Supervising Children on Head Start Buses

Steve Schuman: Hello, everybody. My name is Steve Schuman. I'm a technical assistance specialist with the Head Start National Center on Health. And welcome to our webinar on supervising children on Head Start buses. We have a diverse group of people here from all across all 12 regions of – of Head Start. We are as much like the rainbow that these – this colored map reflects as all of Head Start is. We have transportation managers; we have drivers. We have transportation aides and monitors. We have health managers and directors. We have federal staff; we have T/TA staff. It is all of Head Start here, paying attention to this important issue of keeping children safe on buses.

We have a survey that we'd love you to pay attention to as we get ready for today's webinar. We're going to be using surveys throughout today's session. The first survey asks you what the weather is like out in your neck of the woods. And we know it's quite different. I'm sitting here in southern California, and we have people in the Midwest and on the east coast as well speaking on today's webinar. I see that we have a lot of people who have some sun, but unfortunately, even more that have rain and clouds; and as people log in, I see about 90 people where it's snowing, and even worse for drivers, about five percent of you, things are pretty icy.

So lots of people logging in. Thank you. You're doing the survey just the way we'd like you to – to share that throughout – throughout today's session. We know that weather is a critical element of transportation, and we want you to be as aware of the weather as everybody else is. So, thanks for sharing that. And if you're curious, we'll send you those results.

So we're going to start today with just a very brief introduction by Lisa Krams, one of our staff here on the National Center on Health who's going to explain how to use the webinar tools. Lisa?

Lisa Krams: Thank you, Steve. Hello, and welcome. On behalf of the Head Start National Center on Health, thank you for joining us today for Supervising Children on Head Start Buses. My name is Lisa Krams and I'm the program coordinator for the National Center on Health at the American Academy of Pediatrics. And I just want to go over a few housekeeping items before we begin.

First, just a couple of details. During the webinar, our speakers will advance the slides throughout their presentations. Attendees will not have control over the slides, so those will just go at the pace that our presenters need. You won't be able to go forwards and backwards in the presentation during this live event. All attendees' phone lines and computers are muted. If you have a question, we encourage you to type it into the dialogue question box window on the side of your screen. We have people standing by moderating questions and looking them over; and if time permits, there will be a short question and answer session at the end of this webinar. If we don't have time to answer any questions live during the webinar, we will follow up with you individually via email because we'll save all of the questions that you type in and we'll be able to get back to you in the next couple of weeks.

We do expect the webinar to last about 90 minutes today. We're looking at an end time of 4:30 eastern standard time. I would also like to assure everybody that we are recording today's webinar. We will be

recording the webinar, and in several weeks it will be available on the ECLKC website for you to download and share with other staff members who maybe were unable to participate today. And the handouts and the questions and answers that we take today as well will be part of that package once it's up on ECLKC. We are going to be focusing on content related to the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

And my final comment is that after the webinar, you will be redirected to an online evaluation. Please take a few minutes to share your feedback on today's event. We would really appreciate it. It will help us make future events like this better and better for you. Only participants who complete the evaluation will receive a certificate of participation. If you're watching as part of a group, the person who logged in for the webinar will also receive an email with a link to the survey. So if you are the person who logged in, you'll get this email with a survey link. You can just forward that link on to everybody who's watching with you and they can complete the evaluation that way.

And finally, if you need any technical assistance during this webinar, please dial 1-866-709-8255 and someone will help you. There is also a question mark in the top right corner of your screen. You can click on that question mark and it will open up some other options for you to – to receive assistance or get technical questions answered. And now, it's my pleasure to turn the webinar over to Nancy Topping-Tailby.

Nancy Topping-Tailby: Thank you, Lisa. My name is Nancy Topping-Tailby, with the National Center on Health, and I will be hosting today's webinar along with my colleague, Steve Schuman. Again, a warm welcome from the Head Start National Center on Health. As many of you know, the National Center on Health is one of six national centers in the Head Start training and technical assistance system. Our work includes providing Head Start and Early Head Start programs with resources to help prevent injuries and to support the health and safety of children, families, and staff.

