

Using the Relationship-Based Competencies (RBCs) as a Professional Development Tool for My Staff

Jennifer Olson: Welcome everyone. Welcome to this session on using the relationship-based competencies, or what we like to call them, the RBCs as a professional development tool for your staff. I'd like to let you know who's with you today: my colleague, Nancy Darlington, and myself, Jennifer Olson. Nancy, would you like to share a little bit about yourself before we start?

Nancy Darlington: Sure. Hi everybody. This is Nancy Darlington. I'm a Senior Training and Technical Assistance Specialist with the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, and I'm sitting in my home up in Maine. And we're so thrilled that you're joining us today.

Jennifer: Thank you, Nancy. I'm Jennifer Olson. I have the same position at the National Center as Nancy, and I'm sitting in my house in Oregon. We're at opposite ends of the US, or sides of the US, and very excited to be here with you today because I know you're coming from all over the country to participate in this. Nancy, would you like to give us a little bit of housekeeping as I move the slide for you, as we begin?

Nancy: Sure, absolutely. Thank you, Jennifer. If you've participated in a session already, you've probably been through this description, but we want to make sure that everybody gets the same information in the same way so that you know how to navigate through here and you're not frustrated. So, I'm going to read you the instructions as I click through here. To maximize your experience on this webinar platform, I want to show you how you can control your audience console. You'll see five engagement tools that are controlled by the widgets at the bottom of your console. I just clicked on the first one, which is the media player in the top left of the console. That one will take you to watch presenters and videos. The next one is an important one. It's the question and answers, or Q&A, that's in the bottom left of your console, and we encourage you to use that during the presentation. Type in there. We will see your comments and your questions, so please take advantage of that. That's how we all learn from each other. You'll also see the slides. I just clicked on the widget for the slides that popped up in the middle there. That's where you'll find the slides from today's presentation. We have a list of resources for you. I just clicked on that one. You can download the resources and you can download the slide presentation right there with that widget. If you want to know a little more about us, there's presenter bios in the bottom right-hand corner that you can go and read at your leisure. These engagement tools on your console are movable and resizable. There's little arrows right here in the lower left corner there to make them bigger or smaller. You can resize them with that, and in the bottom right-hand corner, you'll see a double ended arrow. You can drag that to resize as needed. There are three more widgets that you need to be aware of. One is the knowledge check widget. At the end of each session, you will have several questions to answer, and when you've successfully completed those questions, you will get your certificate, which is important, so you get credit for your time. You'll also see, in the bottom right-hand

corner, there's a help widget. If you have questions, you can click on that. It doesn't take you anywhere live, but it takes you to a written document that might be able to answer any of your questions related to some technical issues. Thank you very much.

Jennifer: Thank you, Nancy. Great housekeeping, and we'll start now with a little bit of reflection. When Nancy and I were thinking about preparing this PowerPoint for you, we began to think about how successful are your staff in building effective relationships with families? We thought that that might be an important question to think about, and how do you know? You may believe that they're successful, but how do you know? Nancy, did you have a comment on this as well?

Nancy: Yes. Often when you ask someone, "How is your staff doing in their relationships with families?" The answer that you'll get is, "They're really good. They're doing really good." It's really important to think about those indicators that tell you, how do you know that these relationships are going well and that they're building and being effective, So, as we go through the presentation today, keep that in mind: things that you can measure, things you can observe, and knowledge skills and practices that you might be able to develop in order to build relationships, and to know how your staff are doing.

Jennifer: Thank you, Nancy. Let's take a look at our learning objectives for today. We're going to explore how the relationship-based competencies can be used as a pathway for professional development, and we're going to align some of these common circumstances that you encountered with your staff with the RBCs so we can develop professional development plans. We're also going to examine reflective practice as a way to build relationships and support staff in growing their skills. Some key messages that we want to share with you today is: Family engagement is a dynamic process. It's meaningful in the context of positive goal-oriented relationships, and we really want to emphasize that positive relationships, since that's the center of all the work that we do. Another message is that the RBCs provide your staff with an effective pathway for engagement and a way to advance their professional goals, for the knowledge, skills, and practices that they might need to become more capable or even to validate their family engagement skills. We're going to talk about that. Then we're also going to talk about reflective practice is essential to creating and maintaining those relationships. Nancy, let's talk a little bit about what is engagement.

