make some connections though to some specific places in the elements of the framework. But, I mean, community is just woven within and throughout everything we do, right? I mean, just such an important part of not only how we share ourselves and our expertise as the nation's laboratory, everybody, but also the way that we learn and hold others as things shift in our communities and the way that we mobilize together for that greater good. We also really need to ground ourselves, and Kiersten alluded to this, in language and the approaches, given that this conversation is so important but can also bring a lot of feelings for each of us. It's really critical to get grounded there in the language and the approaches so that we can spring from that same page. We have some really great practices to offer for you, many of which I'm guessing are going to be confirming because I know who you are and the incredible work that you already are doing within your communities. But we also hope to offer another two that are new. That's at least intriguing, you know. And then Francie is going to bring it on home with some key action steps in how to plan specifically with child welfare agencies in mind.

Now, in all things, training and technical assistance, we like to tell you exactly where we're going from the beginning so here are a few key messages that we hope that will kind of set the stage for what we're about to embark upon together. So, here are a few things to keep in mind. It kind of gives you the end of the story first so we can kind of build back up to it as we go through this 90 minutes together. So, when families experience challenges, those safe and trusting relationships that we build, facilitate, and sustain, absolutely strengthen family well-

being. And you guys know what we mean when we say family well-being, we're going to touch on that here in just a second. The other piece here that is really exciting to pull out is not only are we really good partners and are we good at seeking out partners, that when we make those intentional partnerships, everybody benefits. And we're going to talk a little bit about that. And then certainly, together when we serve as partners, not only do families grow and thrive but it becomes this notion of prevention around child abuse and neglect.

So, we want to kind of kick off with those sort of in your mind as we pivot into this next piece around what I promised with the Framework. So, let's look. Take a look. This is where we're going to transition in a little bit to looking at the Framework, getting grounded there, and getting some of the definitions and I'm pretty quickly going to hand it over to Josh to talk to us more about these relationships- the strength-based partnerships that you see evidenced here. So, if I were anywhere in the world and I was spending time with you, the way I say this is you know it, you love it, you live it, you have it memorized. It's the PFCE Framework. And you can see what we've highlighted here. The shortcut to this Framework, it really does live as a theory of change and what we've done is we've started talking about it as if it's the match and to us that means, if you lean into the space as a goal oriented relationship, and equity, inclusion, cultural, and linguistic responsiveness, as they move into the systems which is that yellow column, the services which are the pink column, then families and children grow. The cool thing is our performance standards totally support that systems and services business and we're so good at really leaning into those arrows as part of who we are organically and how we do things. The thing that we're going to highlight today is certainly the element that you see circled, around community partnerships. But you've already heard me say other words like that first word on the top of the blue column, around family wellbeing. There's a connection here to, you know, positive parent-child relationships. There's so much here to unpack but we definitely want to direct your attention to that community partnership piece of the proper course of where we'll hover for our time today.

And with that we want to just ground ourselves in the definition of community engagement as we've experienced it now for three times, this is our third and final in the series. And the way that we offer this up, I would simply submit is pretty parallel to how we would think about family engagement. Listen to some of the words. Community engagement refers to the mutually respectful, feels familiar already right, strength-based interactions that Head Start and Early Head Start staff and families make connections with their community members and agencies at all levels. I love this visual because it really illustrates the threading that happens. From the micro to the macro and back and how we each hold each other in these partnerships in service of where we're going, both together and separately. So, community engagement, very parallel.

The other thing I want to do before I turn the mic over to Josh is mention and get us all grounded. I started off with this, but I want to come back to it because it's important. What is child welfare? And based on your locality, you may refer to it in different kinds of alphabet soups, but the ways that we offer it is that the child welfare system is a continuum of services designed to ensure, one, that children are safe and that families have the necessary support

they need to care for their children successfully. Now, this statement alone may even open up the possibility for us to process who our partners in the child welfare system are, because if you've ever done work alongside our child welfare partners, you might come into that partnership with your own set of notions about what they do, who they are, and how they do it. But one of the things that we know is typically, child welfare agencies offer things like support and coordination of services to prevent child abuse and neglect. They provide services to families that might need help in the protection and caring of their children. They receive and investigate reports and that's how many of us have come to know, you know, in our responsibility as mandated reporters as part of our job. The thing I really think is important about this is not only to receive and investigate reports, but to assess family needs, strength, and resources. Because ultimately, as I understand it, the goal here is to make sure that we as grown up folks who are parents or important caregivers in the life of a child, have what we need to do the good hard job that it is, to be a parent and a caregiver in the life of a little one. And they also arrange for kids to live with relatives or foster families if safety can't be ensured in the home in those moments. We definitely support, you know, they support the well-being of children living with relatives or in foster families, including educational needs that might need to be addresses. And lastly, for the purpose of this conversation, child welfare agencies also work with children, youth, and families to achieve reunification. That's always the main goal. Whether it's reunification with the biological family, adoption, other permanent placements, so as children transition that they, first and foremost, are kept as the focus. So, hopefully a little bit of backgrounding is helpful as I transition over to one of my most favorite folks. I'm so glad he's here with us again today, Dr. Josh Sparrow.

Dr. Josh Sparrow: Thank you so much Brandi. Hello everybody. So, we're going to start by looking at three different kinds of interactions between Head Start programs, families, and child welfare. And if you'd like more information about these three kinds of situation, please take a look at the "Engaging Families When there is Child Welfare Involvement" resource that you can find on the ECLKC website. So, the three situations that we zoom in on are number one, when a family gets referred to your program by the local child welfare agency. The second is when a family in your program makes you concerned and leads you to decide to file a mandated report, which then involves the family and your program in the child welfare system on behalf of that child. And the third is when a family has their child in foster care already or when the child in your program is being placed in foster care. And you'll find in this resource that we both describe what is challenging, hard, painful, what the struggles are for us in these three situation, and some examples of the kind of language that you can use in order to do your best to try to hold on to the relationship with a family through these difficult moments. So, if you're speaking for the first time with families who are newly enrolled in your program because they were referred to your program by the child welfare system, and that happens often because studies shown, and my brilliant colleague Cathy Ayoub who will be speaking with us a little later, has been deeply involved in the research showing how effective early Head Start programs are in preventing child abuse and helping families heal. So, this happens often, and in this resource, "Engaging Families When There is Child Welfare Involvement," you'll see that there are some suggestions about being clear and direct in the reasons for your first conversation. So, not to beat around the bush but to ask some questions that honor their

