

Virtual Home Visiting Strategies that Support All Children and Families

Roselia Ramirez: Welcome to the Home Visitors' webinar series. We are so happy that you have joined us today. My name is Roselia, and I am one of your host presenters for the series. I'm here with my colleague, Adriana. Hi, Adriana. It's so good to see you today.

Adriana Bernal: Hi, Roselia. It's good to see you, too. Hi, everyone. As Roselia mentioned, we are so glad that you joined us today. We are with the National Center on Early Childhood Development Teaching and Learning, known as DTL. We have an exciting topic for you today to kick off our series, Virtual Home Visiting Strategies that Support All Children and Families. You are in for a special treat. We will be hearing from Dr. Brenda Jones Harden during our presentation.

Roselia: You are so right. We have a great topic lined up for you today, and it's so exciting that we get to hear from Dr. Harden. But before we jump in, we want to take a moment to recognize and acknowledge that home-visiting programs continue to be flexible in their approach to supporting families during this time. We know that many of you have gone from virtual back to in person and then back to virtual, as well as a combination of these two options. We also know that families, as well as program staff, continue to balance work and education for children as well as their own wellbeing. So, throughout our time together today, we will talk about strategies to deliver home-visiting services virtually, but keep in mind that many of these ideas and resources can support in-home, in-person visiting as well. OK, so with that said, let us review the key topics for our session today. We will begin by first setting the stage. Then, we will focus on exploring strategies and methods that support virtual home visits, and we're excited that we get to highlight some new resources that are now available on the ECLKC, or ECLKC, as well as identify some oldies but goodies to help support the work that you do with all children and families.

But one more thing that we really want to emphasize before we move into today's topic is, it's now more than ever we need to take time to take care of ourselves. To be the best version of ourselves, we must make this a priority. I remember when I was doing home visits, I had my day carved out with chunks of time for each of my families, and then in between those visits, my mind was already working through the next visit and thinking about resources and all the things that I needed to do for my families. It can become overwhelming really quickly.

So, one of the things that I found that was very helpful was taking even just a few seconds to take some deep breaths and commit and focus to one task at a time, so clearing our minds or having a mindful moment can really help alleviate that stress of the busy days that we have. So, let us try this out. Let's practice. So, take a few deep breaths with me and Adriana and commit to focusing on this hour with us. Think about what you would like to take away from our time together today, and we ask that you turn off the many thoughts that are running through your head and just focus on your breathing here. OK, so let's try this out, and we're going to call this the take five method. OK, are we ready? Let's take that

first breath. [Inhaling and exhaling deeply] In. [Inhaling] Out. [Exhaling] In. [Inhaling] And out. [Exhaling] In. [Inhaling] And out. [Exhaling] And one more time. In [Inhaling] and out. [Exhaling] Alright, so that's just one strategy. In your participant's guide, we'd like to invite you to jot down at least three things that you're going to commit to doing to help take care of yourself during these times.

Adriana: Wow, that was a great exercise. Thanks so much, Roselia, for reminding us how easy it can be to take a few moments to work for ourselves, to focus and decompress. We now can move into some of the content that includes great strategies and resources that we want to share with you. And to set the stage for the connections we will be making, we want to start with Head Start Program Performance Standards. We are not going to spend a lot of time here as we know that you are familiar with these and you can revisit them any time. We just wanted to highlight a couple of things to emphasize the why of the work we do as home visitors. So, our standards tell us that a home-based program must promote secure parent-child relationships and help parents to provide high-quality early learning experiences. So, in addition, programs are designed to partner with the family, so we are planning jointly and using assessment data and we are scheduling enough time to serve all children enrolled, and of course, delivering comprehensive services in promoting positive outcomes. So, we mention that we have a guest speaker today. Roselia, do you want to tell us a little bit more about her?

Roselia: I most certainly will. It is such an honor to tell you about Dr. Brenda Jones Harden. Dr. Harden is the Richman professor for children and families at the University of Maryland School of Social Work. She is the co-chair of DTL's Research to Equitable Practice Advisory Group. This is a group of researchers and grantee representatives who help to inform the work of our center. Dr. Harden is also the vice president of the Zero to Three board of directors. And for more than 35 years, she has focused her work on the developmental and mental health needs of young children who are at risk, and she's interested in using her research to inform practice that promotes positive outcomes for children and home visitation in Head Start. In this first clip, listen in as Dr. Harden was asked about the unique opportunities that home visiting provides, and also, what are some of the challenges at home visitors are facing. We invite you to pull out in your participant guide and jot down some thoughts or key takeaways that come to you as you listen to what Dr. Harden shares.