Nancy: Thank you, Jennifer. Family engagement. It's really important that we all understand what we mean when we're talking about it, so we don't have all kinds of different ideas about it. Basically, it's the process of building ongoing, lasting, and goal-oriented relationships that have a purpose. The purpose is applying a collective vision, that's the vision that you have within your program, what you hope to accomplish with families, families contribute to that vision as well. Where are we going? How are we really going to work together, work hand in hand? There's benefits to this effective family engagement. We all know this, but it's also really important to keep in mind that family engagement is everybody's business. We sometimes think about silos. We have the education staff. We have the management staff. We have the health staff. But really, everyone that interacts with families in any way, family engagement is

part of their business. They help to set the quality of the program and contribute to the benefits. We know that effective family engagement leads to better child and family outcomes. We know that it leads to building stronger communities, and that's one of the focuses and goals of head start: developing community partnerships so that we're all working hand in hand to support children and families. We know that some of the long-term benefits of this kind of partnership and kind of engagement is: we know children will be healthier and more ready for school and for life, that families will be healthier and more ready to really engage in your program and engage in their community, your program will achieve a higher level of quality – says right there program quality – and you'll also be building stronger communities that are not only supporting the families that are in your program now, but the next generations coming along. When we talk about effective family engagement, how do we do it? What are the ingredients for success? One is a shared responsibility, which, I just talked about in that family engagement, is everybody's business. It's a set of beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and activities – things that you can actually do – and we've already mentioned knowledge, skills, and practices, which you'll hear more about as we go along. When everyone is in agreement on the definition of family engagement and those attitudes, behaviors, and activities, to achieve it, then the same things will be happening at home, in your program, in school, and in the community, for the benefit of everyone. Again, the purpose of this is building those goal-oriented relationships with families. It's important to keep in mind that, in each of these, there are elements that can be measured and/or observed. That's why we gave you this picture of cooking because you need to measure; you need to know what you're putting in; you need to have the proper ingredients. Then, you can observe what happens when everything comes together appropriately.

Jennifer: I love that analogy, Nancy, when you say put the ingredients together and watch what happens. I feel that way about the RBCs as well. You have a deeper understanding of the knowledge, skills, and practices that can really assist in quality family engagement, and then you get to watch what happens. It's exciting. Should we talk a little bit about those RBCs now?

Nancy: Yes, please do.

Jennifer: Thanks, Nancy. OK, so let's start with the definition of relationship-based competencies. It's here on your screen. It's a set of knowledge, skills, and practices, and other characteristics that are necessary to be effective in one's family engagement work. I hope many of you are familiar with the relationship-based competencies today. We'll be really throbbed to hear it in the question and answer box how you've been using them, and how they've been helpful. But for those of you that might not be as familiar, I'd like to share a little bit about what's involved in the suite of resources. We'd like to call it a sweet suite of resources. It begins with the overview for all early childhood professionals, and we really recommend that you keep that overview booklet handy at all times – handily handy – at all times because it really gives you the background and the research that went into building these relationship-based competencies, and there's a great deal of information there that we would love you to be aware of. There's actually three different resources: one for family service professionals, the other for teachers and childcare providers, and the third one for home visitors. We're very

excited to feature that home visitors one because often the home visitors have to mush themselves into those other two roles because they're doing both on those home visits. We want you to be aware that there's an informational book on each one of these roles, and then also, there are assessments that are assigned to each one of them, so family service professionals, as individuals, have an assessment, and the supervisors of family service professionals, such as yourselves, family service managers, you have your own assessment as well. We'll talk a little bit more about that as we move through this presentation. Nancy, would you like to align these RBCs with the framework for us?

