

Lessons in Leadership: Pt5 -Support Systems

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Jackie Bell: When I face challenges, I find that my biggest support group is the other managers in the program -- the other content area specialists. Most of the time, when I come to a challenge, it's because I'm not familiar with that field. So, if it's disabilities -- well, I know that I can go to our disabilities specialist and talk to her and get her input on that. So, that helps a lot -- just utilizing the resources you have around us. Also, our director is very good; she has an open door policy; so, any time I would have a challenge I need to try to take care of, or a question, I'm always very comfortable going with her and asking that. So, it's important to have those kind of tight knit group that you feel comfortable with talking to.

Marlene Midget: If a new leader is in a state that has an association, that's a good place to go to get the support, because sometimes you think you're all alone and you find out that somebody else is facing the same issue as you are. Also, find a mentor. Please find a mentor for yourself, so, that it's somebody who's not judging you, that you can be open and honest with and they will give you an open, honest answer; they do not have a hidden agenda. You definitely want the mentor to be in Head Start and Early Head Start, so that they can understand some of the things that you are going through. That helps because they can explain the unwritten rules -- what is expected of you as a leader in the organization and how to gauge what you're doing is appropriate and how to gauge when you need to change your action.

Jackie: Some of the resources that I found being very helpful in this leadership role is the Early Head Start tip sheets; they are like my Bible that sits on my desk. I also refer to ELCKC quite often, being that it's -- I prefer the electronic format; so, that I can get on there; I can search and get an answer a lot faster than digging through the Performance Standards book. Also, another big resource is other agencies -- networking outside. There's been many times that I've called up another agency or another director, another Early Head Start manager and just ask: "Hey, how does your program do this?" And it may not always work out for our program, but at least I have a little bit of interest, you know, a little bit of research to go forward and to a decision that I may have to make.

Che Che Price: We had a book club that our executive director Marlene started, so that we would all read chapters, get together once a month and discuss how do we feel about that. How do I see myself doing that, or what can I take away from this? So, we've had some really good readings that way. The other thing, you have to know your Head Start Act; you should know what your state's early learning

objectives are -- the Early Learning Framework. Each state has them. Our state has them now from zero to three and three to five. So, it's important to know, your Head Start materials -- your Head Start Child Development, Early Learning Framework. You should know that. And you should always be able to explain that -- and also to be able to train other staff on that.