[Video begins]

Brenda Harden: Hello, everyone. My name is Brenda Jones Harden. I'm Alison Richman, professor for children and families at the University of Maryland School of Social Work.

Roselia: What are some of the unique opportunities that home visiting provides?

Brenda: You get an opportunity to observe a family and their interactions in an informal setting. Very different than in an office or a clinic or in a lab, so you're much more likely to get a sense of how family members interact with each other, but also the family's broader context, like the kind of environment that they live in, so the stresses that might affect them because of community violence, for example, but also what happens in their residence. Is

this a stable, calm place or is this a place full of chaos? But also, I really believe you get a better sense of the needs of a family so you can sort of adapt that intervention to meet the family's particular needs.

Roselia: What are some of the challenges home visitors face?

Brenda: We know from the research that families who tend to be in home-based programs – like home-based Early Head Start, for example – are much more likely to be high risk than families who attend center-based. And if you think about it, families who are able to organize themselves enough to get a job and get their children to center-based, you can imagine that they are probably at lower risk than families who tend to be in home-based, but we have the data on this. So, they have many more concrete and psychological needs often. So, the burden on the home visitor is fairly high. But the other thing that I think is related to that is it's incumbent upon the home visitor to kind of balance case management with promotion of parent-child interaction and child development. I would argue that home visitors are so stressed, not only because of the kinds of risk factors that their parents bring, but also the fact that they're going out into these communities: there's nobody with them, they're on their own, their car might break down – all kinds of other things. They're literally putting their lives on the line with their jobs.

The other thing I think is important is to help the home visitor focus on the moment. I think what happens, whether we're parents or home visitors or clinicians and other kinds of ways or even teachers in the Head Start classroom is we get overwhelmed with the breadth of what we have to do instead of taking each moment at a time and celebrating each moment and trying to make each moment as effective as you can be.

[Video ends]

Adriana: I don't know about all of you, but there are a few takeaways for me. I really appreciate that Dr. Harden talked about the primary population home visitors' partner with are those that tend to be high risk, as well as highlighting on the fact that home visitors must balance case management with the promotion of the parent-child relationship. So now, take a moment and share your key takeaways in that Q&A.

So, we know that one of the biggest differences between home-visiting and center-based programs is that home visitors are working to promote positive parenting through effecting home-visiting practices that in turn inch back child development. Because of these dynamic, we do have a unique opportunity, as Dr. Harden mentioned, as home visitors – we get a better sense of sort of a big picture view of the child's and family's strengths as well as their needs that we can then use to frame activities to better support learning experiences.

Roselia: I do believe that our audience today would agree that home visitors do have a unique opportunity. For me, listening to Dr. Harden, something that resonated was focusing on the moment, which made me home in on remembering our home-visiting purpose which aligns with the Head Start Program Performance Standards that we began our discussion with. Our purpose as home visitors is centered around these two things. So,

first is promoting secure parent-child relationships and supporting or facilitating high-quality early learning experiences. Take a moment now and reflect in your participant guide and jot down some additional things that come to your mind when you think about your purpose as a home visitor. And while folks are doing that, we want to move along and we want to explore each of these components just a little bit more. OK, so let's start with the parent-child interactions or relationships. How do we define what we mean by this process? So, for me as a visual learner, this image helped me to put it all together when we think about this as a process. In the resource widget, you have a tip sheet from rapid response virtual home visiting, and they have to find parent-child interaction as “any moment of shared attention between a parent and child and then how a child experiences the parent, how the parent experiences the child, and how these experiences impact the relationship.” So, this process takes place during playtime as well as during daily routines. So, in your participant guide, we invite you to take some time and jot down some key words that really resonate with you when you think about how we define that parent-child interaction. So, take a couple of moments to just kind of jot down some of those key things that you look for.

Adriana: Thank you, Roselia. Now that we have defined what we mean by parent-child interaction, the second part of our purpose as home visitors is facilitating high-quality early learning experiences. We want to think about how we are supporting parents using daily routines as well as everyday materials in the home as learning opportunities. Take a look at the two photos here and in your participant's guide. Write down some notes about what you think these children are learning as they engage in these activities. And as you do that, I want to share some thoughts that I have. The first thing that comes to my mind is the opportunity here for language development, introducing new words, and asking open-ended questions to see what the children are thinking. Young children playing with blocks are developing their fine motor skills in exploring early math concepts as well as problem-solving. And cause and effect, of course. So, many opportunities to do our daily routine. Hope you came up with some other great learning opportunities and noted them in your participants guide.

