

Session 2b: Using the Relationship-Based Competencies (RBCs) as a Professional Development Tool for My Staff

Nancy Darlington: Hey! Welcome, everybody. This is Session 2b of the Family Manager Services Institute and using relationship-based competencies as a professional development tool for my staff. Welcome. We're so glad you came to join us. I'm Nancy Darlington. I'm a Senior Training & Technical Assistance Specialist with the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. And I'm currently sitting here in my home in Maine, talking to you, and I'm with my colleague, Jennifer Olson.

Jennifer Olson: Hi Nancy, this is Jennifer, everybody. And I'm also with the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. And I'm sitting in my home in Oregon. So, Nancy and I are at the outer edges of the United States, but we love working together so let's get started, Nancy.

Nancy: Thank you, Jennifer. I'm going to go over this session audience console for you. If you've been in previous sessions, you've probably seen it, but we like to give the instructions again just to make sure that nobody is left floundering. So, if you already heard it, we apologize and I'm actually going to read some of these instructions because we want to make sure that everybody hears the same thing, so you don't have trouble. So, on your screen, you'll see five engagement tools that are controlled by the widgets at the bottom of your console there. Let's see. The media player is located in the left top of your console. You can watch presenters and videos in this tool. You'll also see what just popped up, the question and answer widget. That's in the bottom left of your console, and we really encourage you to use that as we're presenting. If you type in your comments or your questions, we will do our best to respond to them or get back to them at some point. You'll see slides for today's presentation. If you click on that widget, that will take you to the slides. We have resources for you that you can click on and download from the resource widget, handouts, and slide presentations. And in the bottom right corner are speaker bios if you want to learn a little bit more about us. These engagement tools are resizable and movable. You'll see those little arrows down there at the lower-left corner. You can use those controls to minimize or maximize, and if you minimize any of the tools, you can use the widgets across the bottom to make them appear back. You want to resize them, go to the bottom right corner of your tool and you'll see a double ended arrow. Drag that to resize as needed. There's three more widgets I want to bring to your attention. One is the knowledge check widget. You'll see right there. At the end of each session, as you probably have experienced by now, you do a knowledge check. There's a few questions for you to answer, and once you get those answered correctly, you can receive your certificate for participation in this institute. So, for each session, you can receive a certificate. You can download it, print it, save it. We recommend that you save it to your computer. And you'll also notice there's a help widget. Anytime during the session, you can click on that to find additional answers to any technical questions. It doesn't take you anywhere live. It will pop up with some written information that hopefully will answer any questions that you're having. So, I hope you got that. It's not as complicated as it sounds, so let's move on.

We're going to start today with this quote by Stephen Covey: "Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply." So, I want you to think about that. Do you really listen to learn? Are you preparing your responses to what you're hearing as you're listening? We're going to be talking about the benefits of reflective practice today as we go through the session particularly in your work as managers. So, keep that quote in mind and if anything comes to you, you want to type in the chat, feel free to do that. Our learning objectives today are ... We're going to introduce – if they're new to you and explore – the relationship-based competencies or RBCs, as we like to call them. And we're going to explore how they can be used as a pathway for professional development. And we're also going to examine reflective practice as a way to build relationships and support your staff in growing their skills.

The key messages in our presentation today are that the relationship-based competencies provide measurable and observable descriptions of knowledge, skills, and practices that support family engagement. If you've already seen these RBCs, you'll know what I'm talking about. And if you haven't, by the end of this session, hopefully, you will know what we're talking about. Listening and reflection can lead to the identification of staff strengths. Primarily, that's where you want to start and potential areas of needed growth for family engagement. That's where you can define your professional development. And the use of reflective supervision helps you and your staff focus on their next steps and identify the goals to support family engagement. So, I'm going to ask Jennifer now to introduce the relationship-based competencies.