efforts to be with you. And then to simply ask questions like, "I understand that you're currently working with a child welfare agency, and I'm wondering if I have information, right?" Or "I want to be sure we have the same information about your referral to the program, and I'd really like to have you share your perspective." And then to begin to honor the family's expertise and agency with a question like, "I'm interested in hearing about what you want for your family. I'd like to understand more so I can share with you what our program might be able to focus on with you." There are more suggestions about ways to begin this conversation so that you put the fact that the referral comes from the child welfare agency on the table from the beginning of the conversation. Other strategies, and you'll find this in that resource as well as others that the National Center for Parents and Community Engagement has developed over the year on the ECLKC website is to focus on the specific positive behaviors or interactions that you see right there in the moment. It's so powerful to say, "I saw how your baby turned to you for comfort and how quickly she responded to your efforts to sooth her." So, throughout, it's recognizing parent's competence and expertise particularly when their involvement in the child welfare system may make them doubt themselves or make them worry that we can't see their strong intentions on behalf of their children and the actions that they do have.

The second situation, when you have concerns that lead you to consider filing a mandated report, and all Head Start and Early Head Start staff are mandated reporters and are legally obligated to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate state child protection agency. You'll want to consult with your supervisor or co-workers. It's important to not act alone. And also, and this is hard to do, but it really is a best practice to inform the parent in advance about your concerns and your need to file a report. As uncomfortable as it may seem, you can invite parents, if they're willing to do it, to be with you when you call in the report. Although this is challenging, and although clearly the first moments are going to be very difficult and there will be the full range of emotions from fear to anger, and everything else, the goal is to try to see if you can lay the foundation in the way you handle this moment so that you can get back to a relationship over time. And you can also be clear about offering to support parents through the process. You can't promise about what's going to happen, but you can promise to keep them abreast of whatever information you can find from the child welfare system as the process unfolds.

Now, the third situation, when a family either has their child removed and placed in a foster home or when you're working with a child who is in a foster home, there are often opportunities for reunification. Now, I've probably been involved in the care of 2,000 or more families involved with child welfare in the state of Massachusetts and the vast majority of them, the vast majority of those families, parents love their children, mean the best, want the best, and have good intent and struggle in a difficult moment. I am well aware of the exceptions, but the exceptions are the minority. And so through each of these situations, to working with a family when their child is in foster care or being placed in foster care to keep in mind the possibility of reunification or to help parents find the realistic role that they can play in their child's life if they're not able to resume care at some point. So, you'll provide a sense of continuity for the children as well, when you position yourself as a critical source of emotional support for parents. And again, if you refer to the resource, engaging families when there is

child welfare involvement, you'll find more suggestions about the language that you can use which will actually help you find your own words. And remember, again, for situation number two, you may be filing a report because harm is suspected having been caused by somebody other than the parent or primary caregiver. And you'll also want to talk with your co-workers and supervisors to understand your obligations there. These vary from state to state. And you'll also want to have a conversation with a parent about what to do together to protect the child. And to remember that in all of these instances, you have to concern the safety of the child and the family as a result of what actions you decide with your supervisors and co-workers take with regards to the child welfare agency in your community.

So, another resource on the ECLKC website is the strength-based approach and the relationship-based practices. And these again are guides to ways of having strength-based conversations with families to get them through these difficult times and to strengthen your relationship with them in times that really challenge them. So, it may be particularly hard to identify for yourself the strengths of a family when you're deeply concerned about harm that may be or may have been caused by the family. But that's all the more reason to look hard for where you might find strength from which you can begin to build other strengths in the relationship. To do that it means really listening deeply and learning from the differences, from the things that surprised you and be ready to be surprised and to discover. Be open to the family's wishes and the differences in how they think about their role as parents. And even in the range of situations we've just described, we approach families as equal partners in their children's development, health, and well-being. So, another key point to remember in the strength-based approach is, as you all know, so many families who have children involved in the child welfare system were themselves as children involved and so one of the big struggles that they have is the history that comes back again, and that may be triggered and that we may touch upon without even knowing it. Which is, again, all the more reason to start from a place of listening, curiosity, and respect.

So, in communicating with families, we started with this idea of honest and open surface from the beginning, why a family is here and what it is we're going to talk about. Using family-centered language is really critical. I think a lot of times when we end up working in an agency or institution or a program for a number of years, we end up having a kind of way of talking that separates us and our colleagues in our center or institution from the families that we work with. And so, family-centered language also includes thinking about the "we" as including all of the families. The "we" isn't simply me and my peers, professionals in my center. "We" is the families and my peers so that there isn't the sense that there is this powerful institution whether it's the center or the agency or the child welfare system, and then the family out there all by themselves. Regular communication is really important particularly because of the fear, anxiety, unknowns about how the process will unfold. So, when you make the commitment to regularly obtain whatever information you can about how for example, an investigation is unfolding, to keep families abreast as often as you possibly can. Clarifying expectations, roles, responsibilities, and goals is critical and one of the challenges there is that when families are terrified about what for example, a mandated report might mean, it can be really hard to resist saying, you know, I promise that you will retain custody, for example, when in fact we may



believe that should happen, but we aren't, when we are in our roles, in a position to be able to set that expectation. So, realistic expectations are like the ones I mentioned earlier which is, "I will be right there alongside you, I will get you whatever information I can as soon as I get it, and I will support you all the way through this, and I will listen to what your goals and hopes are for your child, for yourself, and for your family." And culture does matter. I mentioned beginning from a place of curiosity and respect.

I do want to say that it is really important to recognize that there are a disproportionate number of mandated reports that turn out to be unsubstantiated and a disproportionate number of reports that are substantiated wrongly in error with regard to families of color which has to do with our long, long history in this country of discrimination against people of color. And so, it is critical that any agency in which there are mandated reporters, track the data on when and why reports are being filed. Including the race and ethnicity of the families involved and the staff so that they can really surface do we have trends here that indicate we need to look at ourselves and whether or not we are looking at and responding to situations in ways along lines of color or race or ethnicity that lead to mandated reports that are not justified. To do that also means considering our own biases and experiences. And it's easy to say that it's hard to do.