Roselia: When we began our time together, I took a moment to acknowledge the flexible approaches of home-visiting programs, and we know that many programs continue to support their work with families virtually. As we begin to talk about some strategies, methods and resources to support families virtually, let us keep a few things in mind. First, providing information and sustaining relationships with our families is really key during this time. We need that relationship to build our partnership and to engage our families. This helps to promote security and confidence in the families skills to facilitate learning experiences for their children. Hearing from Dr. Harden, we are reminded that our families are high risk and they may be encountering additional stressors during this time. Our goal is to support skill building by identifying strengths and capitalizing on those strengths to support facilitation, of facilitation, of learning experiences for all children.

Adriana: So, Roselia, how about we pause here and take a moment to see how our participants are feeling about their current engagement with virtual home visits. So, now if you can just take a moment, and respond to this poll and we have a few answers for you to

respond to. How would you rate your engagement with virtual home visits? So, we have A, I am engaged with all families. B, I am engaging with most of the families. C, I am engaging with some of the families, and D, it is difficult to engage family virtually. We will wait a minute to hear about your experiences and what responses do you have.

Roselia: Alright, well, it appears that most of our folks are engaging with most of their families, which is good, but we've got some work to do in that area. So far ... Let's review a little bit. We've spent our time focusing on our purpose and what guides the work we do with children and families, as well as acknowledging the flexibility of programs to reach families.

We're going to shift gears now and dive into exploring some strategies and methods, as well as sharing some new resources that we mentioned, are now available on the ECLKC. And that will help in connecting these concepts to your daily work. OK, so as we heard from Dr. Harden, we fully recognize at home visitors face some unique challenges in their work. We know that our work as home visitors focuses on supporting parent child interactions to promote positive outcomes. So, here are some strategies to consider when planning for a virtual home visits. First is where. So, encourage families to set up the visit where the child is comfortable. Before the visit, work with the family to decide where they and their child feel most comfortable with their virtual visit. And then next is when. So, when is the best time for that virtual visit to take place. Schedule times around play time interactions, both previous and real time. And this helps to promote parents reflection of their child's development and skills and their own behaviors and skills as parents. Remember to consider routines and everyday life activities and adapt to the family's schedule when possible.

And then you have the who ... So, who is on camera? Of course, if this is an option. And we know that this can be difficult, especially when working with very young children. But as you saw in our video example, working with young children on camera can be possible. But we want you to consider the importance of using that camera to help you feel connected, which ultimately supports building that relationship with the parents and the children.

And then lastly, we have the why. This is really about directing the visit toward the parent child interaction. We're going to talk a little more about this in a minute. But right now, we invite you to jot down some additional considerations for the families that you serve in your participation guide. And what folks are doing that, Adriana, do you want to share some suggestions about the use of cameras with families?

Adriana: Sure, Roselia. There are a few easy strategies that I have found to be helpful. First, have the parent adjust that device and camera angles so you can capture everyone on the screen or at least for part of the time. Remind the parent to move that device as needed, positioning that camera four to five feet away from the parent and child interaction. That can provide a broader view and relieve the tension a child might experience. So, encourage the parent to take-me-with-you kind of approach, which means take the device if the child moves or leaves the room. Give gentle reminders to the parent at the start of the call or even at other times during the call that other family members are welcome to join or rejoin

the station. And remember that your own personal and family needs may occur during business as we know that many of us are working from our homes, so we have to be flexible. Think to the what steps might take place and share those possibilities with the family. That makes us more relatable families see that we ourselves are managing work-life balance, so it sometimes can be helpful for the family to observe your own family interactions and see that that flexibility exists.

Roselia: Those are some great suggestions, and I really appreciate you talking about how our own personal and family needs may occur. I can't even begin to tell you how many times I've been interacting virtually and folks really get to see a glimpse into my personal reality. I've got a needy cat that will decide to jump in out of nowhere, or my little dog decides to start barking uncontrollably. Or I have my 7 year old who suddenly decides that he has an emergency, there's some type of crisis, or he just wants to pop in and see what's happening on camera. We know that life is not on pause during our virtual visits. We talked about our families and how they may be experiencing additional stressors during this time, and we heard from Dr. Harden that home visitors are balancing case management with promoting the parent-child relationship. As we're working through that balance, we want to focus on our purpose as home visitors, whether it is virtually or in person. Adriana, can you share why it's important to direct those visits toward the parent child interaction?