Jennifer: Thank you, Nancy. Oops, I pushed it too fast. Well, I know here today to talk a little bit more about those relationship-based competencies and we'll start out with a definition. And we like to say: It's a set of knowledge, skills, and individual practices and other characteristics that are necessary to be effective in one's own family engagement work. So, we want to really stress that it's knowledge, skills, and practices. And they're observable and measurable. And so, it really gives us some insight into our work. It's often we'll think about a professional that we work with when we say, "Oh, they're just such a natural with families" or "I just love watching the interactions between that staff person and the families that they work with." And these RBCs really give us the understanding of what it takes to do that – the knowledge, skills, and practice that go into those things that we see naturally happening between our staff and families. So, there are set of suite of resources. We like to think about it as a sweet suite of resources, and you'll see on this slide, we have, first of all, the overview booklet, which is lime green. They are color coded on the actual documents, and that's why you'll see these colors here today. And we really recommend highly that when you work with the RBCs, you always have that overview booklet with you because that kind of explains the background and the importance of the RBCs and the use of the RBCs. And then there are three other resources on the screen, and this is when the RBCs are divided into those three separate roles. And as you see, the first one is a Family Services Professional; second is Teachers and Child Care Providers; and the third is the Home Visitor. And they're uniquely designed to address each of these roles. And with them are assessment tools that also accompany each one of these roles: one for the individual professional and one for the supervisor. And we'll talk a little bit more about that

later. So, Nancy, I know I love to hear you talk about the foundation of the RBCs, which of course is our framework. Let me turn it back over to you.

Nancy: Thank you, Jennifer. I do like to talk about the Head Start Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework because it really does provide us with the foundation of all the work that we do in Head Start, and it has been the source of these competencies. So, I never like to assume that people are familiar with the framework, so I'll just give a very quick overview of it. And I'd like to start on the far right in the purple column, which is child outcomes because this is our ultimate goal, that children are successful in each of those areas that you see listed there, and those are the areas that we know are essential for children to thrive now and into the future. If you move to the blue column of family outcomes ... Now, we all know that children live, grow, and develop in the context of their family. So, these seven family outcomes are the areas that, research has shown us, that when families are strengthened in these areas, are healthy in these areas, that that leads to positive child outcomes. So, in Head Start, we work with both the family and the children because we know that it takes support in both areas and work in both areas for successful outcomes. If you move to the far left to the yellow column, that's your program foundations. That's your leadership, professional development, and that commitment to ongoing and continuous improvement. And I always say that the priority and the value of a program is set in that column. If family engagement is a priority and a value, it will be reflected throughout the entire framework. It will be reflected in the pink column, which are the systems and services that you provide in your program. Across the top, you see equity, inclusiveness, and cultural and linguistic responsiveness. Those were added when the framework was adapted because they're just so foundational to the work that we do. They're so important that we have to pull those out and really emphasize that they are reflected in all of the elements of the framework. And of course, across the top, positive goal-oriented relationships is really the glue that holds it all together, and we will talk a little bit more about that as we go through the competencies. So, Jennifer.

Jennifer: Yeah. Before we leave this slide, Nancy, I'm going to go back to it for a second because if we look at the blue column there, the family outcomes, I just want to remind everybody the family well-being and positive parent-child relationships, think about those as we move to the 10 competencies. Here, we have your first look at the full list of them. I hope many of you are very familiar with the relationship-based competencies already, but here are the ... They all are on one slide, all 10. And as Nancy explained, the arrow across the top of the framework, you see there, positive goal-oriented relationships as our No. 1 competency. And the second one is self-awareness and culturally aware relationships. So, again, you see them that they're aligning with the framework, helping make the content in the framework observable and measurable, so they're aligned directly with that. As we move into three, four, five, six, and seven, you'll notice that they're aligned specifically with those family outcomes. So, we've combined a couple of those family outcomes. On No. 3, we have family well-being and families as learners. No. 4 has parent-child relationships and families as lifelong educators. And five is similar to the outcomes in the framework, where connections to peers and community. Six is access to community resources. Seven, of course, is leadership and advocacy. And then we turn back to those early foundational parts of the framework with coordinated, integrated, comprehensive

services, data-driven services and continuous improvement and professional growth. And we really like to emphasize those last three – eight, nine, and 10 – as sometimes related to program decisions or management decisions when we're thinking about coordinating and integrating comprehensive services. And the data, we often don't think about how we involve and engage families in data-driven decisions and making sure that we ask families for data to help us with our continuous improvement. And then, of course, the relationship-based competencies are very, very much related to professional growth because that's where we can come up with individual growth plans, team growth plans or professional development for our entire program based on those assessments that I mentioned earlier. Let's look now how we might apply these 10 competencies. I like to think like 10 fingers and toes, we have 10 competencies.

