

Building Foundations for Economic Mobility: Webinar 7

Kiersten Beigel: Greetings, welcome to the next webinar in the Office of Head Start's Building Foundations for Economic Mobility series. Glad you can make it today. I know many of you are still coming in the door, so to speak. My name is Kiersten Beigel; here's me and I work at the Office of Head Start and I'm excited to see so many of you that are continuing to take the time from your busy lives to join us and participate in these conversations we've been having over the last many months. Last month, we focused on community partnerships to help families build financial literacy skills using the Money Start and Your Money, Your Goals resources from the FDIC and Consumer; it stands for Consumer Finance Protection Bureau.

Today's conversation will continue along this theme of community partnerships such a central aspect of this work and we will focus on ways that Head Start grantees can partner with some local organizations to help families achieve financial security and build wealth. That's by maximizing their income, increasing their savings and protecting their assets. So, today we're going to be joined by some guests from CentroNia and Capital Area Asset Builders. These are two community organizations with a long history of supporting low-income working families in the District of Columbia.

So, we're really excited to hear their stories and their work and we're really grateful that they can be with us today. As always I do hope that you will use the Chat Box to post your questions and comments to the presenters and to each other. We really, really love the level of engagement, interaction we've been seeing on these webinars. So, please chat away and we know it's a really valuable part of coming together in this forum for you kind of to learn from each other and get ideas from each other. So, I'm going to turn things over to the folks who are going to be engaging us more intently around the topic, Anna Lovejoy from the National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement, take it away.

Anna Lovejoy: Thanks, Kiersten. Hi everybody welcome back to another of our monthly webinars. I'm just really excited to be here today. I just wanted to take a quick moment to thank everybody for indulging us in our gardening metaphor. We got a kick out of all of the answers that we saw come through. It was amazing; everybody saw themselves in different roles from being the seeds, to the planter, to the rain, to the soil, to the, you know, all kinds of. And Kiersten, I loved your response was that you see so many of us as the sunshine that helps everything grow so I just, we just thought that might be a fun way to set up the conversation, get our creative thinking flowing and have a little bit of fun as we head into this important topic today.

So we have an exciting program for you. As Kiersten said, please feel free to use the Chat Box as you all are always so good at doing, to introduce yourselves to each other and to share resources and to react to the ideas that you hear and we'll enjoy each others' learning from each other throughout the day today.

So, today's webinar, we're going to focus on effective partnerships to help families build wealth. And we always like to begin with a reminder about why we care about family engagement. And the family and community engagement framework can help us draw a line between what happens in our program, our program the work we do to partner with families and the family and child outcomes that we can all achieve together.

Today's webinar, we're going to highlight an example of that framework in action. So we're going to hear the story of a Head Start Grantee and a community action partnership agency and learn how through actions of program leadership and attention to professional development, there we go, encourage the community partnership that is focused on helping families to achieve their financial goals and family wellbeing which of course we know is directly connected and such a critical and important part of how we ensure that children start school ready and are able to sustain their development and learning gains through the 3rd grade and on into life. So, if we scroll down into the Parent, Family and Community Engagement framework we'll see that we think about family wellbeing as a combination of three things, family safety, health and financial security.

So, safety refers to housing and neighborhood security and includes things like personal and cultural safety. Health encompasses things like food security, access to medical health for parents and children as well as access to oral health, mental health and substance abuse treatment resources and things of that nature. And then finally financial, financial security refers to a family's ability to earn an income, take care of expenses, manage their money, pay debts, save money, build assets et cetera. So, if you remember back to previous webinars we know that families can achieve financial security when they're able to put financial knowledge, skills and access to resources, all of which we call financial capabilities into action. So our colleagues at the Corporation for Enterprise Development or CFED have conceptualized how families achieve financial security which can help us to understand how we can help them along the way.

So, the first part of their framework is, refers to learning and that refers to the fact that individuals need to learn financial skills. They also need education and professional training to secure and maintain employment and they need skills to effectively manage their money and assets. In addition to wages and job-related income, households can earn income through investments and public benefits which requires knowledge of how to apply for and receive benefits for which they're qualified. And we're going to talk about that and hear a little bit more about that from our guest speakers today.

And of course in order to save households [inaudible] left over after meeting basic needs and paying down debt they need budgeting skills and financial knowledge necessary to manage their finances and credit and reduce debt and they need access to convenient low-cost savings products and structures that support continuous savings behaviors to grow savings over time. And finally, they need to protect their gains through things like insurance and avoidance of predatory financial practices and safe banking products or not avoidance of but access to safe banking products.