Adriana: Absolutely. Development and relationship patterns continue regardless of family circumstances and ongoing situations. Redirecting discussion towards parent-child interactions and child development is important to do without disrespecting or disregarding the context and content of the family's story. As we build relationships with the families, they will want to share with us, of course. So, listening to the content and context of the family's story is our first step. Then, asking questions such as, "How do you think the situation is affecting Jose?" or "Have you noticed any changes in Maria since this happened?" are ways to bring that child into conversation so parenting can be supported. You can also connect a goal to bring the focus to interactions. For instance, you can say something like, "It sounds like the week has been a very busy time for you and your family. You and Jose seem to be getting a lot of organizing done together." Even when families might think that they didn't have time to focus on specific skill, children are getting some great fine motor skills practice when they help you. You can ask them, "What else have you two been doing together?" Those are some ideas to ask the families.

Roselia: The ability to ask those reflective questions does take practice so that it becomes natural and just kind of part of your routine and interaction with the family. This is a great lead in to us sharing the new resources that have been created to support your work. So, first, we have virtual learning at home in Early Head Start and Head Start. This resource offers guidance from the office of Head Start when determining best practices for virtual learning. The resource helps to validate the importance of intentional partnering with families, nurturing the parent-child relationship, as well as the intentionality that is needed when planning for those child-family activities. As a reminder, these resources are available in the resource widget and we invite you to explore them, and then utilize your participant guide to jot down some ideas on how you might use them with your families.

So, it's kind of allowing you to kind of start to put together a little resource library for yourself.

Adriana: Yeah, great information, Roselia. Resource that we want to share with you is whole ideas to help education staff plan for virtual learning. These resource contains some great suggestions and considerations. When we think about virtual learning, we just selected a few that we want to share with you today. So, let's now talk about communication and its importance. First and foremost, establish regular communication with families, determine the how and when, what means of communication they prefer, and honor their preference. So, they discuss your available ability to communicate with families such as days, hours of the week that you are available and anticipate a timing for response. I think this is an important one because sometimes we have different ideas of how fast people have to respond to us. So, we remember that not all families have access to electronic devices, and some might have limitations to data plans or not have access to internet or phone service at all. So, you can use multiple ways to keep families engaged in their child's learning and supported during this process. Also to communicate effectively with families with limited English proficiency in children who are dual language learners. Ideally, the home visitor will speak the family's home language. We know that it's not always possible, so make sure to plan and tap into community resources, interpretation services, or software or maybe other family members to support communication.

Roselia: Adriana, this resource also shares some tips on virtual learning events. So, typically when we meet with families in person, our visits are at least 90 minutes, but for virtual meetings, we want to keep them short, so a maximum of 30 minutes. We want to give children and families resources and ideas to foster learning at home and work with them to determine the best approach for their household, so really individualizing, and we need to know that what works for one family may not work for another. The frequency should be manageable for children and families. Make a plan that will work for the family, and then also remember that we're partnering with the family and we want to be sensitive to their unique circumstances.

Continue to follow the child's lead. This is really important. They're in their homes, they're playing, they're exploring and they're learning, so we may not get to see them on camera. Also, we know that virtually, we're getting a very limited glimpse, so one idea, if feasible of course, is to ask families to share pictures or maybe videos of their child during your virtual visit. This can help you to plan for activities or determine what resources may be helpful to encourage continued development. We're going to hear more about videotaping in just a bit, so let's pause here for a minute and we have a video clip that we want you to watch in this virtual visit example. As you're watching, in your participants guide, we want you to jot down some examples or some reflections of some key components that you see or hear during this virtual visit.

[Video begins]

Woman: And are you still seeing him doing some nice, purposeful reaching. I know you said last time he was reaching for Dad's face.

Mother: Actually, he's doing more. We're seeing, what was it? Oh, he actually – So, this little thing. He actually grabbed this the other day. He was on ... I don't remember if he was on his side. We're seeing a lot more side rolling ...

Woman: Fully to the side.

Mother: Yeah. So, he ended up grabbing this, and he had pulled it up to his mouth and everything. Yeah, we've got one of these things, too. I've been having him go on his side, and then he likes this side in particular, and the one that has the buttons too.

Woman: And you can activate the buttons?

Mother: Yeah, so we've been trying to work on him learning how to push.

Woman: Uh-huh.