OK, so this slide has got a lot of information on it for you, and we like to remind people that the RBCs can be applied at so many different levels, in so many different ways. And so, we think about the individual level as a person. I might pick up the RBCs and do a self-assessment and share that with my supervisor and ask to make it a part of my professional development plan. At the managerial level, you might want to think about bringing service professionals together, family service staff together and having them look at one RBC because you've noticed either some feedback from your staff or some interesting things that are happening in your program, you want to pick an RBC and go there with that. And so, you'll do some assessment and then decision about goals. And then, of course, the program level, where you're thinking about information that you might have gotten from family surveys. We'd like to give you kind of some examples now at each one of those levels. So, I'm going to take the individual level, and then Nancy's going to talk about the management level. But the individual one ... If I were a person right now working in these difficult circumstances, I might hear back from my families or – the families that I serve – that they're really, really worried about their capacity to be their child's teacher at home. The Zoom meetings and the interactions are by phone now and they can't see their home visitor. Or they're just anxious about if they have the resources that they need at home. I might go at the individual level and think about, well OK, what competency might I want to look at here. We might look at competency four which is parent-child relationships and families as lifelong educators, and I might look at my knowledge, skills, and practices and get some ideas on how I can work with families during these circumstances and what's happening today as far as what I'm hearing from the families that I serve. Nancy, did you want to talk about the manager level one?

Nancy: I do. Thank you, Jennifer. And before I do that, I just also want to mention that there's two different ways to think about using these competencies. One is, as Jennifer introduced to you the assessments that are part of the competencies, an individual or a group can choose one of the RBCs and do the assessment with the idea of identifying areas that they want to focus on for professional development. So, it's kind of identifying strengths and validating your work but then also looking for areas for improvement. The other way you can use the competencies is consider a circumstance or a situation that either one of your staff members or your program is facing, and you can go back and say, "OK, which of the competencies might give me some ideas

to think about how I might respond to this situation effectively?" So, our examples are going to really show you a little bit of both of those approaches.

So, on the manager level, the situation is that several of your family service staff are coming to you with a common concern. You're hearing this during your reflective supervision practice, that demographics in your community are changing rapidly. There's a lot of new people moving in, a lot of immigrant families from all over the place moving in. And a couple of concerns have come up. One that the staff have raised is that all these families may not be fully represented in your enrollment, in your program. How are we going to reach out to them and make sure that they are welcomed and enrolled in our program? But there's a second concern, and that is that some of the staff are a little bit unsure how to interact with these families. It's new cultures, new languages, new ways of doing things, and they're not really that sure of themselves about how to be successful at that. So, the manager asks them to look at competency No. 2 which is self-aware and culturally responsive relationships. They discover that there are some strengths, that their staff truly does understand that every family has strengths and has resiliency. One of the areas that maybe they want to work on ... It's acknowledged in the competencies that even with everyone's best efforts and understanding, sometimes there are misunderstandings due to cultural differences, and knowing how to navigate those misunderstandings can sometimes be a challenge for staff. So, a skill to develop might be how do you engage in those cross-cultural conversations while you're truly respecting a family's beliefs, their experiences, their questions their opinions – all of those things? So, one of the practices listed in the competencies is seeking out information or consultation on specific cultural values and practices when that's necessary. But then the manager, he went and looked, she, he, she went and looked at what the competencies offered at the supervisory level and saw that one of the things listed is that the program welcomes conversations about parenting with each family and their cultures, their languages, their experiences, all of those things. So, the manager thought, wow! We need to support our staff. We could bring in a consultant or a trainer to talk about cultural sensitivity and all of that, but what if we welcome in these new families. We bring them in, and we all sit down and talk together, and we learn together, and our staff learns about the families, becomes comfortable with them, learns how to ask appropriate questions and how to respond. So, all of those ideas came from looking at competency No. 2 around culturally responsive relationships. So, Jennifer.