So, how are families faring in America and you know, to what extent are our Head Start families able to see themselves in this financial security framework? Well, the latest data from CFED's Assets and Opportunities Scorecard Project may offer some helpful indicators of family financial wellbeing across the country. I'm going to share just real quickly some national data now but I want to point out that if you're interested in seeing data more specific to your state you can find it on the Assets and Opportunities Scorecard website and that link is posted, well actually if Nina wouldn't mind typing it in for us, the link is assetsandopportunity.org/scorecard and we'll be sure to post that in the Chat Box along the way so. But so some of the data that we know, for instance related to education, about 87 percent of adults in the U.S. have at least a high school degree and only about 40 percent of adults have at least a two-year college degree.

So, we know that in today's knowledge-based economy that means there are a lot of adults out there who cannot compete for higher-paying, high-skilled jobs. While the national unemployment rate has dropped to 5 percent, the underemployment rate is more, now more than double at nearly 11 percent and we know that one in four jobs in our nation's economy is in a low-wage occupation. We know that families can only save, invest and protect their assets if they have something left over after paying for basic needs. And we know that building up even a small amount of savings is a challenge for almost half of the country. We have about 44 percent of households in the nation that are liquid-asset poor which means that they have less than three months' of savings to live at the poverty level if they suffer an income loss.

Finally, access to safe banking products and financial services is critical to a family's ability to build and protect savings over time and nationally we know that about 8 percent of households are unbanked which means that they have neither a checking nor a savings account. And another 20 percent of households are underbanked meaning that they have a checking or a savings account but they have also used non-bank money orders, check-cashing services, payday loans, pawn shops and other types of financial products in the last 12 months. So, I'm sure that none of these statistics is surprising to most of you and it may feel like there's nothing that any one individual or program can do to help families make headway in the face of these bigger issues about education, employment, wages, banking but as we're going to hear today there are in fact many things that you can do to make a difference especially when you're able to identify clear goals and use concrete strategies to build on the existing strengths of your families, your program and your community partners.

So, today I have the great honor and privilege to introduce to you two community leaders in our nation's capital who are making a real impact for families working hard to build a good life for themselves and ensure a bright future for their children. With us today is Myrna Peralta. She is the director of CentroNia, a 30-year-old nationally-recognized bilingual, multicultural learning center in D.C.

She has over 35 years of experience in leadership development and organizational management. She received her Master's in social work from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and has a law degree from Georgetown University Law Center. Welcome Myrna, thank you for being here today. And she is joined also by Joseph Leitmann-Santa Cruz. He is the director of external relations at Capital Area Asset Builders, a non-profit organization that seeks to empower low and moderate-income residents of the greater D.C. area to take control of their finances, increase their savings and build wealth for a better future. Joseph has more than 15 years of experience in the financial services profession and he holds a BA in International Relations from San Francisco State University.

So, I hope that everyone participating in today's webinar is willing to indulge with the three of us in a conversation about their efforts and hear their stories, after which we will open the discussion up for your questions. So I'd like to start by asking Myrna to tell us a little bit about CentroNia and the families you serve and the community where you operate.

Myrna Peralta: Good afternoon everyone and thank you Anna. So I assume I'm being heard [laughter].

Anna: Yes, I think we can hear you.

Myrna: Okay, it's my pleasure to be here with you. Let me give you a quick summary of CentroNia for those of you who don't know us. As Anna said we've been in D.C. and in Maryland for, now for 30 years. We serve over 600 children, ages zero to five out of multiple sites and of those 600 plus children we serve their parents, grandparents, siblings, totaling close to over 2500 individuals we work with on a [inaudible] basis. Breaking down those numbers a little bit more we have, of the 600 plus, we have 144 of our children that are under our Early Head Start Program and approximately, excuse me, approximately 450 age zero to five, and three to five and approximately 100 children who are in our Before and After Program. Eighty-five percent of our families are Latino with Spanish being their first, their primary language.

We, of those 80 percent or 85 percent of Latino families, almost 50 percent of them are illiterate in both Spanish and English, and but 80 percent of them are employed and so we have a high number of families who are working and that's primarily driven by the fact that our funding for our childcare requires that families either be working and/or in school in order to receive the subsidies that we receive for childcare. We are at the heart of our work, we are a social justice organization and so, and that gets reflected in a host of ways. Our families are very low-income.