Mother: I guess... And is he rolling to both sides pretty equally or is it at once?

Mother: I'm seeing both sides. It's almost like he'll do one and come back to center and then go to another.

Woman: OK. There we go.

Mother: Say hi.

Woman: So, if you want to tuck his shoulders just a little bit more underneath or his elbows. Sorry, right. Yeah, perfect.

Mother: We'll bring you back. Oh, good.

Woman: Very nice. Look at that little hand opening up a little bit, huh? Now let's see if you can. Uh-oh. Where you baby go? [Laughter] Look at this smile. [Laughter] So, if you kind of back your support off just a little bit, let's see. Do you think he'll try to reach a little bit for anything in front of him yet or is that still really tough?

Mother: You like Yowie. Let's see. You want to ... Ah, and there he goes. You going to your side? You going to climb around?

Woman: I think there's a little bit of spit up too, so maybe if you want to ...

Father: No, that was just bubbles.

Woman: Bubbles. OK. Hard to tell on video.

Adriana: You know, Roselia, when I watched the video, it made me think of some additional considerations when it comes to virtual visits, and they all relate to self-awareness. In a virtual environment, our pace of listening and sharing is different. We want to be aware of our own breathing and tone as well as our body language. Our tone is very important, particularly if interacting via phone. The family and child cannot see us in by text or mail. Our tone can be misunderstood and can impact that relationship.

We want to be intentional with our process to give the parent-child time to respond and join the conversation, so be sure to summarize so that everyone is on the same page with the same understanding, and plan for the next steps to set up the next appointment and develop a follow-up plan.

Roselia: Self-awareness is definitely something that we need to consider as we're interacting with families virtually, so thank you for bringing that up. Particularly in a virtual environment, some of the things that you talked about can really impact how the relationship moves forward. Be sure to check out this resource, Ideas to Help Education Staff for Virtual Learning, for some additional ideas and suggestions, such as those that you see on your screen now. I did want to take a moment and talk a little more about supporting the families whose children have an IEP or an IFSP.

In a moment, we're going to hear from Dr. Harden on the use of videotaping, but I wanted to share an example with you on how you might incorporate videotaping to support children with special needs. Work with the parent to videotape at different times during the day, during natural routines, during play, and then during the virtual visit, utilize the video to talk through ideas and suggestions to reinforce skills and learning. It's also an opportunity to bring together other service providers that are working with the families, those such as the speech therapist, occupational therapist or physical therapist. Oftentimes we know that the frequency of service providers is much less than what you may be providing. So, connecting with service providers in this way allows you to support the parent on the overall desired outcomes, and that everyone is working together on the same goals.

OK, so these next set of new resources, I was really excited about. I can tell you from my own experience that having a daily schedule really helped me as a working parent with two young children. Supporting parents to organize their day with a daily schedule that works for them, and that it also builds in opportunities for learning within those daily routines can really move you into superhero home visitor status. In your resource widget, there are three draft daily schedule examples that are broken down by developmental age. So, you have one for children under 12 months, and then there's one for children 12 to 18 months, and then there's one for children 2 to 4 years of age. These are resources that you can use and share with your families so that they can visualize what their day could look like. And then it can help you to build in those opportunities to work on the goals that the family has established, so be sure and check them out. In addition, you can use the link on the slide to the ECLKC for some additional information regarding the importance of schedules and routines. Sometimes this is really a great place to start to empower our families in understanding and seeing how a daily schedule can really be a powerful tool for them.

Adriana: I appreciate that you mentioned goals, Roselia, because there is a new resource called Using the Family Partnership Process to Support Virtual Learning in the Home that it can support home visitors through the process of developing goals with the family. In these resources, you can learn more about the seven-step process for goal setting with families. The resource highlights reflective questions home visitors can use in each of the steps, and it helps us to ensure that we are valuing different perspectives and contributions.

Roselia: So, talking about different perspectives, in a time in which we are spending a lot of time in the virtual world, a common question that may arise is, "What about screen time?" Know that we are living in circumstances we've never experienced before, and it's important to acknowledge that many of us have relaxed the rules that we have established for screen time right now. It's important for us to talk with parents about the guidelines that have been established by the American Academy of Pediatrics, and these are highlighted on your screen for you by age groups. We want to have these conversations with parents, share the information, the research, but we want parents to understand that when it comes to learning in the home, limited and planned screen time with face-to-face interactions can provide some learning opportunities. So, we're not saying no screen time, and right now, it's the reality that we're that we're living in. And so, credible media for young children is a new resource that you can use and share with families to support parents, to select interactive experiences that support learning in multiple domains. When we say credible, we're referring to technology that is dynamic; it's real time; it's interactive media that encourages active exploration and social interaction. So, kind of working on that parent-child relationship.