Jennifer: Yeah. Thank you, Nancy. And so now, if we think about the program level, this is a big level where you think about what is a program goal that we may have? And of course, family engagement is often part of those long-term goals, five-year goals that we have in our programs. And let's say that connecting families to peers and community was one of those goals that you came up with that was so important for this five-year period, and you're looking at the family surveys. Family surveys have come back and they're telling you families are very interested in economic mobility right now, that they're worried about what's happening as far as their economic strengths and tools. And so, you reflect on that, look for that, and see how you can use that competency to move forward. What's so important here is that the competencies also identify strengths as well as opportunities for growth. So, you may reflect with your staff and say, "Let's go through this competency, see how we're doing with

connecting our families to peers and communities." And the most helpful things about the RBCs, that they validate the strengths of the staff as well as identify through self-assessment, the opportunities for growth. Another area with the example for the program level is that you could review your family partnership agreements and determine any emerging trends, and then go back and look at the RBCs and connect those to those trends. Let's go on to the next one now, Nancy.

Nancy: Before we do, Jennifer, I just wanted to add to what you just said about identifying strengths because all too often when people hear the word assessment, they really think of it in terms of: I'm identifying my weaknesses; I'm identifying the gaps in what I do. And you know, I'll just share that we've been working with a group on these RBCs, learning about the RBCs, and the first time that they sat down and really looked at one of the assessments ... I believe they looked at No. 3, family well-being. And they came back, and they just were so excited because they said, "Everything it said in there, that's what I do, and it's just what I've always done. And here it is in black and white saying, 'I'm doing the right things. I'm doing the things that enhance and allow positive relationships to grow.'" So, it's important to know that we're identifying strengths as well as what professional development might we look for. And professional development doesn't always have to be filling in gaps. It can be enhancing strengths. Do you agree, Jennifer?

Jennifer: Oh, absolutely, Nancy. And that validation, that goes back to things being observable and measurable because some of us think, oh, they're natural at that. But actually, they're learned skills, and their practices, and you can win through coaching and mentoring really enhance someone's skills that are already there and into well-honed practices. So absolutely, validation of the strengths of your staff, family service workers is a huge important part of the relationship, basically.

Nancy: That's a really important point, Jennifer, because sometimes I think teaching is the same way. We often hear, "This person is just a natural. This person just knows how to do it, just naturally knows how to do it. Some have it; some don't, and that's what I always call the art and the science of relationship." The science behind it is what you just said: There's knowledge you can learn, there are skills you can hone, and there are practices that you can get really good at in order to really enhance relationship building. So, yeah, I'm going to take us now if that's OK, Jennifer, to the next example that we'd like to give. So, in this one, Jennifer and I are going to kind of go back and forth here with this situation. So, if I'm the staff person, I'm sharing with my supervisor that several of the families that are coming to me are telling me that they're really stressed right now. Now, remember we're talking about ... Remember that initial quote that we started with: Listening to learn as opposed to listening to respond.

Jennifer: Yes. So, as a supervisor, I am sitting there with Nancy, and I say to myself, I'm thinking and I'm reflecting, "Wow, this is wonderful. Families are really sharing their feelings and worries, and they want to be heard. I'm wondering what Nancy is going to do with this and why is she sharing this today?"

Nancy: Well, there's a lot of stress on the families, and I just don't know what to do when a mother breaks down and cries about her situation.

Jennifer: So now, as her supervisor, I'm starting to reflect a little bit differently. I'm wondering, is Nancy comfortable with having sensitive conversations or does she know about the information that she needs for referrals? So, I'm going to wait and listen and see what Nancy says next.