We have a very small percentage of full tuition parents who exceed the poverty, federal poverty line but the majority, approximately 89 percent of our children are on free and reduced lunch so that tells you the population we serve. And with all of those statistics, including the fact that around 50 percent of our families did not finish high school and a significant portion of our families did not finish elementary school. Given all of those statistics which might suggest a vulnerability of our families I am always amazed at the resilience and the ingenuity and the energy that our families bring to the table. And that's in a nutshell who we are.

Anna: Great, thank you. I'd like to turn now to Joseph Leitmann-Santa Cruz. Could you tell us a little bit about Capital Area Asset Builders and its mission and role in the community? Joseph Leitmann-Santa Cruz: Sure, good afternoon everybody, Joseph Leitmann-Santa Cruz with Capital Area Asset Builders, better known as CAAB. CAAB was founded 20 years ago. We're proudly celebrating our 20th anniversary.

The geographic coverage area is the greater D.C. area, so it would be the District of Columbia, Prince George's County and Montgomery County in Maryland as well as Fairfax County, the City of Alexandria and Arlington County in Virginia. As it was mentioned a few minutes ago the mission of CAAB is to financially empower low and moderate-income residents of the greater D.C. area to achieve three goals, one take control of their finances, two, increase their savings and the third one which is the real objective we're all working towards is build wealth for a better future.

Our work is guided by our [inaudible] of financial prosperity and security for all and we take the goal very seriously. And what we mean by that is we are primarily focusing on underserved and unserved communities so that our programs, our services and our educational campaigns hopefully will have an impact in not only breaking the cycle of poverty but seeking to set our families, our participants in line towards building wealth. And what we mean by that is have the ability to achieve long-term assets. CAAB belongs to the field of asset-building so we see the opportunity to achieve a better life through financial capability, the ability to move on to post-secondary education, the ability to buy a home, the ability to launch a micro-enterprise as venues to achieve a better life. CAAB during the last 20 years has been focusing on providing access to savings services.

Specifically we are one of the original providers of individual development accounts, IDAs. IDAs are a fantastic tool and a method to educate any resident of the U.S. whether they are documented or undocumented on how to be banked, how to set up a budget, how to save and how to benefit from a tax-free no-strings-attached match that is associated with IDAs. So, for those of you nationwide who are not aware of who a local IDA provider may be, I would encourage you to do research on that. CFED was mentioned a few minutes ago.

If you go to CFED.org and search IDAs, Individual Development Accounts it will provide you with a list of local network providers, hopefully and there's one in your jurisdiction. Moreover, we make available financial literacy, financial education programs, one-on-one financial coaching services and lastly we have four educational campaigns to incentivize people both in English and in Spanish to be aware of the Earned Income Tax Credit, the EITC.

That's my second key point for the day, please ensure that you, who touch the lives of so many families around the country are fully aware of the benefits of the Earned Income Tax Credit that EITC for the last 41 years has been the most effective anti-poverty program in the nation. Last year alone it lifted over 8 million Americans out of poverty and it's estimated that more than 2 million of those were children so you have the opportunity to encourage people to be aware of the Earned Income Tax Credit and maximize its usage.

It's estimated that about 26 percent of people nationwide who are eligible for the EITC are leaving tens of millions of dollars on the table by not claiming the EITC so please work on incentivizing and educating people on the Earned Income Tax Credit. And lastly, with regard to being banked and save, that's another key component of what CAAB does regionally. To give you one specific perspective, here in the District of Columbia it's estimated that about 12 percent of D.C. residents are unbanked and that simply means they do not have either a checking or a savings account and about 24 percent of D.C. residents are underbanked. They may have a checking or savings account but they're still utilizing alternative financial services provided.

Why do we care about this? That is because on average those families, primarily, most of them or significantly most of them are low-income families belonging to African-American or Latino communities spend about \$800 on an annual basis to cash checks. By just taking the step of being fully banked each low-income family would be able to save \$800 and start putting that aside for other long-term goals. So, I look forward to answering any questions that you may have down the road and I'm pretty sure that my contact information will be provided at some point so whatever CAAB can be doing with you or putting you in touch with CAAB-like organizations in your area, please let me know, thank you.

Anna: Thank you so much Joseph. I see actually that one question just came through that I think is directly relevant from Debra Palmer and she wants to know if families must have some sort of earned income to qualify for the tax credit you're speaking of. Can you speak to that?