Another really important set of experiences to consider is number one, that when we go into the fields of working with children, it is because of our passion for their care and their learning and their development. And when a child is being harmed or at risk of being harmed, or we're concerned that they are, it is very hard to handle our own protective urges with regard to the child while also trying to step back and understand the parent's perspective. So being aware of our protective urges and how they influence our responses is critical. And another part of our personal experience to consider is our own history and our own experiences of trauma. And many of us who have gone in to working with children and families have significant histories of our own trauma in our own childhoods and those can be triggered by working with children who are in harm's way or where we are concerned that they may be. And so it's also critical to reflect on when the memories are being set off again and feelings are being set off again, that may also cloud our ability to support families through the process of involvement with child welfare agencies.

We also want to be sure to take a trauma informed approach in an addition to considering our own trauma, we want to be sure to consider the three R's of the SAMHSA approach to Trauma Informed care: Realizing the widespread impact of trauma. Recognizing the signs and symptoms. Responding by fully integrating our knowledge about trauma into everything we do. And to actively resist re-traumatizing others or ourselves. Those are the four R's. And we will soon be making available a set of 5 briefs on trauma where you can review that approach on trauma informed care that comes from the Substance Abuse and [Inaudible] Administration. But it's critical to take a trauma informed approach both to understand what we bring to these interactions and also what I said earlier, about what parents may be bringing to the challenges of raising children when they themselves have a history of trauma, were involved in the child welfare system, may have been in multiple foster care placements themselves as children, or

may have ongoing trauma in their lives. Now, this obviously can be challenging enough that we need to seek help for ourselves, and it is critical even before you get there, if you're not there already, to identify your confidential supports in your community and to the extent that you're comfortable, with mentors in your program. So, our key message is when families experience challenge like all of the reasons for being involved in child welfare systems, the safe and trusting relationships that we can build, and protect, and strengthen processes, will strengthen family well-being and will position families so that they will feel enough trust and safety to open up with us about their challenges and to share with us the strengths that they would like our support to build on together. And now I'm going to turn it back to you Brandi.

Brandi: Gosh Josh, thank you for all of that. There's so many nuggets that you offered us there and I really want to circle back to one of the main points that you noted in the ways that we might be able to engage with families as part of this larger system. I wanted just to report for folks, and we've also been watching the chat Josh, as you shared your insights. It's really interesting in how we make such intentional strides to partner with families who are within our programming and also have an open child welfare case. And we have one of our colleagues that shared in their program that one of the home visitors has honest conversations about the need to call CPS or Child Protective Services. And Christie, I'm thinking of you here. She offers that they give the families the option of it looks like the staff person calling or the family calling themselves. She lets them know that if they are reporting themselves and asking for help that sometimes the outcome is better. So, we're hearing things like this. And clearly, where you guys are, based on your states, your tribes, or your territories, you each know your local policies and it looks different everywhere across the country and some of you have noted that as we've come through the conversation even so far. But what we're finding is when we can stand in those relationships and be as open, honest, and transparent as possible in really focusing on keeping that relationship connected, we all benefit. And you're going to hear Cathy talk about that in this next section. So, just so we can get to Cathy's voice and also Francie's, let me pause and turn it over to Dr. Cathy, watch me get fancy, Dr. Catherine Ayoub, everybody.

Dr. Catherine Ayoub: Thank you Brandi, and thank you Josh. I'm going to step up and given the wonderful foundation that both Brandi and Josh have really put out for us, and talk about a little bit more of an aerial view as we talk about how Head Start Early Head Start programs and child welfare can really develop partnerships. First, Josh, to reiterate I think what you heard Josh say, that we know that so many of the children and the families that are served by the child welfare system are really developmentally vulnerable. So, it really means that those of us in programs are thinking about children with multiple needs due to trauma that may be stemming from early abuse and neglect. And also, that families are struggling, and they may have been struggling with lifelong experiences. So oftentimes, what we can see is that a lot of what we call risk factors, co-occur. What this means for us in terms of partnering from programs to our community, is that it may not only be the safety and the nurturance of the child, but a whole cluster or group of issues that families are struggling with. Prenatal drug exposure, child poor health or prematurity, low birth weight, homelessness, parental depression, and I'm sure that you can all add to those lists and please feel free to put them in

chat if there are other key issues that you think may be really important for us to think about as Head Start and Early Head Start programs in the context of partnering.

So, again I'm going to take a step back and just emphasize I think a lot of what Josh said. Is that child maltreatment is really a serious problem. And as he mentioned, there are a huge number again, over 3.5 million cases of suspected reports. And again, the most current data that we have is from 2018, and that's a huge number of cases. As Josh pointed out, many of those cases are not substantiated. Child welfare agencies use the word substantiated which really means that they have done a focused investigation of the suspected abuse and neglect and that they have found enough evidence to be able to determine, or to reinforce the notion that the child has really experienced a safety or a health issue that reaches the level of identifying it as abuse and neglect. Now, as Josh said, some cases get put in this category that maybe don't belong there. There may be a lot of the other cases, or other situations with children and families where many of you may feel like they're significant and severe and those cases are not what we would call substantiated. And so both of those situations can create issues. Intentions for us in Head Start and Early Head Start programs when we think about partnering. Just another bit of information about child maltreatment. Oftentimes, or many times, folks will particularly focus on the child physical abuse, and there are good reasons to do that, because children under age 3 are the most vulnerable to severe injury or death from physical abuse. And as you can see, over 70% of the fatalities occur in children under age 3 years. However, by far the most common form of maltreatment is neglect. And also, by far, the largest number of children who are placed in foster care are there as a result of allegations of neglect. So, it is important to remember that like physical abuse or sexual abuse, that chronic neglect can take a significant toll on a child. Again, there are a large number of children, experts estimate that 5 children every day die of child maltreatment.

