Siobhan Casey: Good afternoon. I'm Siobhan Casey with the Partnership Center. Welcome to Making Strides in Early Head Start- Child Care Partnerships. This webinar will be recorded, and all participants are muted. A copy of the webinar will be sent to all who have registered and attended, following the event. On your screen, you will see the Agenda for our time together. We will begin with Opening Remarks from Shannon Rudisill, the associate director deputy assistant secretary for Early Childhood Development. Shannon?

Shannon Rudisill: Hi, thanks so much Siobhan. We're really excited to have this second call and webinar in our series around the Early Head Start-Childcare Partnership, and I just want to bring you all up-to-date on some of our progress so far.

We have 275 grantees across the country, and the exciting thing for us is they have 1200 childcare center partners, and 600 family childcare home partners, which is a tremendous number of classrooms and children who might be affected by the partnerships even if they're not directly enrolled. We're serving, at this point, about 20,000 children, and as you all probably know from your long-standing tracking of this initiative and your involvement, we're trying to work here to strengthen all of our Early childhood education systems by using the strength of Early Head Start. Certainly these partners and these partnerships are a great laboratory for learning about how we can continue to do that for the long term. There are two things that I know about today's participants based on some previous conversations with them.

First of all, what you'll hear today is really the individualization of their approaches, and the way that they are thinking how to customize and tailor their approach to each of their partners. That's one thing that I think we're learning, is a hallmark of the successful grantees, is they're not even within their own grants using a one-size-fits-all model, and I think you'll hear about that today. Also our goal is to learn from these partnerships, as I said, and to learn at all levels, so I think what you'll hear from them is things that are real, real challenges and also real strategies that will help others of you who are doing this work. We had our prep call in the freezing cold blizzard the other day, and some of the stories that they were able to tell really warmed me up so I hope that they'll tell some of those today. Finally, I think that you'll hear from our two grantees today, some of the hallmarks of this initiative so far.

That is, that we're seeing a lot of these partnerships focused on specific vulnerable populations, so you'll be hearing something about work with teen parents, perhaps some work with refugee families. That is to me, the truest sense of Early Head Start and Head Start are all about, and it's been exemplified as we roll out these partnerships. You'll also hear about the efforts to actually build the supply of infant and toddler care of quality, much the way that Head Start builds our supply of pre-school care of quality. That's exemplified by these, as well as a more emerging strand around more work in family child care then we had previously done in Early Head Start. So those are some of the things to listen out for, as we turn it over to our conversation, and I'm going to turn it over now to Amy Thomas from our national Early Head Start- Childcare Partnership Center. She will be leading the conversation with Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency and United Way of New Haven, who are going to be our discussants today.

Thanks so much, Amy?

Amy Thomas: Thanks, Shannon. As Shannon mentioned, my name's Amy Thomas, I'm the Knowledge Management/Resource Development manager with the National Center on Early Head Start- Childcare

Partnership. I would like to welcome you all and thank you for joining us today. Joining me today are staff from two Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships. We have Eva Pignotti, Liz Salinas, and Jenny Gelbrich from the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency in Oregon, and then we have Karen Pascale and Jessica Sager, from the United Way of New Haven, Connecticut. They will be sharing innovative ways they are making strides in their partnership. Thank you for being with us today.

Speaker: Hi Amy. Thanks for having us.

Amy: We're just so looking forward to hearing from you. So let's get started by hearing about your work. Karen, I wanted to start with you, and I wanted to ask you if you could tell us about United Way in New Haven.

What's your experience with Early Head Start and Child Care Partnerships there?

Karen Pascale: Sure, Amy. First let me start by saying that United Way of Greater Haven is committed to ensuring that all children have access to high-quality care. In 2009, we applied for and were awarded an Early Head Start grant (audio cut out) funding opportunity, and All Our Kin was an original partner with our first grant. We were thrilled to stand with All Our Kin when the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant opportunity became available.

Amy: Wonderful. Eva, how does your experience with Mid-Willamette Valley look like with the Early Head Start and Child Care Partnerships, how does that differ?

Eva Pignotti: This is a new experience for our program, we were not doing any child care partnerships prior to receiving our grant funding on January 1st. We really had to build from the ground up and learn on our feet.

Okay, so I think it's interesting and delightful that we'll hear from two different programs, one who has previous experience, and one who is new to this partnership.