We are going to be using some webinar features during this presentation to get you involved in thinking about transportation safety. Throughout this webinar, you will see pictures of children, transportation, and other staff from real Head Start programs, which we have used to talk with you about how you can help children travel to and from programs safely. While we welcomed you to our webinar today, you participated in a poll about what the weather is like where you are. We will be using polls throughout our session today, as discussed, asking you questions about what you're hearing. We will let you know when you can respond to them.

Because we have a very large audience today, it will likely not be possible for us to answer questions. But as Lisa said, we will be able to answer questions later on and we'll provide you with our contact information at the end of this webinar so that you can follow up with any additional questions that come up during our presentation.

We will begin with an introduction from the director of the Office of Head Start, Yvette Sanchez Fuentes.

Yvette Sanchez Fuentes: Welcome. Today, the National Center on Health is holding a webinar for transportation teams working in Head Start and Early Head Start programs. We recognize that you have

an important job, because without you, many families would not be able to send their children to our programs. Head Start children, families, and staff all depend on you to bring children to and from our programs every day safely. But we also recognize that there are many challenges in running transportation services for administrators, drivers, and monitors. Many of you spend long hours on the road. You are with children when they are most vulnerable: when they are leaving their families in the morning and when they have to say goodbye to their teachers and friends at the end of the day.

We know that you have many responsibilities: developing routes that get children to school safely on time and that meet individual families' as well as program needs; maintaining buses and bus equipment; serving as an important connection between families and our programs and staff because you see families every day; and supervising children while they are riding the bus. Supervising children is one of your most important responsibilities. We all know that any time a child is left unattended, that child is in danger. Your job is to create systems and use strategies to make sure that this never happens.

We know that young children are also in danger of being left in cars by parents and caregivers and want to help your programs address this problem as well. You will learn about our Look Before You Lock campaign that reminds adults to check all seats in a vehicle before it is locked. We offer this information for all Head Start staff and families to ensure that no child is ever left in a vehicle without an adult. This webinar was created to help you identify strategies to successfully manage the many challenges that transportation teams experience. Thank you for your work and for the work that you do each and every day for our children and families.

Nancy: Next, Amanda Bryans, the director of the Educational Development and Partnerships Division of the Office of Head Start, has joined us to talk with you about the importance of transportation safety. Amanda?

Amanda Bryans: Good afternoon. It's a pleasure to be here. I'd like to ask everyone to close your eyes. Just bear with me. I know you're not all closing your eyes. Please, go ahead. Imagine you're 3 years old. You're asleep. You're sound asleep. You just start waking up. You struggle a little and you can't move a lot. You open your eyes. First, you can't remember where you are. Oh yes, you're on your bus. You're on your way to Head Start. You love Head Start. You wiggle around and you're all sweaty, hot. You turn your head and you notice there's nobody else on the bus with you. You're all alone. You call out and nobody answers. I'm going to stop here 'cause I really can't stand to go on.

I want to tell you that this can happen to everyone, to anyone. It's happening every week in Head Start programs. It's happening to poor people, rich people, old people, young people, busy people, and not so busy people. It's happening to Head Start bus drivers and monitors. It can happen to anybody. Human memory is not perfect. If you've ever driven between two points and not remembered for sure how you got there... You know what I mean? You're driving somewhere and suddenly you kind of snap to and think, "I don't really remember being on that highway," or "How did I make the right turns to get home because I don't exactly remember doing it?" If you've ever done that, if you've ever been absolutely sure you know where you put your car keys and they're not there and you're sure you put them there and you can't find them, they're not there, and then days later, you find them somewhere completely

different and then you remember putting them there... If that's ever happened to you, either of those things, you're capable of forgetting you're with a young child in a car or on a bus.