And again, I wanted to give you another factoid or figure here that over or almost 28,000 infants in 2018 were identified with prenatal substance abuse. And we know with the opioid epidemic that we've seen prenatal substance abuse issues increase. Again, Josh pointed out that most children actually do not enter the foster care system. Most children remain in their homes. Oftentimes they are assigned an active child protection or child protective worker from the mandated agency in your community. And that particular worker is responsible for supporting reunification of that child with that family. So again, just some basic information to emphasize that child abuse really is, and neglect, are really significant issues in our communities. So, that's one key reason for us, in programs that serve the youngest children, and particularly also families living in poverty, that it may be very important for us to consider this when we think about our every day work in Early Head Start and Head Start.

I want to say a little bit about the benefits, the barriers, and then also some of the issues around making connections between Head Start and Early Head Start programs and child welfare agencies. And then Francie is going talk about some of that in even more detail. So, many of you have really listed some of the benefits and I know many of you in your comments have talked about ways in which you partner. But why should we as Head Start and Early Head Start programs really think about partnering with child welfare? Because many of you have also

pointed out it can be very hard. So, what are the benefits? Well, Head Start and Early Head Start programs are uniquely positioned to be child abuse prevention organizations. And there now is some substantial evaluation and research that really validates that position, something that many Head Start and Early Head Start programs have been saying for a long time. So, I'm going to tell you just a couple of the highlights from some of that research if you are interested in taking it back. One of the key findings, and my colleague Dr. Kline at the University of Michigan has a whole series of studies, but there's some significant evidence that children who receive Head Start or Early Head Start services are less likely to be placed in foster care. They're not just less likely, they are 93% less likely, but the odds are so reduced that children will be placed in foster care if they're involved in Head Start and Early Head Start. And Dr. Kline's study not only looked at children who are receiving no early educational services. But she compared Head Start and Early Head Start to other early care services and found that it really was Head Start and Early Head Start that made the difference in those foster care placements. So that is one really important finding.

Now, I want to talk a little bit about some of the findings from the Early Head Start research that also extends into those children continuing into Head Start which also gives them an extra boost. But there are some things in Early Head Start programs, certain areas of focus, that both when the children were 2 and those children were 3, were very important to creating differences in what we call the trajectory of those families. Not only for the times that they were in Early Head Start, but through their 15th birthdays. So this is a longitudinal study of children who were in Head Start, who were eligible for Early Head Start, and they were selected at random to go into Early Head Start but not really when Early Head Start was founded which was the only way that that kind of random assignment can be done. But some of the findings were that early Head Start programs that really supported positive parenting behavior and positive and emotionally responsive parenting, and really helped families improve their overall well-being, really supporting and gave families what they needed at the beginning of their life as a family with their young children. And consequently, reduced their involvement with child welfare. Again, not only when they were infants and toddlers, but through their 15th birthdays. By the time children were 3 in Early Head Start, the children in Early Head Start who really showed that through Early Head Start interventions, had better child developmental outcomes also were less likely than their counterparts who were not in early Head Start to be involved with the child welfare system.

Again, in Early Head Start, one of the other things Early Head Start programs did was they reduced family conflict and stress and consequently reduced the likelihood of abuse and neglect reporting in later life. So, with these findings, we have been able to say that Early Head Start is a child abuse prevention program. And it can prevent child abuse, it can also prevent second reports and the recurrence of child abuse and neglect. So those are some of the key benefits. Again, I would put forward that additional benefits, and I think that Josh mentioned these, is that the sustained support for families and for children to be maintained in safety and in health in their families can really be enhanced by children and families participation in Head Start and Early Head Start Programs.

So, with all of those benefits, what about the barriers? I think again, some of them have been mentioned. A number of you in the chat have pointed out that it's been difficult to partner with child welfare. That oftentimes you may have different perspectives, or you may see that you have a different mission. Child welfare primarily for the safety of the child. And again, in Head Start and Early Head Start that's our primary goal too but we also are interested in helping families providing safe and supportive care for their children. So, sometimes folks list issues around confidentiality and how do you talk to the child welfare agency. Sometimes you feel like you don't know what's going on. What can you share? And I know that Francie is going to talk about some ways that that may be able to be remedied. Partnering with child welfare, being part of what's called the service plan for any family that's actively involved with child welfare, really gives you the permission to be able to be involved in sharing confidential information. And of course, partnering with a family to make this a three-way solid exchange. So, it's Head Start or Early Head Start staff, child welfare staff, and the family and sometimes it's a fourth group of people if that child is in foster care. So, these kind of things are very important. Again, barriers really are problematic when we see our missions as different and oftentimes the notion that we are going to monitor and document and report is an unusual or foreign one for us in Head Start and Early Head Start. And yet, I think Josh has given us some really good guidance around how we might be able to do that.

Let's talk a little bit about then making those connections. That's really, I think, the key. You know, oftentimes when you don't know someone very well, you don't kind of know what their position is, and sometimes we even make judgments about first impressions that may not be correct. If you think about that at the community level, you may have some first impressions of that child welfare agency that we make because we don't know them very well. Or we certainly may have had a difficult experience. But making the connections is one of the key ways in which we can really reach out and for that family and for that child, really bring our work together. And so, programs, again at the program level, and really provide ongoing stable enrollment for children both when their families are struggling, and the child is at home and also if that child goes to foster care. Sometimes the Head Start and Early Head Start program is the only continuity that that child might experience. So really advocating for that child to stay in the program and to work with both the child welfare agency, possibly with foster parents, the biological parents can be really, really important. At the community level, the kinds of connections and the kind of understanding of the community that those of you have in Head Start and Early Head Start can be tremendously helpful both to the family and often to the child welfare agency. The Head Start and Early Head Start programs can also be a neutral and safe place, the program location for a child to visit with birth parents if that's part of the service plan that's been developed. It may be, even if the parents don't get to visit, that sharing information about the child's daily experiences with the biological parents, again as a formal and transparent part of a service plan, to really support that parent's reunification, may also be a really important role of the program. And support for both the child and the family when the child returns home if they've been in foster care, as well as support for the work of the foster parents can be a critical aim of Early Head Start programs and Head Start programs.