Amy: Liz, could you tell us a bit more about your partners at Mid-Willamette Valley and whether they're new to you? I know it's a new partnership but not necessarily new partners across the board.

Liz Salinas: Right, some of the family child care partnerships, people we knew from our Head Start program, they were daycare providers for some of the kids that were already being served by our pre-school programs.

We have two Teen Parent programs, each serving 16 children each. Then we have six family child care providers, serving 28 children.

Eva: Wonderful. This is Eva. We have a big partnership as well with the Child Care Resource and Referral Network, which actually is under our same Community Action umbrella, and without them we would have really struggled to find these partners and be able to contract with them so quickly.

Liz: Most definitely Karen, could you tell us a bit about your partners at United Way Greater New Haven, and these are new to you or not?

Karen: Sure, so our center-based partners are new to us through Early Head Start, but as a United Way agency, we have worked with some of our partners in other capacities. Our three center-based partners include Elizabeth Celotto, which is an accredited center with the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

It's very unique because it's located within a local high school. The Celotto exclusively serves teen parents enrolled in our public schools. They serve 24 children and families. Our other center-based partner is Morning Glory Infant Toddler Center. It's also accredited, and it's located in one of New Haven's most impoverished neighborhoods. The Morning Glory is our only for-profit center, and it serves 10 children and their families. Lastly, our center-based partner is the West Haven Child Development Center, which is also accredited. West Haven serves eight children and their families in a brand-new classroom. This particular partner is comprehensive in nature. It has a nurse and a social worker on site, but services for the low-income children and families have largely been out of reach due to the high cost of care. With this partnership, we were able to expand our service area and bring Early Head Start out to this community. I'd like to let Jessica from All Our Kin share about her organization.

Jessica Sager: Hi there, so I'm the Executive Director of All Our Kin. We are a staffed family child care network. We work with 400 family child care providers over four cities in Connecticut, specifically targeting those providers that serve our lowest-income families.

Obviously, Early Head Start is a perfect extension and expansion of our mission. We were lucky enough, as Karen mentioned, to partner with the United Way in 2010 to pilot Early Head Start with a few of our family child cares, and we're actually part of the Early Head Start for Family Child Care demonstration project. Now, through the Child Care Partnership grant, we're able to serve 30 children in nine licensed family child care homes.

Amy: So there's a lot of similarities and a lot of differences here. You both serve teen parents, and you're both working with center and family child care. It sounds like some really exciting new innovations, Karen, even though you've partnered in the past, it sounds like you've got some new exciting partners.

Karen: Yes, absolutely.

Amy: Eva and Liz, could you talk to us about how you recruited your partners? What some of your strongest selling points were at Mid-Willamette Valley?

Liz: Sure. Through our CCRNR, we held an open forum for providers who were interested during one of their network meetings, we were investigating the possibility of getting the grant. We met with them, got their interest, we sent home with them a self-assessment for them to fill out and send back to us. Then a panel of people from our CCRNR, our Early Head Start program, and our USDA food program, met, went through all the assessments, and then we individually went out with the CCRNR provider that they were familiar with, and met with them, talked with them. It was kind of like that no-clipboard thing, it was an open forum, conversation, getting to know them, them getting to know us, and then fielding any questions they had. At that point, we also gave them access to our contracts so they could look through it, ask any questions they might have, re-ask questions. It was more about being transparent and knowing we were going to take this walk together, that we were learning as they were

learning, and meeting those providers where they were as we met them, and got the process going for getting their contracts in.

Eva: This is Eva, we wanted to make sure that we were reflecting the intent of the Child Care Partnerships grant, by partnering with family child care homes, that weren't necessarily the five-star, QRIS-rated, super-successful centers in our community. We wanted to actually do something that would enhance the quality of child care in our community. We work with a variety of partners, one of whom actually signed with us not even having had her GED, and she's in the process of completing that this month. We brought her child care center forward through enhancements from a simple babysitting in the living room scenario to a really beautiful center. She converted her garage, and now she's pursuing her education, and it's enhanced her professionalism so much. That's one of our goals when we met with partners was to be able to bring some people up and elevate them. Then with our Teen Parent programs, those were easy partnerships for us to identify, we are already very involved in networking with both the school districts that operate these programs.

That was a given from the beginning. The only centers we wanted to use would be the ones serving teen parents.