We know that programs have policies in place and we also know that monitors and drivers follow those policies almost all the time. In fact, maybe the follow them 364 days of the year. But on the 365th day, for whatever reason, they only walk three-quarters of the way toward the end of the bus instead of all the way to the last seat. We absolutely know this can happen. We also know that it is something that cannot be allowed to happen in Head Start. We have a sacred trust in the children that we care for. Don't ever put yourself in the position of explaining to a parent that their child was injured or died because we forgot the child in the vehicle.

Oftentimes, we hear that people find children after a period of time. Recently, a child was left on a Head Start bus for three hours in very cold, sub-freezing conditions. And they're relieved and they say, "Everything's okay; the child's fine." I guarantee you a child is not fine. If they wake up and find themselves alone on the bus and the people they trusted are not there, they are not fine. So I've told you that human memory is fallible, and I suspect you already knew that. That does not mean that we can tolerate this happening in Head Start programs.

In the rest of the webinar today, you're going to learn about the importance of duplicate or secondary safety systems that can help you prevent having this kind of tragedy happen to you. The last thing I want to say is that, while it is something that has happened in Head Start and we have been lucky that no child has died, we have had – lost several children in Head Start when their parents or guardians forgot them in a vehicle related to either bringing another child into the program, volunteering in a classroom, or not remembering that they were the parent or caregiver responsible for dropping that child off that day.

Dozens of children are dying in private passenger vehicles. Programs can do something about this, too. Tell parents to call you if their child is not going to be in, or text you or email you. And if you don't hear from a parent and you were expecting the child, require that your teachers call home; call the parent to see where the child is. You'll save lives. Secondary safety systems in our programs to make sure that we do not make this mistake with our own vehicles, and working with parents and guardians to make sure that children are not left in vehicles – in private passenger vehicles.

I'm looking forward to the rest of the webinar. We'd love to hear your questions and we definitely want to hear your feedback. Thank you for taking the time to be with us today.

Nancy: Thank you, Amanda. There are four handouts with this webinar. As you will see in your handouts, the Head Start Program Performance Standards related to transportation safety – you are required to make sure that children are always safe on the bus. This means that children are always supervised; children are seated in height and weight appropriate child safety restraint systems; drivers have the required licensure; drivers and monitors are trained to ensure the safety of young children on the bus; parents and children are trained in pedestrian safety; and children with disabilities are able to be transported safely.

We know that sometimes day to day distractions can make your work harder. Some busy people find it difficult to give their full attention to the task at hand. But there are strategies to deal with these distractions. The goal of our webinar today is to share these strategies with you. We hope they will help you recognize what can get in the way of focusing your attention and what to do when this happens. Two strategies that transportation staff can use are attention management and active supervision. Together, they can help you keep children safe.

First, let's talk about attention management. Imagine your full attention is a full bucket. You wake up each morning after a good night sleep, wash up, get dressed, and have breakfast. Your bucket is full so that you can pay attention to the things that matter. But as the day goes on, you may get stuck in traffic on the way to the bus yard or you may have to deal with a parent running late for pick-up, and you need to soothe several crying children on your bus, creating leaks in the bucket you just filled. So how do you plug the leaks in your bucket? It's important to identify where these holes or distractions are coming from. Even when you are trying to focus on something, distractions then make it really hard to pay attention.

Let's bring up the survey now so that we can see some of the typical distractions that are likely to occur on a bus route. Please think about these and make a note for yourself that you can talk about later with your team to see what you think are the most likely situations that will distract you. Let's think about traffic conditions. Would traffic conditions be likely to distract you? How about the weather? We opened today with a discussion of the weather, which can also provide very real distractions on the road. Then there are road closures. There can also be route changes. How about crying children? Or special requests from parents and staff?

Remember that all of your responses today are confidential, but are trying to give you an idea of the kinds of situations that are likely to occur and to distract us on the bus. Let's see if we can talk about some of the results. Well, I'm having a little bit of trouble seeing what the results are. I don't know if they've come up yet, but I can't see them. So I'm going to move on, and maybe we can give you that information a little bit later.