So, now a little bit about connecting with your local and state child welfare department. Several of you have mentioned well, in my state things are a little bit different, and you all are right. Every state has its own child abuse reporting laws. There are some things that are common in all of those laws. All of those laws designate mandated reporters, and Head Start and Early Head Start staff in every state are mandated reporters. Secondly, the state actually keeps your name confidential so that if you don't disclose to the family that you have made the report, that's not something that they would hear from their child welfare department, and that's part of all of the state laws. The other part of the state laws that's common is that you have immunity from any legal action if you report in good faith. And those are some of the things that are really held with great importance for programs so you can feel like you can go ahead and report when it's needed. However, there are lots of variations across states and I would refer you to what I think is the best resource to really understand not only what's going on in your state but if you have a family come in from another state, or if you're trying to understand state laws. And the child welfare information gateway website has a ... Again, if you click on the link that's here, you will see it gives you a state by state information about the laws in each state. But I also want to say that the way that each local child welfare office and child welfare offices are usually established by county unless counties are very small and then sometimes there is more than one county represented. And in tribal communities, by Indian child welfare as well as by county child welfare at times. Local municipalities also have their own ways of working. So, it really is important to get to know your own local child welfare organization.

Finally, I want to say a little bit about partnering with child welfare during uncertain times. And the pandemic which we're now involved has made things difficult not only for child welfare agencies and juvenile courts, but I know that a number of you have increased concerns because of your need to connect with families virtually rather than to work with them face to face. Just to let you know, just like many or most of you are engaging with families virtually, child welfare agencies are doing the same. So that they are doing a lot of the investigation which immediately follows a report virtually unless there is an immediate fear for the safety of that child, and then in some states, child welfare workers are going in, in other states it may be law enforcement. So, you may see more law enforcement officers who are involved with child welfare cases. I know that this makes it very difficult to feel comfortable, oftentimes about what you're seeing virtually. I think that Josh gave us some tremendous suggestions around the ways to approach issues with families and to talk to them. I would just remind you that offering compassion, connection, and care, and carefully listening may be more important now than it ever has been. To also really try to identify some of the immediate stressors. Because again, in our virtual times that may be more difficult, but it may be important particularly if you then feel like you need to file a report. Doing all those positive strength-based things like supporting the parent-child relationship, and really thinking about how you may be able to support the positives within a family are also of critical importance. I would suggest that each program develop a response protocol for your virtual work with children and families when safety issues really are identified, and it may be really important to do that and we can say a little bit more about that in a few minutes. So, our key message here is that Head Start and Early Head Start programs and child welfare partnerships are really important. And these partnerships can really

make a difference in the lives of children and families. So, I'm going to turn this back over to Brandi.

Brandi: Couldn't you guys just listen to Ms. Cathy all day long? Do you see what I mean? What are y'all doing for the rest of the day? Can you hang out for a little longer? Cathy, you used words throughout like kindness, care, compassion, connection. I mean, it's how we do what we do. It's such an organic part of our wiring in Head Start and certainly so excited we get to take those skills and apply them on a community level. So, I wanted to highlight one more thing before we turn the mic over to Francie because she has so many great things to share too. Cathy, I can't help but circle back to things like, you know, when children and families get to be part of our Head Start and Early Head Start programming, they're less likely to go to foster care. We can actually stand on that it's a child abuse prevention program. What we do makes a difference. Oh, my goodness. If you guys don't walk away with anything else today, underline that part. Exclamation point this moment. What we do makes a difference. And you guys are leading an effort in a way that is mind blowing. You're offering virtual service, you're making connections in a way that families can receive stuff right now, today. So, I just needed to stop there and just pause for a second because even in the framework it teaches us in that blue column about family outcomes, the importance of that connection to peers and community. Well, it's through what you guys do to really pave those pathways for families as they are traveling along their journey. So, I just kept meaning to underline that for a second because that's just such a powerful set of statements. And with that, Francie, how are you doing? Are you ready?

Francie Zimmerman: I think I'm ready.

Brandi: Let's do it.

Francie: Okay, Brandi, thank you, and I just too want to acknowledge, as prior speakers have, that these are just exceptionally difficult times, and I am so impressed and grateful for the audience that we have today. I think we keep adjusting to new situations that are described as unprecedented. So, several of you have already talked about the fact that we're in the midst of this pandemic. That it has led to enormous isolation and as we have to take a number of precautions to try to keep ourselves and our families safe as well as just other citizens around us. We're facing enormous obviously economic uncertainty as we look ahead. And then, of course, now I am calling in from the city of Philadelphia, so I am in a place where so many cities, communities, and counties across this country have just reached a breaking point in response to these recent murders by the hands of the police and the uprisings that have resulted from this. So, it felt like a hard morning to just shift into, honestly, a webinar, but if there was a group that I could want to be with today, I have to say it is all of you. I, too, am an old Head Start person. I'm an old Head Start Director of Family Services, and so, prior to joining the Center for the Study of Social Policy, where I work with my colleague Charlyn Harper Brown who is someone that you have heard from before, I work on child welfare issues, but I would say that I always keep a part of me in what, when I worked there, we called Head Start World, and was a

Director of Family Services for Head Start centers here in Philadelphia as well as Camden, New Jersey. And really, today and every day, I'm thinking about the needs of those families.

I think Josh did a really important and powerful job of grounding us in the reality of thinking about families and their individual situations, which is almost always where you want to start with Head Start and Early Head Start. And then, Cathy did just a terrific job as she said of pulling back, giving us that aerial view, giving us those statistics and those research findings that really provides a rationale for why we should be talking about Head Start, Early Head Start, and child welfare partnerships. She has really given you the reason for why these should be high on your list of priorities. And just that beginning list that Brandi shared of the things that you all are already doing makes me feel very encouraged that I hope [Inaudible] that what I have to share really resonates with those of you who are already doing something, and for those of you who have been maybe on the fence of getting involved with child welfare, I hope will be just the motivation you need as we look ahead in these uncertain times. So, under normal circumstances I would have started really with just a very positive statements about a new opportunity that I think some of you are probably familiar with and others of you may be shaking your head and saying, "Family First Prevention Services Act, what is that?" OK, so you can tell from the name that this is federal legislation. It was passed in 2018. There's a lot of information on our website and we have a link to it in the notes and in the resources that we'll get to at the end, but there's also good information from the Children's Defense Fund and others, so if you just want to google the Family First Prevention Services Act, you'll get lots of information about what this new law has to say. But the really important part of it, I think for a Head Start audience, is that this is a law that came about because the numbers in foster care had been declining pretty consistently over many, many years and they have started to creep back up, and especially for that young infant and toddler cohort that Cathy mentioned.