Nancy: So, as the staff person, what I'm thinking I need in order to help these families who are experiencing stress is, I need more resources and I need more referrals that I can give them to help solve the issues that they're dealing with.

Jennifer: I, as her supervisor, reflect. Is she up to date on referral information? But, as I think about our whole conversation, I'm remembering she may not be totally comfortable with having those sensitive conversations. So, my next step is to talk to Nancy about what's really happening here to begin to paraphrase and reflect back on the conversation that we've been having to try to really understand the feelings that Nancy is having and what she's requesting from this reflective time together.

Nancy: Thank you, Jennifer. So, as the supervisor is listening and reflecting, the supervisor is thinking about the RBCs and hmm, your story is making me think of two of the RBCs. So, they take a look, and they explore which ones might help set the direction for the staff person. Now, in this example, we're going to talk a little bit about what I said before: how do you go to the RBCs and look for support related to a specific situation? So, the supervisor is considering which model might best support the professional development of the staff. So, I'm going to give you two examples. One is the individual, OK? The individual staff person is thinking, I need more resources and referrals to give to the families. So, the competency that this person goes to look at is competency No. 8, which may not be one that would initially pop into your mind because No. 8 is coordinated and integrated services. But what the staff person is thinking is that – thinking about knowledge, skills, and practices – because this staff person has been very deeply introduced to the competency. So, that's how they're thinking now, right? So, they're thinking, I might want to increase my knowledge about other organizations in my area and the services that they have to offer so that I can make meaningful referrals. I also realize I need to improve my organizational skills so that I know where that information is and how I can get my hands on it very quickly. Keep track of all the resources that are available. And I need to make it a practice of regularly reaching out to community organizations so that I stay up to date, not only on what they offer but to develop that partnership with organizations so that we can increase our collaboration and best serve our families. Now, the supervisor is seeing the other side of this dilemma, which was: Is this staff person really comfortable with sensitive conversations, right?

Jennifer: Yes.

Nancy: The supervisor goes to competency No. 10, which is what type of professional development might benefit the staff person? So, again, thinking about knowledge, skills, and

practices. They're saying I'm going to look in here for ways to provide knowledge to this person about the benefits of empathetic listening and listening without feeling you have to solve the problem but allowing the family to just be heard. I might look for professional development to increase this staff person skill in listening, asking open-ended questions, and finding out from the family what's really going on. And then I might look at all of my staff and say, what practices could I put into place? Well, maybe we could have the staff explore some case scenarios and practice that listening and responding in a safe environment before they're out there actually with the families. So, what do you think about these examples, Jennifer?

Jennifer: Nancy, I'm just so excited about it, and thinking about that whole comprehensive service area too, comprehensive coordinated services, having a discussion about that at a staff meeting, saying, who's been using what type of resources, and as we encounter new circumstances of opening – reopening, closing, reopening – what other community partners are we seeking and using now? And so, that could be again part of a whole staff discourse on community resources and cooperation and collaboration with our community partners.

Nancy: And remembering, if you go back to the list of the 10 competencies, one is families access to community resources. So, there's knowledge, skills, and practices around that. And there's connections to peers and community. And there's how do you provide the resources? So, they're just so rich that any situation can really be explored in multiple of the competencies to help give you some ideas and suggestions of what you might want to do.

Jennifer: Yes, Nancy, and you can cross-reference some of the RBCs as well. As managers, you may become so familiar with the RBCs that you actually pull a couple from building positive relationships and connection to peers and community and kind of come up with your own assessment. You can mix and match the RBCs when you become more comfortable with them. And so, that's another way to think about it as a manager. And using the RBCs in a situational aspect: program level, management level, and from an individual perspective.

Nancy: Exactly. And Jennifer, do you want to talk a little bit about this model for professional development?