Nancy: Sure, Jennifer. Thank you. I never get tired of talking about the framework because the more you learn about it, it's just more comprehensive, in-depth, and supportive you discover it to be. As I always say, I never assume that people are familiar with it. Some people may be; it may be new to some people. So, I'll give you the quick overview, but I encourage you to dig a little bit deeper and learn more about it. I'd like to start in the purple column because that describes child outcomes, which really is our ultimate goal. We want children to be healthy, happy, ready to succeed. We also know, moving to the blue column, that children develop and learn and grow in the context of their families. The seven family outcomes that are listed here are things that we've learned through research, that when these things are strong within a family or healthy within a family, they result in positive child outcomes. That's really the heart and soul of Head Start work, is working with the family and the child for the benefit of all. Then, I jump over to the yellow column, which is your program foundations. That's where the leadership of your program lies. Within that leadership, that's what your program is all about comes to be. What are the values? What are the priorities? Yes, we're guided by our standards and whatnot, but every program is unique. If the program leadership believes that family engagement is everybody's business, that will be reflected across your program. Professional development will be provided around that, and it will be one of the things that is looked at for continuous improvement. It will be reflected in the pink column, which is all your systems and services that you provide. You'll notice right above those four columns: equity, inclusiveness, cultural and linguistic responsiveness. Those are pulled out and highlighted because those are values that we hope to see reflected in every aspect across the board, within a program, and within this framework. Then, again, across the top is the purple arrow that pulls everything together. Why are we doing any of this? Our goal is those positive, goal-oriented relationships. It's within the context of those relationships that all of this work takes place. As Jennifer goes on to describe the relationship-based competencies in a little more detail, you'll notice the language in the competencies, much of it comes directly from this framework and it's really pulling out those knowledge, skills, and practices to tell you how to achieve these things that are in the framework. Jennifer.

Jennifer: Yes, Nancy. I wanted to emphasize as we look at that yellow column, professional development and continuous learning, and quality improvement ... I want to have people keep that in their minds as we move forward to talk a little bit more about the competencies. So, there's key terminology that we want you to be aware of. There are three things that we've been talking about that are within the competencies: knowledge, skills, and practices. When we think about knowledge, it's what a professional needs to know. It's the background information

that they need to be aware of: research or basic information associated with working with families or the standards. It's all that you need to know. Whereas, skills are what professionals need to be able to do. Now, we're talking about actually implementing a skill, a home visiting skill. Going in and interviewing the family for the first time, building rapport with the family. That's a skill, and we need to be able to do that, but the practices include key examples of what people actually do. This is how, as individuals, we apply our knowledge and skills differently, don't we? We actually develop our own practices. That's what you see when you see your family service professionals working with families. They may do it uniquely and differently, but they're all applying the same knowledge and skills to get to that practice. Then, of course, these three things equal professional practice, which is the combination of all of them and is measurable and observable, as we were mentioning along the way. Let's take a closer look at the selected example. This is competency two. You see, it's self-awareness and culturally responsive relationship – self-aware and culturally responsive – and a professional practice – now, this is a combination of all three – is respects and responds to the cultures, languages, values, and family structures of each family. Well, that can be made up of many things. Respect is such a big word. But let's take it apart and see what kind of knowledge that we would need to show that respect and responsiveness. The knowledge is: I understand that each family has unique strengths and resilience. Look at that word, that verb. It's knowledge, isn't it? We're understanding, understanding rather than doing. Now, we get to strengths and we look on skills, which are also strengths, and we reflect on our own beliefs, values, experiences, ethics, and biases to enhance our self-awareness. See, we're going deeper here now. We're going into a skill where we're reflecting, and we might share that skill with others. Finally, the practice is we actually engage in relationships that are responsive to other's cultures, languages, and values. Please be aware that this is observable and measurable because it's so properly defined within the RBC, that you can actually measure it. What are these RBCs? Let's look at the 10 of them altogether. I'd like to think about fingers and toes. There's 10 fingers and toes – we hope for everybody – and we also have 10 competencies. As I said, be aware of that leadership-coordinated, integrated, comprehensive services, professional growth, from that first column. See those last ones? 8, 9, and 10. Those really come from that leadership column at the beginning, that foundational yellow column that Nancy talked about. No. 1 and 2 are associated with the arrow, aren't they? The positive goal-oriented relationships, and self-aware – culturally aware – relationships. Then, three to seven mirror exactly what is in the family outcome column, and they're combined in some instances. I'll give you a minute to look at those.

Nancy: Again, Jennifer, I'll just repeat that the language in the competency mirrors the framework, but you go to the competencies to look for the knowledge, skills, and practices in order to advance each one of those things that are in the framework. They're really working.