And so, in an attempt to really think about what's going on there, and also to really emphasize the prevention agenda, this law was passed and it mandates that the state develop new plans for how to keep kids in safe, supportive family contact, preventing them from ever having to enter the foster care system. For you all ever having to make that mandatory report, state has the option of developing these plans now, and a handful of them have. Many have deferred and they can defer for months to come into 2022 if they choose to, but there is an emphasis around prevention and they must focus at least part of their plan on the very young children from zero to five. So, I wanted you to be aware that this act is out there. That child welfare agencies have some mandates to respond and develop plans and that this is a place where some of those research findings around evidence for prevention and prevention that supports families with the youngest children and the role that Early Head Start and Head Start can play in this could be enormously valuable.

So, I wanted to plant that seed for you to do some investigating and then as we talk about a little further, some of the community engagement framework, have this in the back of your mind as something that may be an opportunity in your county, city, or state going forward. So, when you think about child welfare and what you can accomplish together, I want to acknowledge that when I worked in Head Start and asked my family services staff what do you



think about when you think about child welfare, they pretty consistently had two things in mind. One was, don't we call somebody to come in for pre-service training? Isn't there somebody in the state capitol who comes down once a year, and that was in fact true. And the training they did was for mandatory reporters and they talked about the definitions in the law and what you do to report to the hotline. And people were, you know, more nervous and worried about ever having to make a hotline report which generally is a fairly rare occurrence. But they really hadn't thought about that broader continuum of services that Josh and Cathy have mentioned. And so I want you to think today in the Head Start context, not just about that narrow role for child protection but for the broader role of child welfare and how that can dovetail with Head Start and Early Head Starts goal around wellbeing. If thinking about child welfare in that way is unfamiliar or maybe even a little uncomfortable or you think they won't be receptive, I think if we're learning anything right now, it's that maybe we have to push ourselves to stay in some of those uncomfortable spots.

And so, I just want to ask each of you in your programs, both as individuals and as organizations, to try to think more broadly and deeply about what you might do in partnership with child welfare. Brandi shared this terrific matrix that grounds the community engagement work and I just want to acknowledge that there are opportunities for action, as we said that aren't necessarily around those narrow roles of reporting but really could get to some opportunities for leadership. So, does your organization have any kind of written agreement with the child welfare agency? Do you have a memorandum of understanding? Have you reached out to them for that? Do you share some participation in your governance structures? Child welfare is not always invited to those tables so it might be something for you to think about in their roles as program leaders in your community too. Are there opportunities for professional development? So, we've already heard a little bit about trauma and trauma triggers and the need to heal from trauma. And of course, we know that Head Start is steeped in early childhood brain development. So those are concerns for child welfare agencies too when they think about what they do. And so, there may be some opportunities for sharing some of those professional development resources or pursuing some of those topics especially right now around things like healing and recovery that could be a benefit to both entities.

In terms of continuous learning and improvement, I've spent some time in Head Start but I've also spent lots of time in child welfare agencies and I want to tell you that there are some pretty big gaps in what child welfare workers, especially those in direct service roles, understand about early childhood. Each system has its own alphabet soup. Each system has its own rules and regulations. They're complicated and often they're just happy to know that a child is in some kind of child care setting. Not everybody understands the added value of Head Start and Head Start. So there really is a teaching role for you all to make sure that especially those direct service workers where there's a lot of turnover, and their supervisors who may be juggling a lot of roles and responsibilities really understand the enhancements and the comprehensiveness of Head Start and Early Head Start. And so, again, I would just think about that as a role where you all might be able to play a really valuable part. And then one other area that I'm going to return to but just want to tip my hand a little and say that the family partnership part of the matrix is something that Head Start and Early Head Start have a lot of

experience in and child welfare agencies often want to do. Many of them have set up parent advisory councils, they often have use advisory boards, but they haven't had as much experience with the kind of parent and family leadership and community development that Head Start and Early Head Start have done for decades. And often they are, to be honest, in a disadvantaged position because their history is approaching families often from a deficit model. And so some of your expertise with leadership and working with families in partnership, again could be an area where you have something to offer a child welfare agency and could be a basis for a partnership that looks a little different than perhaps what you've done in the past.

So, I want to put in a plug for our six action steps. They are in the brief that is in the resource folder. And they're really detailed steps with lots of thoughtful questions under each step. Not going to reiterate all of that on the webinar today but I just want you to know there is a process there for you to look at, and that you really want, I think, to take the time in thinking about how important child welfare is, to really try to articulate what that shared vision might be. To think about whether you have some commitment or leadership on both sides of this equation to start to develop a plan to take some action and then think about the steps for accountability. I'm just going to go through those one by one with a little bit of illustration and examples. But again, the questions, and the framework, and the templates for doing this have been codified and are there for you in the brief if you need to refer back to it, which I hope you will. So, when you think about mission, I feel like this is something we are all going to be kind of checking ourselves on in the coming weeks and months. But one thing you may want to add as you begin to return to your program's mission and really think about where you're headed for the future down this highway, is where could child welfare fit. Where have they fit historically but where could they fit going forward? I know there's a lot of anxiety about the fact that we're not able to see children and families on a daily basis that we're used to. We don't really know what will happen through child welfare when things open back up. We certainly know that reporting is not at its usual levels right now and so I think there's a lot of question about what the future looks like and maybe what a different kind of child welfare agency could be.