Adriana: [Laughter] Great information, Roselia. We have covered a lot of information so far and have highlighted some great new resources which will support the strategies and methods to serving your families for sure. Earlier, we mentioned the use of videotaping. Videotaping can be a really great strategy when we think about how to be more effective as home visitors, particularly right now in these virtual environments.

So, Roselia, you talked about how videotaping can be used to support parents who have children with special needs. So, let's hear what our guest expert speaker, Dr. Harden, has to say about the use of videotaping and how we can use our education managers established resource to help support our growth.

[Video begins]

Roselia: How can education managers help home visitors increase the effectiveness of their visits?

Brenda: So, one of the things that I really believe in is the use of videotape, and more and more as we do parenting interventions in the field, we are borrowing from evidence-based parenting interventions that use videotape. So, I would argue, and I always say this to Head Start programs: If you got a little extra money and you want to spend it before the budget year is over, get some video cameras. And I think what you can do is teach home visitors

how to video themselves, and we've done this. You just put the camera in a corner of the room and you pretend like it's not there. Families often forget about it; home visitors forget about it. And then bring it back to the office and have the ed manager look at that videotape with the home visitor to see, for example, like a 12-monther. Are they pulling up the stand? So, here's an opportunity to say to mom, pull that little ball a little farther and see if he'll cruise, or are you got a 24-monther who says, "Cookie, cookie, cookie." You can say to the home visitor, and the head manager knows child development like the back of their hands, of course. Look, the child is doing a single word. Let's see if we can expand the child's language and have them say, "Mommy, cookie, please. So, mom can say, "Cookie, please." So, I think really looking at the child and using what the child does in the context of the home visit is the best way. Certainly ed managers can go out with home visitors and do the coaching in Vivo. But I know that's really hard for them with the kind of workload they have, so I think using a video is a prime way to kind of get this work started.

[Video ends]

Adriana: Yeah, videotaping can definitely be intimidating, and just like being on camera, sometimes something that takes time and practice to get comfortable with. So, now we are quickly coming to the end of our time together. And before we get to some questions, we wanted to mention a few oldies but goodies that we want to be sure you are connected to for your work with children and families. So, we have learned that what happens during the first five years of life is critical to healthy child development. That ELOF is a resource that supports how we approach children's growth and development in all learning domains. Anywhere you can use a ELOF@Home application that serves as a tool for home visitors to get on the go access to the ELOF goals effective teaching practices. We also want to mention the effective practice guide. They provide information about domain-specific teaching practices that support children's development. They offer information for guidance on teaching in-home visiting practices within early learning settings and in-home environments. The Know, See, Do, Improve structure is helpful for home visitors and families to use in their planning of home visits and socialization activities.

Roselia: In addition to that, we also have the Connecting Research to Practice briefs that are available on the ECLKC. These briefs were developed to support home visitors in their work with children and families. Each brief is topic specific and reviews the latest research that is important to child development, and it helps to inform effective practices. The briefs also provide home visitors with strategies to talk with families about research on child development. And then here are some additional resources that are available to home visitors to help you stay connected and expand your knowledge.

So, first we have the MyPeers home-visiting community, and this is a place to connect and collaborate with your peers. Members share thoughts and strategies on staying connected with families, as well as intentional planning for home visits and socialization activities. The individualized professional development portfolio, or the IPD of this offers self-paced courses, including the effective practice guides for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, and then the beginning home visitor series.

And then there's the Text4HomeVisitors. Sign up to receive text messages with information, tips, research, and resources to strengthen and support your home-visiting practices. And then lastly, we want to encourage you to continue to visit the ECLKC Coronavirus Prevention and Response page for the latest news and updates and resources. We know that things are quickly changing. And then this is this is a great resource for you to stay connected as those changes are happening.

OK, so let's take a breath here. Adriana and I, we feel like we've covered a lot of information in a short amount of time. We hope that you will take these new resources and share them with your families, with your teens, reflect with your education managers, but ultimately utilize them to support your virtual home-visiting practices. We want to use the final minutes of our time together to respond to your questions. So, Adriana and I are going to go off camera so that we can sort through questions and look for some themes. And so, right now, what we want is, one, encourage you to enter any questions related to today's topic into the Q&A. And we're going to, as I mentioned, we're going to go in there, we're going to sort through, and we want to take some time to answer your questions. So, let's get started with that.