Jennifer: They do, Nancy. They're actually defining each other, aren't they? Yeah. Thank you so much. Let's look a little bit at these assessments. I alluded to them earlier where I said each role had their own assessment, either for the person themselves as an individual or a supervisory assessment regarding the knowledge, skills, and practices. Really, a unique feature in the supervisory assessment is the whole column on leadership, and so there's competencies on how you might actually lead within your program to ensure that family engagement is a top

priority. And that you would lead as far as being able to observe and measure that as an outcome. Now, we're going to get into some specific ways to actually use the assessments to support professional development. There's kind of three levels that we like to think about. Of course, maybe there are others, but the primary ones are an individual can use RBCs to assess their own competencies. Managers can use the RBCs, and we're going to share some examples of that. And you can actually look at program goals and align them or one of them with your RBCs as well. So, let's take a closer look at the individual level. I, as a person, I've started as a family service manager, or I just learned about these RBCs, and I'm kind of excited about them, and I'm starting to delve in. And my supervisor told me to go slow though. I should probably only look at one or two when I first start because it's a lot of information. So, I decide to review a selected RBC to determine if I have strengths and also some opportunities for professional development. So, let's say that I look at the data one. I'm kind of interested in how we align data with family engagement. I look at that and I see – oh my gosh – really what it talks about is using family feedback, family surveys, family goals to really look and see what's happening and our program. And so, we're aligning information back from the families with growth in the program or with continuous improvement. So, I go through that and I think, "Wow, I have some strengths in this area that I didn't even realize that were data-related and that gets me excited." And then, I also discovered that perhaps I have an opportunity for some professional development because I didn't think about that piece before. I didn't think about that skill as being related to data and family engagement. So, I schedule an appointment with my supervisor to review those same that same selected RBC, the data one, No. 9, and I asked them to help me assess by strengths and needs. And then, together, we compare information and areas of growth, and we recreate my personal development plan. We add to the professional development plan using a relationship-based competencies, and in six months, I come back and have that same conversation with my supervisor – or three months or four months, whatever date you set – and we use them as a pre/post measure of progress. So, that's an example of how an individual might engage with the RBCs in their own professional development planning. And Nancy now is going to give you an example of a manager.

Nancy: Thank you, Jennifer. In this situation, the manager is hearing some concerns from a number of staff. It's not just one individual, but a number of staff are bringing a concern. And the concern is related to the fact that the centers have had to close for some time and due to the current situations that are happening, and the staff is really concerned that the children are missing out on opportunities for learning, for positive development, and for social emotional support. So, she decides ... Hmm, we all know that parents are the first and foremost educators of their children. Here's the perfect opportunity to build on that. So, she asks her staff to look at competency No. 4, which is parent-child relationships and parents as educators. She does find some strengths that the staff really does understand the value and the importance of those early family interactions, that what's going on in a family is the foundation for learning. The staff also understands that there's so much that goes on within a household in just everyday living that are opportunities for learning. So, how can we maximize that? Looking under skills, she finds a way that suggests that they can strengthen their partnership with families to really identify and support ongoing learning activities in the home and in the community. Working together, partnering with the parents, not saying, "We have to come in and tell you, 'This is

what you can do with your child," but let's work together, hand in hand and partner on that. In the supervisory practices, as Jennifer mentioned, each one of the supervisory assessments has some leadership and supervisory practices that are not in the staff assessments. And she starts thinking about offering some training for the family services professionals to think about, first of all, how adults learn, so you can really approach the parents from right where they are, and also – and this could be co-training between the staff and the parent – let's look at parenting behaviors that support child development. Also, some parents are concerned about behaviors they're seeing, since their children are home and not coming to the classrooms, so maybe we could do some joint training together on how do you support children who are having challenging behaviors, and how do you support their healthy social emotional development. Looking at all those professional development opportunities for staff, the manager also thinks about, hmm I need to go back to the leadership and make sure that they're willing to allocate the budget I might need to provide some web-based technology for the families to use, maybe supply some materials for them, or even transportation for some community activities that might be going on. That's an example for management level to support their staff using the RBCs.