And so, this is something, I think, there is some time right now to perhaps reflect on as we adjust to a new normal. It's not going to be business as usual, and where they might fit. I also want to encourage you, if you don't know what your local child welfare agency's mission and priorities are, this might be a time to do some research. There's a lot of information on their websites. And I'll just site, you know, here in Philadelphia, over the last few years, the department moved to a community-based strategy and has really worked now with much more community-based organizations. Many of whom also offer Head Start and Early Head Start as the basis for their child welfare service in their attempt to be more local to families, and to present a more family supported and strength-based face. So, you want to get to know what your local child welfare agency has prioritized and how they are really acting on that mission and what's changed. Assessments, something that Head Start thinks a lot about is how to do that community assessment. And so, again, this might be a time where you can look and see what kind of data have you included around child welfare. Josh mentioned the importance of looking at data that's disaggregated by race and ethnicity, and most child welfare agencies have a lot of data on their websites that you can look at, even down to the zip code level. So, this is a

good time now to see what that baseline looks like. What are the nature of reports? Who are the most prevalent mandatory reporters, so that you kind of know what their environment is and how that dovetails and overlaps with Head Start? So, this is a time to really enquire about that data and think about how it can play into some of the future plans. Whether there are some goals. I also want to put in a plug for the importance of qualitative data.

So, it probably is known to you already, but if not, you may want to just have an informal conversation about, how is child welfare viewed in your community? Are they seen pretty much as a hostile force with a lot of anxiety and worry about child removals? Have they started to do different kinds of activities with families? Are they seen differently in different neighborhoods where you have Head Start programs? So, you want to add in that qualitative assessment as you think about the environment. In terms of setting goals, we have a nice list of possible goals that you can look at in in the brief. But one of the things I want to say is this may be changing a lot in this current context and so some of the past goals had to do with increasing the availability of preventive services in certain communities, trying to reduce the number of infants and toddlers that go into care and reduce amount of time they spend in care. And I think those are all still really worthy results but there may be some results now that really have to do with transitioning back with people having dealt with a lot of health disparities, people taking a new perspective on the importance of being not just not racist but actually anti-racist and trying to be more proactive around issues having to do with race. I think there are a lot of questions about the infrastructure for families and supports for workers. So, I think there may be some different kinds of goals and outcomes that are coming up. But I would encourage you to also think about this child welfare specific goals that Head Start can have an impact on as Cathy mentioned. So, in selecting strategies, I do want to just acknowledge that child welfare agencies can be prickly and part of that is because it is often the most egregious cases that get a lot of media attention. Commissioners and assistant commissioners can feel very defensive and they're often skeptical when people reach out that it's going to be critical. And they're not always ready to explore and prioritize a shared agenda. So, I think this may be an opportune time to find those middle managers and to really try to identify some things where there are some in fact shared priorities that are meaningful to the communities that you're in. And where there are some opportunities to develop a plan of action. This is a part that I gravitate toward and others of you may as well. This is a task oriented, you know, for the concrete thinkers out there, to really think about okay, what are some measurable goals? What are some things where we could really make some progress? And I would say that's always important in any partnership and in any kind of community engagement but so key to child welfare. They are governed by a ton of regulations, they often feel overwrought, and sometimes under siege. And so, if you are able to come up with some things you can do together that represent meaningful victories, even if they're small, that can be hugely impactful on building a relationship with child welfare.

So, I would just encourage you to think of a plan of action that truly is actionable that will have some measurable results that are meaningful on both sides, the child welfare and Head Start. In terms of the potential for community impact. When I worked at Head Start we used to talk about family services being the heart of Head Start and I'm actually now thinking about or so

many places, Head Start is so often the heart of the community. It's where we take our most vulnerable, our youngest citizens to really begin their process of education and development, building those social connections, and see families as this enormous resource with tremendous strength. And I think right now that message and that sense of community and impactfulness is going to be needed by a lot of partners, including child welfare. And so, I would just encourage you to think about Head Start as that sort of beacon for some other places and situations where child welfare often is seen with understandable skepticism and wariness by families but where you may be able to find some things that you can do in common. And I just want to share a few of those examples so that this isn't just conceptual. You may not be able to pursue each of these examples but I share them, I hope, as a kind of lightbulb going on where you think, that's something I can find out more about, that's something we might be able to pursue. One idea is that many child welfare agencies have designated people as early childhood specialists and you want to find out who they are and make sure you're in conversation with them if you're not already, before there's a crisis before there's a problem. And often those are people who gravitate towards young children and their families but may not have as much training or expertise as the Head Start center has in that early childhood developmental stage. And so, there's certainly people who I think would be eager for the resources and knowledge that you have and also as places where you could perhaps hook into a child welfare agency that otherwise may seem a little bit anonymous or hard to penetrate. So, see if there are early childhood specialists in your jurisdiction and if they would be amenable to sitting down or virtually sitting down, I guess these days, getting to know each other.

Another opportunity are infant-toddler courts. This is something that a number of family courts have set up in places all over the country. And they're intended to really make sure judges and the other participants in court hearings are better informed again, about early childhood brain development, and how their decisions and plans, this is another set of plans that are made, impact our youngest children in their families. So these are courts that have said we need to have special expertise when infants and toddlers are involved. And so that might be, again, a resource that you could look at to see if you have it or if you even have a judge who would be open to and interested in making infants and toddlers and the cases that come before them that involve those young kids a priority. I already mentioned that there should be a sharing interest in parent and family leadership both on child welfare and of course Head Starts long and exemplary history in that. And this is a place where you could probably do some planning about some shared events. And I can't even imagine it right now, but we will eventually get back to the days where we actually plan things that are fun and that relate to a community context. And so these are some of the things that you could potentially do together, bringing together your parent groups for the kind of health fairs, recruitment events, transition events into kindergarten, back to school events. So, that could be something that you think about from a parent perspective. Parent cafe's, and again, thinking about the powerful leadership within Head Start as a bridge or even a near pier kind of mentoring to some of the parent advisor groups and advocates that are involved in child welfare.

Finally, I'm just going to put in a plug for young parents and expectant and parenting adolescents who have young children and their family support. They are a priority. Back to the

beginning, in that Family First Prevention Act, they are identified as a priority. Again, an area where Head Start and child welfare have some common interest and something that you could perhaps find out who is spearheading work with young mom's and dad's and perhaps do some collaboration and sharing of planning and resources for the parents in those within child welfare with the families who are participating in Head Start. So, I am going to wrap up my comments there and will turn this back to Brandi but will just reiterate on last time that when you think about that community engagement context and your efforts to promote family wellbeing and to prevent child abuse and neglect by supporting families before there has ever been an occurrence of abuse or neglect that needs to be reported. Head Start and Early Head Start are really, really powerful partners to the child welfare agency. And if they're already on your list, terrific. If they're not, I hope you put them there and think deeply and broadly about how you might engage with them. Brandi, I'm turning it back to you.