Steven: Nancy, this is Steven. I'm happy to share the results with you.

Nancy: Thank you. I can't view them from my screen. That would be great, Steve.

Steven: I see about 50 percent of folks have identified traffic conditions. And not surprisingly, about 60 percent have identified the weather. And then about a third of the folks are talking about road closures and route changes. Unfortunately, half of our folks are having crying children on our buses, and we know that that's an endemic part of working with children who are in Early Head Start and Head Start of course. And then, another half are – again, half – special requests from parents or staff. So all of the issues that relate to distractions that you identified are shared by our audience today. Let's go back to the slides now.

Nancy: Thank you for your response, Steve. Attention management is a set of strategies that work together to help you stay focused and direct your attention. You need to do a few things. First, you need

to identify and limit distractions. Then, you need to set priorities. And finally, you need to stay focused. We have included some questions in the handout "Child Supervision on Transportation" that you can think about yourself or, again, with your team later to plan how to keep your bucket full and manage distractions when they occur. But having a full attention bucket is just the first step.

The next step is active supervision. Once you know how to focus and sustain your attention, you can use active supervision strategies to help create a safe environment for children. Active supervision includes six specific strategies. First, you set up the environment so that you can see and hear the children at all times. You position staff so that not only can you see and hear the children, but you can get to a child quickly if needed. You scan and count children constantly so that you always know how many children there are and where they are. You listen to make sure children are safe. You anticipate children's behavior so at any time you know who may need more attention and support. And finally, you engage and redirect children when necessary who may need your help to make good choices and do the right thing. These skills build on each other to help you keep children safe. You start by making sure that you can observe everything that's happening on your bus. Then, you use what you know about the children who ride your bus to decide what to do when children need a little extra support.

Let's see what these strategies actually look like. We are going to share a story with you so that you can see how these different strategies might happen on a bus route. Steve, who you met as you joined the webinar, will tell you about one transportation team's morning route. As you listen to the story, you will see a poll listing the active supervision strategies, and we invite you to participate by selecting the strategies that you think the team has used. Choose at least one, but see how many you can hear. Steve?

Steve: Thanks, Nancy. So here's the story. Marguerite is a bus driver who has worked with Achmed, a bus monitor, for two years. They have worked with other transportation teams in their program to develop some great ways to use active supervision that you'll hear about as we tell you about their morning route.

Monday morning, Marguerite and Achmed begin their day by boarding bus 31 in the bus lot right behind 123 Head Start. Before they get started, Achmed goes to the back of the bus and places tokens on a Velcro spot underneath the last two seats. Then he moves to the middle rows and places tokens under those seats as well. These tokens will serve as reminders that he needs to check every seat at the end of each route. When the team agrees that the bus is safe and ready to go, Achmed grabs his clipboard with attendance sheets. There is a sheet for each route with the name of every child that rides the bus. It is arranged by bus stops. Achmed sits in a seat in the middle of the bus. He will seat the children from the front to the back so that he can observe the children safely and be close to them.

Did you select at least one strategy in the survey? What strategies did the team use? Please select from the survey that you see on your screen now. Did you hear anybody on the team set up the environment? How about positioning staff or scanning and counting? Did you hear anyone engage in listening or anticipating children's behavior? How about engaging in redirecting? Okay. Thanks for responding. Let's see what you had to say. I'm not seeing any results. I see the poll but I'm not seeing any results.

Okay. Let's see. Here we go. Thank you. So about 12 percent of you identified setting up the environment. And correct, Achmed and Marguerite set up the environment using tokens to remind themselves to check the bus after each route and before parking the bus in the lot. About a quarter of you identified scanning and counting; and sure enough, Achmed counts the children then uses the sign-in sheet to make sure he records his count of the children on the bus. And more than a third of you identified positioning staff. And yes, Achmed positions himself in the middle and seats the children so he can scan them safely.