OK, so before we get started, as a reminder, we do want to let you know that if we do not get to your question, our plan is to put together a document with questions as well as those responses and then post that in the MyPeers home-visiting community. So, be sure to submit your questions. And again, if we don't get to them today, please don't feel that we didn't see your question, but we just want to make sure that we capture all the questions and then put those in a document with the responses in the MyPeers community. Alright, so our first question ... This is actually a question that we saw that came up into MyPeers home-visiting community as well. And so, the question was asking for ideas on how to make home visits more inviting. Adriana, do you have some suggestions based on your experience?

Adriana: Sure, I have a few ideas. One of the things that we need to remember is that regardless of the type of home visitor in person or virtual, the foundation for success is still the same – relationships. We need to do whatever possible to sustain those strong partnerships with families and keep the communication flowing. We know that needs to have change, and families as well as programs, need more support than ever. So, home visitors need to respond genuinely to each family needs to reinforce those partnerships.

We have discussed different strategies throughout the webinar to highlight the importance of learning experiences to promote positive outcomes. So, remember to keep your enthusiasm and energy high by taking care of yourself. And of course, it is essential to be prepared and to be flexible keeping in mind that life will happen during those visits, and we need to relax and go with the flow. Now, I have an example. We need to be aware that many families might feel isolated as they maintain some distance from their friends and extended family members and many of the activities they have been part of or their routines have changed. Some programs are trying new strategies to minimize the sense of isolation by facilitating brief extracurricular activities according to the family's interest, such as cooking, gardening, meditation and yoga, dancing. So, home visitors can still be supportive

by providing information about any groups in their communities that might have activities focused on the family's changing needs and interests. So, basically, we need to maintain those strong relationships with families, and home visitors are experts on that. We know that, and to be responsive more than ever to their changing needs and challenges. So, remember that all families want the best for the children, which includes effective learning, and we need to keep going back to that major goal. Always connect your activities to that goal and facilitate activities that are exciting with accessible materials, highlighting what the child will be learning and how those skills are aligned with the learning outcomes. On the other hand, home visitors also need to be supported with resources and strategies are the ones we highlighted, and also by networking with their colleagues to get fresh ideas about new strategies and activities to keep the engagement going. There is a lot of creativity out on the field. I can never stop surprising myself about the things the programs are doing, and we always learn something new and exciting when we network. So, Roselia, is there something else you would like to add?

Roselia: Yeah, just a couple of things. I agree with everything that you have shared here. When I think about making the home visiting or the experience inviting for the family, whether it's a virtual or in person, this is really based on our ability to meet the family where they are, so to speak. And I really want to emphasize the importance of that joint planning. When we're joint planning with the family, they feel a part of that process, and we want the agenda for that visit to really be based on the family needs. And then within that process, our work comes in with weaving in those opportunities for promoting parent-child interactions and then facilitating those high-quality learning experiences. So, we always want to wrap around, as we mentioned earlier in the presentation, we want to make it about the child.

And then remember some of the things that we talked about regarding self-awareness, particularly if you are conducting those virtual home visits. Self-awareness is really important. The visit can seem uninviting our approach is overbearing, and then the parents are feeling like we're not listening to them. So, just kind of be mindful of our self-awareness, and then also just kind of looping back and making it about the child. OK, so I'll turn it back over to you, Adriana.

Adriana: Yeah, I totally agree. Those are great points that we need to keep in mind. We can now move into the next question that came up that I thought will be good to share some feedback with everyone. The question is how to maintain a healthy balance while supporting families virtually. What can you tell us about that, Roselia?

Roselia: That is a really great question, and we're talking about that balance. Dr. Harden talked about the fact that, as case managers, we're not – Not case managers, but as home visitors, we're having to maintain that balance between promoting those parent-child interactions as well as case management. So, this really lends itself to the commitment that we talked about at the beginning of our session today, and that is self-care. We really need to make this a priority. Now, I hope that I'm understanding what the individual was asking, but I would think that this is an indication that staff themselves are experiencing additional stressors during this time, right? I mean, we just can't ignore that. So, we talked a little bit

about this during the presentation, but I would reiterate the importance of establishing boundaries and then committing to time for yourself. If we schedule it, then we can make that a priority. Try the deep breathing before each of the visits to kind of help clear your mind and then focus on that task at hand.