Brandi: Oh, wow Francie, I mean you're speaking our language here. I love the language that I picked up as I was hearing where you were driving us. One, I'm totally with you on the action planning. I get a little nerded out. I get to put things in a pile and really come to a solution, especially with friends. But that's what I hear you saying. Not only are we incredible contributors in our community, but we also have what I read, I think you said we put this in a teaching role, but what I hear is like this we would say the classroom, a teachable moment to really continue to educate our community colleagues on where we are, what we're doing, especially in this day and time where, you know, as we mentioned earlier, you guys have been mobilizing in ways that are stress taking like in the best possible way for really being with families and staying connected with them and not giving up. When families weren't ready to receive us because they're holding and juggling so much, you gently still stay connected and you haven't given up. And Francie, I take away from your, not only the strategies that you gifted us but this language around, when we can help continue to make those connections not only between our Head Start, Early Head Start programs but also with our child welfare agencies and others, this just broadens all of our circle of support. Which, gosh, we could never live with that idea, right? I mean, we just need each other. So, that's my little personal wrap-up with where you took us, so I hope it honors your vision there too.

A couple of things. I want to do a time check. You know, the good southern hostess in me to sort of check in here with everybody. So, a couple of things- We promised to spend 90 minutes together in the context of the conversation. We also promised to hang out for a little bit afterwards for some Q&A. We've been collecting questions as we've come through the dialog as many of you have been continuing to type those in the Q&A part of the bottom left- hand side of your screen. I want to show you a couple of resources before I open up the mic to my colleagues so that we can circle back to some of your questions. You'll notice a couple of things about our resources. On the top left of this slide you're going to see the three documents that are in our community engagement series. And you're also going to see on the top of this slide across the center right, the three documents we have for you to download that are all about child welfare. And we mentioned one is really about how to make and keep connections with families as they travel through this process. And then also, we've been thinking about together today, this zoomed out community application of that. So, you'll see a few resources listed here

for you. You can always visit the ECLKC, depending on where you live, E-CLKC, EC-LKC, ECLKC to find these resources for you for free at any time. The other thing that I would mention, oh my goodness, it's one of the series that I'm most excited about from our work right now. You'll see it mentioned, the five briefs on understanding trauma and healing in adults.

There's so much to unpack here, and I believe sometime in the near future we're going to come back to you guys with a focus on creating this program wide trauma-informed culture. There are a couple of things that we're thinking about as we continue hearing and learning from you guys about another sort of web-based interaction that we might share together. So, those briefs, and Josh mentioned at the top of our time together will be up super soon, so you heard it here first, everybody. So, let's vend a couple of these key takeaways and let me give you at least one more place that we can continue this conversation, and then I'm going to go back and look at some of the questions so that we can think together about those in our final minutes.

So, a couple of things. When families ... You guys have heard these key takeaways woven in throughout. When families experiencing challenges, those safe and trusting relationships strengthen their wellbeing. I mean, it allows each of us to come through wherever we are with colleague support and success. Cathy taught us about how the partnerships are so important between our Head Start, Early Head Start programming and our child welfare partners. Francie brought us around her really thinking about how coming together in this kind of way and bringing friends, that connection that she was talking about, the widening of that circle of support is really a win-win. And we have a couple other ones here too. That, of course, community service as powerful partners in promoting not only family wellbeing but the prevention of child abuse and neglect. It makes me think about Cathy's research that she brought to us. And then, certainly, oh my goodness, we don't have to work by ourselves and we certainly don't have to work in silo's. I think, you know, in these times we've really been able to illustrate that in a bigger, more concrete way, and I think we've been able to stand in that space in a way that we have been craving for a while, just in service of each other.

If you haven't yet, please do come over and visit us in the PFCE Deepening Practice Community on MyPeers. MyPeers is a community that you can sign up for on the ECLKC and you see a couple of instructions here on the bottom of the slide. One of our colleagues, he's actually on the line today, Dr. Earnstein Brown, leads and helps and facilitates and guides conversation over there. The connection to each other in that community is very strong. It's really for each of you as grand key's and programs to come together to share what's working, to ask for support, to think together. So, come on over and sign up. And we're there to hover around too to say, oh gosh, you guys are thinking about that? We have a resource that's coming about that. Or, oh, have you checked out this resource? So, every once in a while, you'll see us pipe in too if we find something that we think would be cool for you to consider. And then resource wise, last but not least, oh, I love this service. The "Text Your Family" services. You can go to exactly what you see here on your screen. You can text PFCE to 22660 to sign up. You only get, I don't want you to feel like you'll be inundated with texts, but it's a couple of texts a month. And actually, I signed up for the service too and I get these little you know, thoughts of encouragement and connection. It's just been really, really cool to stay connected in this way too. But it's all about

family engagement, it's all about taking your practice to the next level, and it's all about staying connected. And of course, you can see here they're also available in Spanish.

I want to say one more thing because I know we need to wrap-up, but I see my friend Heather is in the chat, and I definitely want to bring out what she said and acknowledge this in all the ways that we need to. This work is emotional, and I'm so grateful to report that we're not alone. And that's not just lip service. She's offering as a reminder in the chat that we have each other, we have our colleagues, we have supportive supervisors who engage with us in reflective practice, supervision slash maybe even coaching. We have a mental health consultant as evidence in this conversation. We have our communities, and those services are broadened. I mean, even the pathways that you guys have paved within the context of this pandemic and reaching out for food, and even internet services, equipment. I mean, it's just been incredible to see what you guys have been doing. I guess that would be this instance I would humbly leave you with is we're here together and together we make a difference. And when we're connected in these ways, we all benefit.

So, with that, I'm going to leave you with a hearty, hearty thank you for spending this much time with us today It's always an honor. And you know, I've been thinking about how I would wrap up and getting in the word too, but I guess that's what I've got to do. I've just got to say go forth everybody and cheese it when you need to. Thank you all. We look forward to seeing you again soon. Take care.