Joseph: Sure, so to give you two answers. At the federal level we have the Earned Income Tax Credit and then I believe there are about close to 15 jurisdictions, states, counties and cities that have also created a local version of the EITC. In order to qualify for a local version of the EITC one must qualify for the federal EITC and the key term is earned income, whether it's from a W9 or a 1099 source, then you are eligible to qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit. If somebody has been in prison and earning money while in prison, that does not count as earned income. SSDI does not count as earned income so, whatever the IRS would see as income which is reportable, and has to be reported to the IRS that qualifies as earned income.

Anna: Great, thanks for clarifying that. That was very helpful. So, I want to turn to Myrna now and actually I'm going to advance our slide. Among the families, especially those with young children in your Early Head Start program, what's the most common financial goal that they tend to have? It's, you know, it's so important to help families identify their goals so that in order to help them, you know to achieve them. So what are you finding are the goals of your families?

Myrna: Well, I think the singular most unasked for, and I'll say unasked because we get to this issue in our conversations with families whether we're doing it with a pregnant mom, doing a home visitation or at our center and that is the issue of repairing credit. It is, it surfaces in many, many different ways and so budgeting, repairing credit and budgeting assistance would be the two most commonly-asked for services by our families.

Anna: And so, how, talk to us a little bit about how does CentroNia help families kind of capitalize on their strengths to help them achieve their goals that they've set?

Myrna: Well, we start, our whole approach to working with our families is really from a strength-based perspective and I often wonder how many of us would survive as our families do. They're extremely, extremely resilient and they are, many of them are working two, three jobs and so over the years CentroNia has developed, created the family center as sort of a point of contact for all the families that come through us. And through the family center we have, we currently have been in the past, have offerings that really go through the gamut of services whether it is a family coming to us because they're being evicted, whether it's a family that can't buy food for that week for some reason, if it's a family that whose child has entered into, has gone into the criminal justice system for some reason, our families come to us with every single challenge that you can imagine.

Under the area of economic or financial stability it's just really important that, for us, that we're focused quite extensively on stability of a family's financial situation. And I've had this conversation with others, it is extremely difficult to have families, to ask families to focus on a, you know, where do you want to be ten years from now discussion? Or how much do you want to have saved, you know, by the time you retire when they live paycheck to paycheck and they are consumed in many ways by day-to-day survival.

And so our job and our focus is stability and then a plan, a realistic plan for, you know, how do you move from sort of A to B? And what does B look like? We are especially challenged not because our families don't want to advance from a fiscal or their financial situation, but many of our families are caught in this terrible cycle that in order to qualify for childcare, city support subsidies they can only make so much money and we literally have to work with our families and with the city and with employers because having a family say to us, I turned down a raise because it would take me over the cap and I will lose my subsidy if I accept the raise. I mean that's the kind of conversations we have all the time.

And so a family might, an employee will say I don't want that \$1000 increase in my salary because I will lose my \$20,000 subsidy and it, so part of what CentroNia does and is working on is on that policy side advocating for changes in some of these, what I think are very oppressive policies that really serve policies that really serve as obstacles for financial improvement on the part of our families.

Anna: That's just some really I think difficult challenges and points that you raise. I want to turn back to Joseph to I think some of the, questions that we're getting related to, you know the challenges of why families are unbanked or underbanked. So what are you seeing as some of the common challenges and barriers to financial security and their ability to access those types of products?

Joseph: There are multiple barriers preventing low-income individuals and households from becoming connected with the mainstream financial services industry. Three major ones that we tend to see, one is the lack of trust from low-income communities towards the financial institutions. And that is primarily because of the lack of information on what benefits there are for an individual to be fully banked and do not rely on alternative financial services. So information, hopefully there's the trust, one.

The second one is unfortunately we continue to see too many low-income neighborhoods throughout this region and that is very true across the nation as well, where there isn't an easy availability of a bank or a credit union branch nearby. So, having somebody need to take two bus rides to get to the nearest branch is definitely an impediment. So, how can we resolve that, through technologies, through phone banking, and through the ability to actually connect with a mainstream financial institution without physically having to be present at a branch? And the third one is specifically dealing with low-income residents in the U.S. who do not have proper immigration status.