Jennifer: Nancy, I'm struck ... [Crosstalk] Sorry. I'm stuck by that third bullet: "Together, compare information on strengths and areas of growth, and support staff in creating a professional development plan for the year. So, in this case, in the individual one, you are looking at an individual professional development goal and plan. But in this case, we're looking at everybody being involved in this one competency and coming up with a plan for the entire staff for the year. So, our focus has moved now from the individual to the group, where the manager is looking at their entire staff, or a group of staff that may have been newly hired, that she or he wants to make sure they have the knowledge, skills, and practices. Certainly, the knowledge as they move into their new role, and then build on the skills and practices. Nancy, shall we move on to think about at the program level and look at a program level goal?

Nancy: Well, I was just going to save that the way you just described that as: A professional development plan is developed for a staff that can sometimes become a program goal if there, if an area is identified that the program wants to increase. Let's look at a program role.

Jennifer: Yes, that's exciting, Nancy. Let's! Let's! [Laughter] So, we're going to do a little role play on this, right, Nancy? One of us is going to be the manager, and the other one is going to be a team member. And so, Nancy, set us up so we can do this little role-play back and forth.

Nancy: OK, so the family services manager was looking at the program goals, the overall program goals, looking for something that relates to family engagement to make sure that they're included. And they did see one goal that stated, "Our enrollment is reflective of the changing demographics in our community. So, this manager asked the staff to look at competency No. 2, self-aware and culturally responsive relationships. Because some of the staff were bringing concerns that, with all these people moving into the community from different countries with different cultures, I'm not so sure I know how to interact with them, I'm afraid of saying the wrong thing, or I'm not really comfortable going into some of the neighborhoods

now that have changed so much with the new immigrant populations. So, Jennifer, they did the assessments, and you took a look at the aggregated data. What did you find?

Jennifer: Well, I certainly did find some very interesting thing, Nancy, but found that we really had a real strength. All staff really rated themselves quite high in understanding that each family has their own unique strengths and resilience, and we're in that knowledge column now. But under the knowledge column as a well, there was an area where we may be could see some professional development opportunities. I'm going to read to you that competency under knowledge. The staff indicated that they knew that, despite their best efforts, there may be some understanding due to different cultural beliefs, values, and viewpoints, and that they were a little under aware of the fact that they may not be able to navigate these misunderstandings. They indicated in their assessment that they knew that there was some maybe possible misunderstandings happening, and they said they needed to have a little bit of assistance and develop that as a stronger skill. They also assumed that they developed skills to engage cross-cultural conversations. They really felt that maybe they could do a bit more on that because, in the notes, they put that they weren't aware of some of the culture, ethics, and practices, and beliefs of some of the families that are new demographically to our area. They also said, under practices, that they wanted to have information, more information about specific cultural values and practices. So, again, there's a whole group of people maybe that we don't have enough information about, and we were seeking some help with that. But what are we going to do?

Nancy: Well, that's very helpful information, Jennifer, and I took that aggregated data, and I went to the supervisor's assessment looking for some ideas on how could we support our staff around this issue. And one of the suggestions was to offer training and coaching to increase their skills in engaging in culturally and linguistically responsive relationships. But I also saw one that talks about that our program welcomes conversations about parenting and about each family's culture, language, and values, experiences. And I thought, you know what? We could bring in a professional or consultant and do a training on cultural competency or sensitivity. Or, why don't we welcome these families in to our program, and we can all learn together. They could share with the staff, their stories, their cultures, their beliefs, their experience, and what they hope to get out of not only being new immigrants in our country but what might they hope to get out of our program, and what could our program offer them? I think that would go a long way to developing that cultural competency of our staff and helping them be comfortable in these situations.

Jennifer: Nancy, what a perfect example of giving, the RBCs giving us some insight and depth into how to approach a circumstance. That's again, just the magic and the beauty of them, that they open our eyes to maybe different opportunities about thinking about things rather than the typical response that we might have for this. That's just such a great example. Did you want to say more, Nancy?

Nancy: Yes, I just wanted to emphasize, again, that the two ways you can approach the RBCs are taking the assessments, as an individual or as staff or as a program, to identify strengths

and also develop professional development plans, again, for individuals or for your staff. But you can also look at the RBCs ... Take a situation like the situations that we've just described to you and say, "Let me take a look at that list of the competencies again and see where I might go to find some ideas about how to address this situation." And when you do that, you will find that the competencies really overlap each other, and you can find information in one that you might not have thought is going to address a different kind of situation and support. So, it's very dynamic and user-friendly, I might say. It's just such a wonderful tool for exploring not only professional growth but how might you respond to situations that you'll encounter in your program as a manager?