As we continue the story, please use the polling features, these surveys, to identify the strategies that you think the team has used. And the story continues. Marguerite starts the bus and begins their first route of the day. At each stop, Achmed gets off the bus and greets the parents or other authorized adults. They initial next to their child's name. Then Achmed seats all the children so that he can see and hear them. As the bus is moving, Achmed constantly scans the bus to see and listen to know how the children are doing. Some children continue to sleep on the bus while others sing songs and chatter with Achmed. One child drops his mittens and starts to cry, but Achmed reassures him that he will get it at the next stop. Achmed sometimes moves to sit near a child who needs encouragement. He knows that one child, Rosa, has just learned how to unbuckle herself and he seats her next to him and distracts her by chatting about what she did at home that morning. If necessary, he reminds her that all children have to keep the buckles fastened.

And what strategies did you hear revealed in that part of the story? Did you hear anybody on the team set up the environment or position staff? Did you hear anyone scanning and listening or anticipating children's behavior? How about engaging? Think about the story and think about the strategies, and respond to the survey.

Ah, and here are some results. Thank you. So, Achmed compares his count of the children with his sign-in sheets to make sure that they match. And Achmed positions the children in seats so he can easily scan and listen. Lots of you got that. While in motion, Achmed scans and listens to children sing and talk. Achmed also engages and redirects children when they become upset by talking to them, reassuring them, and soothing them. Almost half of you identified that. And Achmed uses what he knows about Rosa to anticipate that she will try to unbuckle herself, so he redirects her through conversation and engages with her by seating her next to him on the bus and offering reminders when necessary. And lots of you got that as well. So thank you for responding to that part of the survey and listening so closely to the story.

And we continue. We're now arriving at the program. More surveys to come. When the bus arrives at the program, Achmed and Marguerite watch as some of the children's teachers and aides greet the bus. They conduct a last head count together and escort the children off the bus. As each child exits, one of the teachers initials next to his or her name on the clipboard. This provides a written check that each child has been delivered to the authorized adult. The teachers and aides then walk the children to their classroom. When all the children have exited, Marguerite and Achmed inspect the bus to make sure that all children got off and no one got back on. While they conduct this check, the center supervisor counts – counts the children as they enter the building with their teachers. This is a way of double-checking the

information on the clipboard. When they are done with their inspection, Achmed removes the tokens from both the middle and the back seats. He reviews the clipboard and both he and Marguerite sign off at the bottom of the attendance sheet. The center supervisor takes the sign-in sheet for program files. Achmed then conducts a final check of the bus before the next route, replacing the tokens in the middle and back seats.

Let's see what strategies you might have heard this time around. What strategies did the team use? Did you hear anything about setting up the environment or positioning staff? Scanning and counting? Listening? Anticipating? Engaging? Redirecting? I know you all know how busy a job it is to be on a transportation team, and so I hope you were paying attention to what Achmed and Marguerite were doing and then share that with all of us. And as soon as I see some results, we'll move forward here. Achmed and Marguerite count one last time before unloading the bus. They also count when the teachers use the sign-in sheet to receive the children. And the center director offers a third count as the children enter the program.

These are the kinds of duplicative, redundant systems that ensure children's safety that you heard Amanda Bryans refer to earlier. Achmed and Marguerite scan the bus after they've unloaded it. Achmed sets up the environment by removing the tokens and then replacing them before the next bus ride. And the sign-in sheet becomes proof of the route's count. I'm so glad to see so many of you responded so very positively to these elements in the survey. I really appreciate you staying engaged so far.

Moving – moving forward, I'm going to talk a little bit about Look Before You Lock. At the end of their daily runs, Marguerite and Achmed park the bus in the yard. They walk through the bus one last time from front to back, checking every seat. They collect and put the tokens away before leaving the yard. The Look Before You Lock symbol is posted on the doors to remind them to do this as well. A shorter part of the story, but did you hear any strategies being used? How about the environment? The staff? The scanning? Counting? Listening? Anticipating? Engaging? Redirecting? Achmed indeed set up the environment by removing the tokens after a final scan of the bus. Achmed and Marguerite set up the environment to remind them to conduct a final check using the Look Before You Lock symbol. Thank you.