One of the biggest challenges and one of the biggest opportunities that CAAB sees and this is something where we have been partnering with organizations working with Latino, Ethiopian, African and Asian community-based organizations is to bring information in a culturally-relevant way in the native tongue of the individual to inform him or her that in this country one does not have to be a citizen or even a legal permanent resident to be able to open a bank or a credit union account. This is one of the few nations in the world where regardless of your immigration status you still can have access to a bank or credit union account.

So just being able to inform, educate and empower somebody that they too can participate in the mainstream financial services is considered a success but it's one that unfortunately will still take some time and a lot of resources to spread that information.

Anna: Yeah, thanks, that's really I think important for everyone to understand. I think too many of us aren't aware of that so it's--I think it's important.

Joseph: Anna, can I underscore something that?

Anna: Yes, please by all means.

Joseph: It was just that when we looked at the families we have served, the thousands over the years. There's been one consistent data point for us that really challenges us and it really goes to the point of folks not either knowing about services but our families despite all of the needs that they have, whether it's in housing, transportation, education, health, wherever it is, less than, oh I'm sorry, more than 50 percent of our families do not access any, any public benefits that they're entitled to.

Whether it's out of fear or they just don't know about them or they are, you know, suspicious or whatever their reasons but, the amount of resources that could improve financial stability is less on the table, untapped, unused and we have to do a better job as organizations, as advocates with our families in order to get them to tap into these resources that so many folks use without even blinking an eye.

Anna: Right and you're actually kind of jumping ahead of some of my questions that I wanted to ask, which is fine. I wanted to ask, which is fine. I'm eager to get there as well. So maybe what I'm going to do is actually skip forward so we can go to helping families overcome these barriers that you're talking about and being specific and concrete about how CentroNia and CAAB have partnered to combine strength to help families. I know it's still an ongoing issue but you know, there certainly are examples of things that you have done and successes you've had with families to at least try to, you know, reverse that to some degree. So, Myrna do you want to talk a little bit about that?

Joseph: I can talk a little bit about our sort of history with CAAB. As you can imagine I don't work with them on a daily basis myself but the director of our family center Cesar I know works closely with them. And so, but the nature of our relationship has really focused on the financial literacy classes that we have, I think since 2011, been working together on. And we partner with CAAB, with the community tax aid, with the Central American Resource Center, once again focusing on financial literacy but more specifically on the Earned Income Tax Credit issue.

We do a lot of outreach with regards to resources in the community separate apart from sort of calling it financial or financially-focused. If we can educate a family or families about the option to rent or buy a house, the option of, the use of you know, Payday loans and that is one of the areas where I feel really good about the work we've done, is we're really reducing the number of our families that look to Payday loans as a way to make ends meet. And we do a lot of work with our families around healthy eating, showing them how to make their food dollars go as far as possible including holding cooking workshops and purchasing workshops.

We also have relationships with farmer's markets that make available to us vouchers, \$25, \$50-- vouchers that we can give our parents if they use them at farmer's markets. So we help them. We have a relationship with a saver's organization that really puts an emphasis on you know, how, how to make your money stretch as far as possible. There's an awful lot of money-saving strategies that we impart to our families either individually through our case management or in group classes but we understand that poverty is probably the strongest obstacle to people making smart financial decisions and so we take a lot of pains to have a lot of one-on-one conversations with our families about their financial status, financial situation.

Anna: Thanks. Joseph, maybe, you could tell us a little bit more specific about the work that you're doing with CentroNia particularly around the tax assistance and the EIPC benefits?

Joseph: Sounds great and let me focus on two types of components of our collaboration and Myrna was alluding to both of them. These two components are ones that I believe the attendees research in their localities research in their localities as to who else they can be partnering with. With CentroNia for a few years now CAAB has been partnering to host a VITA free tax preparation site. And this is something that is extremely valuable for individuals who earn less than \$35,000 in adjusted gross income or families with a maximum income of \$53,000.

Free tax preparation services are essential. Unfortunately very few low-income families take advantage of them nationwide. Why are they important? To give you one specific data point, here in the greater D.C. area we have the highest expense for tax preparation on an ongoing basis. It's estimated that \$200 is the average tax preparation cost. Imagine what impact a low-income family, one of your participants, one of your clients can have by simply saving \$200 by utilizing the high-quality free tax preparation service that is made available at VITA sites from mid-January to mid-April on a recurring basis. These are highly-trained volunteers who have a passion to correctly get the maximum credit that low-income families should be getting by participating in the tax preparation system.