Jennifer: Thank you so much, Nancy. Let's look at this reflective practice, what we've been going through. We want to remind everybody that it's a parallel process. That is, you demonstrate this, as managers, with the staff that you supervise. You hope that those same staff then use this reflective practice with the families that they work with. So, do unto others as you would have others do to you; pass it on. So, it's a parallel process, and we want to remind you of this as we wrap up today. But what we really talked about in this session is: knowledge, skills, and practices are key ingredients in building relationships. The RBCs are very useful tools at the individual, management, and program professional development levels. And remember, they are observable and measurable, those competencies. Finally, we want to call your attention to the resources that we have available. We posted them in the resource widget. You'll see the competencies; they're there. Building partnerships with families, ways to use the relationship-based competencies, and a reflect and plan handout. Nancy, do you want to describe this last widget?

Nancy: Sure, I'll do the widgets. [Laughter]

Jennifer: When I introduced you to the widgets in the beginning, I did mention the knowledge check widget, and you'll see it's the one that little piece of paper with a check or an X on there. If you click on that, it will take you to what we're calling a knowledge check. There'll be a couple of questions to answer, and when you've answered those questions correctly – because we want to make sure you get credit for this time that you're putting in here and the effort that you've made to attend. So, when you answer the questions correctly, you will then have access to your certificate of participation that will pop up, and you can download it, print it. We recommend that you save it to your computer so you don't lose it. But again, we just really appreciate you spending the time to come with us and learn from us. I would encourage everybody to, again, make use of the Q&A button, and if you have any thoughts or questions or things that weren't clear to you, please put it in there and we will review all of those. Thank you.

Jennifer: Yes, and we'll move now to our reflection question, Nancy, as they're filling out that little knowledge check and downloading their certificate of completion. As Nancy mentioned, if you have questions or thoughts, please put them in the Q&A tool, and if you would like, you could actually reflect on this final comment: "How will you strengthen your strategies and resources to build relationships with families?" If you'd like to reflect on that and put your

thoughts in the Q&A, then we'll certainly look at those. The last one was, "Who was your most influential supervisor and why?" What characteristics about that person makes you think of them when I asked that question? Who is the most influential? What characteristics or what parts did you have about that person that prompt him to mind? Nancy, did you have a comment about our reflection?

Nancy: Yes. I was just going to say that maybe as you're thinking about those, reflect on what you learned in the session. Reflect on the 10 competencies and reflect on some of those knowledge, skills, and practices that enhance relationships. See if any of those were reflected in the relationship you had with that supervisor you're thinking of.

Jennifer: I had a comment in the Q&A, Nancy. I just saw that this person indicated that one of their most influential supervisors was actually someone that they wouldn't want to emulate, but they learned a great deal from watching that person struggle, maybe, with their leadership. But then, it was very insightful for them and they learned one of their most influential supervisors was someone who was actually struggling, and they learned how they wanted to behave differently. Kind of an interesting comment.

Nancy: Yes, very important. Yeah, that is a very interesting comment, and I don't think it's uncommon. Yeah, put your thoughts in there.

Jennifer: Do you see another one in the Q&A, somebody else talking about their supervisor?

Nancy: Yes, someone mentioned someone that wasn't particularly a supervisor in a job but that had a great influence on them. It actually was their mom.

Jennifer: Aw

Nancy: She was thinking about this person who helped to guide ... You think of the things that a supervisor does: someone that helps to guide, that gives you positive reinforcement, and that always believes in you. That term, "supervisor," really can encompass so many things. These are wonderful ideas you're putting in the Q&A. Thank you so much.

Jennifer: Yes. Thank you very much. Well, it looks like we're almost at the end of our time now, and we just want to thank you so much for taking time to join us today. It's been really fun to prepare this PowerPoint for you, and we're really looking forward to the Q&A's and other opportunities to interact with you over the next date or so. Nancy?

Nancy: Thank you so much for spending the time with us, and we hope that you enjoy the rest of the institute. Thank you so much.

Jennifer: Thank you.

Nancy: Bye-bye.