At the very end of the webinar, we will tell you how you can contact us to let us know what strategies that you have used to help children stay safe. And now, the return trip. Please use the final poll to tell us how you would adjust some of these strategies for the trip home. What would be different on this trip? Would you be double checking your count? Would you be receiving family members' or authorized adults' initials on the sign-in sheet? Would bus monitors also initial the sign-in sheet? And is there something else that you would do? Let us know. Return trip home is, of course, as important as the trip to the program. And I see people responding to these items: double-checking, receiving, signing in, initialing the sign-in sheet, and a few of you have shared some other strategies as well. We'll be looking forward to seeing those as we move forward. So these are some of the ways that Achmed and Marguerite have – have kept children safe on buses.

And now, Nancy's going to – I'm going to return to Nancy to summarize some of what we've said already. Nancy?

Nancy: Thank you, Steve. Attention management and active supervision techniques are used throughout this webinar to help the transportation team focus on keeping children safe on the bus. Achmed used all six parts of active supervision: setting up the environment; positioning himself close to the children; regularly scanning and counting the children; listening to make sure they are safe; anticipating children's behavior using information from families and staff, as well as his own relationships with the children; and engaging and redirecting children when necessary.

The fact sheet that we mentioned before, "Child Supervision on Transportation," includes some of the ways transportation teams can work together to practice active supervision. You can read through it and find some ways that you can use active supervision on your buses. It is important to not only use active supervision strategies, but attention management strategies as well. You can get to know what kinds of issues distract you or may distract you and work with your team to limit these distractions, set priorities, and then stay focused.

And always remember to look before you lock. The Look Before You Lock campaign was developed to prevent adults from leaving children in vehicles unattended. As you know, and as Amanda discussed, there have been many stories about children being left in extremely hot cars, vans, trucks, and buses over the last few years. The Administration for Children and Families has joined with Safe Kids and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to get the word out about this problem. They offer strategies for adults who drive vehicles with young children to remember that a child is in the vehicle. Your program may use some of these techniques to make sure that all children have exited the bus at the end of each route. For example, in our story today, the program used tokens and the Look Before You Lock sticker at the front of the bus as a reminder to their staff. You can also share these tips with parents and other family members so that they too never leave a child alone in a car or in a truck.

The Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, the ECLKC, as you know, is the official website for the Office of Head Start. You will find all kinds of resources about transportation safety and transportation issues throughout this website, including requirements in the Head Start Act, the Head Start Program Performance Standards, and other regulations and information. You will also find the Transportation Pathfinder on this website. This resource links you to training resources and state information for transportation teams.

Child Care Aware and Ray Ray's Pledge are two other resources to support families and programs in making sure no children are left unattended in vehicles. Child Care Aware works with programs to develop policies that ensure parents and educators check to make sure that children are never left alone in vehicles. Finally, Ray Ray's Pledge works with programs to develop procedures for calling parents when children have not arrived at their center. These calls may remind parents that they have left their child in a car or a truck.

This ends today's presentation. Thank you so much for joining us. We hope that we have given you some strategies that you can use as you supervise children on buses. We encourage all of you to talk about this information with your staff, and especially with your transportation teams. And we would also love to hear from you about what strategies you have used effectively to keep children safe. As Lisa told you

at the beginning of this webinar, we will review the questions that you have submitted today and any additional ones that you respond to by sending us a question to our info line, nchinfo@aap.org, or by calling our toll-free number, 1-888-227-5125. And when this webinar is archived, we will try and also post FAQ to answer as many of the questions that you have sent us along the way.

Thank you very much for joining us for our webinar on transportation safety.