So again, please look into who are the local free tax preparation VITA providers in your area. Make sure you're getting information on how you can be sending your clients there and right there you're taking one specific, one concrete step to empower your clients to save at least \$200 and that's for this year. Start multiplying that for the next ten years and right there you are enabling your families to have a safety cushion being saved. So with CentroNia CAAB has been partnering under the D.C. Earned Income Tax Credit campaign to make free taxes available for low and moderate-income communities. The other component of our partnership that could also be explored by those attending this webinar is that for the last two years we have partnered to provide a financial counselor available at the free tax preparation site so that those coming in to file their taxes are being asked or encouraged to also see the financial counselor where it will be a quick conversation, 15 to 20 minutes.

And that's primarily because those who want to come in to get their taxes done usually do not want to spend more time in the same location. But what we're encouraging folks to do is sit down with one of our financial counselors who provides information both in English and in Spanish to quickly ask some basic questions. Have you reviewed your credit score in the last 12 months? Would you be interested in pulling down a credit report to see if there are any errors or issues that you should be addressing in the immediate or in the short term? And once you get the confidence or the trust of that individual then you can then explore what else can be done money-related.

Myrna was alluding to questions or requests on fixing credit. Credit repair, credit-building is crucial but so is no longer having 26 million Americans who are 100 percent credit invisible. Those are all consumers throughout this country who do not even show up in any reports by the credit bureaus because of them not having a social security number or having been incarcerated and then their credit files are lost or simply have never had access to an account that reports to the credit bureau. So, there are multiple accomplishments that can be achieved when you have somebody at a free tax preparation site.

Anna: That's great and I think that's a really good point about, you know, being a trusted source of information and guidance sort of, you know, assuming that folks are there because that's exactly what they're hoping to find.

So, it's just, is the important role that you all are playing in the community is just, is so. It's wonderful and you know, I think we need to do what we can to see more of that which is why we're doing these webinars. And I love the fact that in the Chat Box folks are sharing details about their own partnerships with community service agencies and free tax preparation sites and everything so this is great. I love that everybody is sharing and posting links and everything so keep it up.

I think this is really valuable information that we're all sharing. We have a few minutes left and of course I had way more questions and things that I wanted to ask than we have time for so I think what I'm going to do at this moment is I have one more question that I want to ask Myrna about supporting your own staff. You know, we know that many of your staff are from the same community and are facing some of the same issues that your clients are so can you talk about some of the things that you've done to support your own staff?

Myrna: Absolutely and just picking up a little, on the previous conversation, one of the things that we have advocated and are really proud of is our relationship with several of our community-based credit unions that we refer our clients to, our parents to. With regards to our own staff, CentroNia is extremely proud of the fact that we offer all of our staff a living wage. Here in D.C. the living wage is \$13.80 so even our facilities people, everybody who walks into here starts at \$13.80. It is very difficult to honor that because of the tremendous fundraising it takes on our part. Most childcare or early learning centers even here in D.C. the average is \$9-10 an hour as opposed to \$13.80 an hour which is like I said the official living wage.

We provide all of our families, all of our staff access to really healthy foods. We do tuition assistance. Once again, education, we're very strong supporters of our own staff constantly improving their position, their educational opportunities so we do tuition assistance. All of our staff have access to insurance, some of which we offer as part of our benefits package. We work really hard to be really good, a really good employer and you were right in that many of our staff come from the same communities as the families we serve.

That's a good thing, it reinforces the fact that we're community-based and the families identify much better with individuals who have walked the road that they've walked and so we put a lot of emphasis on hiring from the community. But we think we do a good job, not a great, we can do better, in terms of supporting our own staff's financial security.

Anna: Great, that's such an important aspect of the work that you do and getting back to our framework it's part of the professional development and program leadership aspects that, you know, I think it's important to bear in mind and you know how we can help not only families but also our staff. I would love to hear from both of you, maybe we'll start with Myrna first. What advice do you have for a head starter and Early Head Start grantees and their community partners for how to, you know, identify your families' needs and then go out and build partnerships with other, partnerships in the community to help address them particularly around financial security? So, can you Myrna maybe offer some advice?

Myrna: Yeah, just real briefly I think if I was, if you were to force me to say one thing, do I wish we did better in terms of advancing the financial security for our families? It's reaching out and being much more effective with the employers who, who hold the fate of our families in their hands and sometimes very cavalierishly. I think working with employers is something that doesn't get enough attention and I think that there are opportunities to educate the employers in our community about the populations that we work with and how partnering with them and having a three-way partnership between employers, employees and community-based organizations is a win, win, win situation so that would be the one thing that I would suggest and I think there are some things that we could talk about at another date or another time but we don't hold employers feet to the fire enough.