Jennifer: I do. We both click, Nancy. There we go. OK, I'm going to make mine a tiny, tiny bit bigger here when we get it. We see ... There we go. So, you can see, along the bottom, we have a continuum here about thinking about how do we share knowledge? And you see the knowledge, skills, and practices running up and down on the left axis. And we want to remind you that, when you see a circumstance, where knowledge is needed, that that's the basic, isn't it? That's a basic ... Like what we're doing today. We're sharing knowledge, aren't we? And through that sharing of knowledge. It can be by video. It can be discussion. It can be handouts. It can be that meeting presentations. It can be orientations. But when we get to the skill level, and now we're thinking about how we use the relationship-based competencies for professional development. When you have a knowledge gap, you look at some of those basic applications. But when you're thinking of a skill opportunity for growth, then you're looking at self-analysis using that assessment tool more thoroughly, practicing and providing feedback. And the highest one of course is the practices. And that's when you're really doing the follow-

up planning, the coaching – much, much deeper look at how to implement that competency. And so, when you're thinking about the knowledge, skills, and practices that your staff demonstrate or share with you through their assessment that they need or want or even validate, be sure to think about how you're going to deliver that content because unless you have the resources and the planning and the leadership support to really change practice, which would be through mentoring and coaching, you want to be careful to not overstep. If it's knowledge and skills that you want to get firmly a foundation on and then think about that coaching and mentoring opportunity, it requires a great deal of planning. So, we like to show you this model for aligning the why and the how with professional development. When you begin to think about using the RBCs for either individual professional development or team or program professional development. Nancy, did you have a comment there?

Nancy: Yes. I just wanted to say that adjustment for supervisors ... There is a section for leadership and ... Well, there's supervisory practices and leadership practices, and there are examples in there of ways to use coaching. So, if you're wondering about using that in a particular RBC, go to the supervisor's assessment and take a look and see what kinds of ideas it can offer.

Jennifer: Exactly, Nancy. Thank you for mentioning that about the leadership competencies because it is a unique feature of the RBCs, and that exists in the supervisory assessment for each role.

Nancy: Yep, leadership practices. OK. So, as you could tell from what we've been talking about, leadership matters, right? That leadership really supports the application of knowledge, skills, and practices in support of staff professional development. And if you go back to that yellow column in the framework, again, that's where it all starts. So, if family engagement is a priority and the RBCs are a priority, then it comes from the leadership. So, let's wrap up. We're running out of time, unfortunately. So, knowledge, skills, and practices, again, are the key ingredients in building relationships, and the RBCs are useful tools, and as Jennifer mentioned several times, the individual management and program professional development levels. We have resources for you in that resource widget. You can find them. The competencies, the assessments that go along with the competencies, and a reflect and plan handout, so make sure you take a look at those.

And now, would be your opportunity, would just want to remind you to click on the knowledge check button. There'll be several questions to answer, and when you have answered them correctly, then you will get your certificate. And you can download the certificate, save it to your computer, or you can actually even print it out if you want to. So, make sure you take a few minutes to do that at the end of every session, so you get credit for participating. And we're going to end with a couple of just reflection thoughts for you. Feel free if you have any thoughts or questions, put them in the Q&A tool. How do I demonstrate effective relationships with my staff? Am I leading by example? So, again, that's a key role for the management staff. What can I do to offer reflective interactions guided by listening rather than checklists or self-assessments? And, again, remember: assessments can be looking for strengths as well but

reflective interactions. You learn more by listening. How do I encourage staff to listen and reflect with families? So, remember it's a parallel process. Staff also need to use reflective listening with families, particularly during that family goal setting process. So, we really thank you so much for spending a little bit of time with us. Please be sure and type some questions or thoughts into the Q&A box, and we really have enjoyed spending this time with you. Is there anything you'd like to wrap up with, Jennifer?

Jennifer: No, just echoing what you say, Nancy, how much we appreciated them spending this time with us and looking forward to your remarks in the Q&A tool on this reflection. So, thank you so much for your time.

Nancy: Yes. Don't forget to go and do the knowledge check and get your certificate. So, thank you so much. We hope you are enjoying this institute because we know we are.

Jennifer: Thank you.

Nancy: All right, bye-bye.

Jennifer: Bye-bye.