And then lastly, I would also say that we need to learn to relax during the virtual visits we are learning through this process. I mean, it's kind of one of those things that were flying the plane as we're building it, and so we have to accept that it's not going to be perfect. And we're working with technology. I mean, there's many things around technology – limited technology, no technology, getting comfortable ourselves, as well as getting the family comfortable with technology. And ultimately, we can sometimes create unnecessary stress for ourselves because we get caught up in all the details that we miss the bigger picture, and that is connecting with the family. So, I would say that maintaining a healthy balance is really about making a commitment to take care of ourselves so that we can then and then also have energy for the families that we serve. So, with that, let's explore another question that came up, and it's related to cancelations or parents not showing up at the time of the appointment. So, what can be done to support families in these situations? Adriana, what can you say about this situation?

Adriana: Yes, Roselia, there is a lot to say because that is certainly a big one. First of all, remember to keep your partnerships strong. As we mentioned before, the stronger we sustain those relationships, the more commitment we could see from the families. Also, to set a good example, we need to keep our schedule visits agreed unless we do have a real emergency. I have found in my experience that after I canceled a visit, it will be more common for families to do so as well. So, we have to be very careful with that. So, now on the technical side, we need to prepare families for bases and ensure that they have everything they need. We know that families are experiencing challenges more than ever, and more than ever, they need our support too. So, we can start by checking in briefly via text or phone call to remind them of the visit, discussing and deciding the space in the home where the visit could take place. So, also preparing the family for what you have planned for the visit, such as we will be doing the sporting activities today and these are the skills that your child will be practicing so they can have an idea of how important each visit is and what the children are going to be learning. We also need to confirm the video and the internet access to provide if we need to provide it when it's possible, and remember to allow the parents to drive the session. Be proactive also by anticipating some issues that may occur. If the technology is not connecting, agree on a backup plan and strategies so you both know what's going to happen if things don't work out how you have planned. And finally, support set up with video for families, set clear expectations, and keep open communication. For more information, you can review one of the handouts that we have. It's called Serving in a Virtual Environment Cheat Sheet.

Roselia: Thanks, Adriana. Those were some great strategies, and I'm really glad that you remember to mention that particular resource. I think there's a lot of good information in there. So, here's a question regarding strategy, asking about strategies again. So, this one is, what are the best practices when it comes to virtual learning? And the office of Head Start has offered some guidance for best practices that come to my mind. And so, the first one is,

again, stopping, taking a breath and just really focusing. We can very easily get overwhelmed, and so we want to we want to take that breath and focus. We know that we are all worried about families and children during these times, and we know that parents want what is best for their children, right? And we want to help them achieve their goals. So, it's important to remember guidelines that are established by your programs as well as the Head Start Program Performance Standards. With these in mind we're already starting from a good place. And then there are so many unknowns, but we know that you are working hard to make the best decisions for children and families. Also, we need to remember that we want to rely on our skills and our knowledge. We know how to do this. Partnering with families to achieve children's readiness skills is a core principle of Head Start, and so utilize data that's available to you. Look for guidance from the office of Head Start, local information and good common sense judgment when making decisions about how to approach virtual learning with families. So, when we think about this, here's a few guidelines to keep in mind. Virtual learning approaches must be individualized for each family situation. We know that every family is impacted by the current crisis differently. We have some parents that are working full time outside of their homes. We have some that are working staggered hours or working multiple jobs. Some are working from home, while others are out of work. And then we could also have instances of multiple families that are living in one home. These are all going to impact our ability to connect with these families virtually. So, conduct individual planning with each family to determine what their visit will look like, how long it will be, and then who will be involved, as well as languages that they prefer. And then lastly, I want to mention, because I know we're running out of time here quickly. There's many resources and supports on the ECLKC, so connect with those resources, and then also check in with your supervisors and your managers to explore what resources are available to make those connections for the individual needs that your families have. So, the ECLKC, your MyPeers community, there's resources that are available to help support your work. OK, Adriana, I'm going to turn it back over to you.

Adrian: Yeah, thank you, Roselia. It's great to know that we have all those great resources to support programs. So, well, that concludes the time we have together today. We encourage you to visit MyPeers community to continue the conversation. Roselia and I are your new facilitators for that community, and we look forward to engaging with you there. So, thank you for joining us today, and we also want to send a thank you to Dr. Brenda Jones Harden for sharing her insights. And we look forward to hearing more from her in future sessions. So, we appreciate very much your participation, and have a great afternoon.