Anna: Great, thank you. Joseph, do you have anything that you would say from your perspective as a community partner?

Joseph: Absolutely, first of all very briefly I want to say congratulations to the people who are attending this webinar this webinar because you are taking a specific step in gathering information that may not have anything to do with what you directly do on a daily basis but has everything to do from a holistic approach regarding the wellbeing of the families that you serve, so I really applaud that initiative.

For the sake of brevity, two specific steps that you can take to enable your families to achieve financial wellbeing or financial capability, one is to make sure that they're fully aware of low-income tax credits that apply. This could be either on the Earned Income Tax Credit, on savings, on housing. A lot of jurisdictions throughout the country have access to low-income tax credits, that's step one. The second one is to empower your families to be fully banked therefore they will start saving money and be able to really focus on both the ultra-short-term goals, where would the money come from to put food on my table but also we'll empower the younger members of the family to also start focusing on long-term planning so it's also about wealth creation for down the road.

Anna: Great and I know that we've had some questions popping up from folks about financial literacy curriculum and I just wanted to respond to those. We did, last month's webinar we focused on two that are available for free from the, one is from the FDIC called Money Smart and the other is from the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau and that is called Your Money, Your Goals. And when the webinar recording and slides are available and up on the Head Start website,

if you are subscribed to the newsletter, the Head Start newsletter, stream and you should get information about those so you can go back and learn more about that. And we're always happy to help connect folks to our partners at those agencies as well. There was one question, Joseph maybe this is one for you. If you're a community action agency and have a financial capability program like IDA, a tax program or literacy education and you also have an Early Head Start or Head Start Program how do you engage the Early Head Start and Head Start families in financial capability?

So, I think what this is asking is, you know, if you're offering these kinds of support how do you make sure that families that are actually enrolled in the other areas of your program are aware of and actually show up to take advantage of what is on hand?

Joseph: Oh, fantastic question, just very briefly, my professional background is in wealth management and I would approach an ultra [inaudible] client the same way that I continue to approach our low-income participants and that is to deal with specific matters. So, rather than have to have anybody preach on what to do, what not to do, specifically get to the point. These are simple steps that you, participant, your family can take to save money and to set money aside. So, coming back to where to get your taxes done, how much do you pay for that? Well, instead of paying \$200, \$300, \$400, \$500 why not take advantage of high-quality free tax preparation and right away save that money. That would be one example.

The other example is if you do not have a bank account, how much do you pay every time you need to cash a check? Well, instead of having to waste that money at a check-cashing agency, why not deposit that into a bank account? So, these are very practical approaches that would have your families immediately recognize what is the importance and why it makes sense to get further financial capability.

Myrna: Anna, can I add something to that? We work very closely with our family support workers making sure that each of them is responsible for, you know 10 to 12 families that they work very closely with and financial security and is part of the ongoing action plan for our families. And so we make sure that our family support workers have all the information they need, have all the resources available at their fingertips. And we will also, we also transport our Early Head Start families to activities. We bring them into the centers, those who are home-based and we'll have speakers there so, but we work through our family support workers and because they're the ones with the direct link to the families.

Anna: And I think you make a really important point there Myrna about you know, it's really important to ask the families, you know.

Myrna: Yes.

Anna: It's not enough just to offer it and assume that they know about it or can show up. You know there may be other barriers or reasons why, you know they can't show up on a certain day of the week or time or what have you so I think that's important. And I think last month we had heard a similar example from folks in Kansas about how important it was for them to actually ask the families before they even began planning to offer the services that they had so I think that's really important. We are down to one last minute and I think I'm just going to take this time to thank both of you so very much for your time today away from busy schedules and the important work that you do and we're just so grateful for all the rich information that you've shared and the thought-provoking ideas and just wish you all the best of luck moving forward and hope that you know, we will have you back for the conversations in the future.

I think I'd also like to thank Kiersten for kicking us off and for our tech support, Susan and Nina, Susan Stewart and Nina Zumpalova and of course all my colleagues here at the National Center for helping us and we just thank you all. Stay tuned for next month's, information about next month's discussion. We're going to be focusing on career pathways and we would just hope that you'll come back and join us next time. Thanks so much.