Liz: To add on that, this is Liz, Bertha, who Eva's describing, if you look at her slide and just her quote, she's just been passionate from the get-go, she just needed the means to get it, and that's what we wanted to bring to the family child care providers was them able to enhance their environments, they already had the passion.

Amy: Thank you Eva and Liz, that's such a novel approach, really going in and giving people incentives and things to build with, who wouldn't necessarily have those available to them. It also sounds like you went in building relationships from the very beginning.

Eva: Absolutely. We did, and the CCRNR really had us on a short leash, because they've worked with these providers for many years and have regular relationships with them, and they know the culture so much better than we did. They actually wouldn't let us go visit the providers unless they went with them, because they wanted to bridge that relationship and introduce us and help us build trust, because we were entering into a completely different culture than the one we're familiar with.

And making sure that we're going in with no judgment.

Liz: They feel like we're coming from centers that have all the materials and all the stuff we need, so we have an expectation of an environment, but going not with that judgment of what their environment looks like.

Amy: Wow, and really helping you understand what family child care looks like.

Liz: Absolutely.

Eva: True.

Amy: Wonderful, and I think Jessica will share in a bit that that's her approach as well, All Our Kin is very protective of their family child care providers as well. I wanted to ask Jenny, Jenny is a child care

partner on the receiving end of the recruitment process. What was it like for you, and what were the selling points that you found attractive?

Jenny Gelbrich: I think the recruitment process was pretty scary for us, because we knew this was going to be a lot more work, and we were getting into something that we didn't really know what we were getting into. So we knew that it was going to be a big learning process and learning curve for us. Three things kept us moving forward when we wanted to stop and say, I give up, I don't want to do this anymore because it's too much work.

One was just for our center, we were covered by the school district, so we did not have to be licensed, but in our community, we really wanted this to be a licensed center, that could be looked at by the whole community as a top-notch, child care facility. We knew that that's kind of hard when you don't have a ton of money, and so we knew that that would be something we could move forward with in this partnership. The next piece was staff. We have the most amazing people working for us, that are passionate about our children and about the work that they do. Not a lot of them have their education, and we knew that we were going to be able to bolster that through the partnership. Currently we have a ton of people working on their CDA, so we knew that that would be something that we can't pass up. The third part, and most important part, are our moms and our babies.

Sorry, I just got emotional. We joke that with the diapers, that got us hook, link, and sinker, but really it's those kind of things that sometimes we don't think about how important it is for our teen moms. I've heard moms say before, I can't afford to bring more than three diapers, that's what I use during the day. It was just great being able to bring this to our moms, and Eva came, and our moms were super excited about this opportunity. The other piece about our moms besides the diapers and the support, is that our arms can only reach so far into these moms' lives inside the school day and the school year.

With the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership was going to be able to do, is make our arms stretch farther, farther into the day, farther into the year, and our moms are going to have, they have a lot of support, but we're still deficit in that support, so I knew that going forward with this partnership was going to benefit our moms in not just their school lives, but also in their home lives. There was a lot of times along the way that I really wanted to say, okay we're done. I will be honest, there were times when we met with our partners and we said, okay, we can't do that. They would say, okay, well, let us go back and check in on that, and they would check with the office of Head Start, and they'd come back and they'd be like, it's okay, we can work with you, and I'd be like, "Shooott!" I was thinking that maybe we'd be done with this, but I can't tell you, I love looking back at that and laughing, because I'm so glad that we didn't stop. I'm so glad we pushed forward for the sake of our center, for the sake of our staff, and for the sake of our moms.

Amy: Thank you, Jenny. I know when we talked the other day, when you talk about having your arms reach further, I think your arms reach further across your center as well, because although you have two classrooms, the enhancements and things that you received as part of this.

Could you tell us about how that touched the whole center?

Jenny: Yes. All of our teen moms go to high school together, we couldn't just say, okay, here we go, we have these two amazing rooms, here's where we're going to put the rest of the stuff. I will say, before we entered this partnership, we were very proud of what we were doing, but our goal's to always

move forward and always to provide more. Some of the things that stretch out across our whole center, curriculum, training for our staff. If there's going to be a training that our Early Head Start supported classrooms are going to get, our whole staff is going to get it. If we have curriculum, that's not just going to be kept in a cabinet for Early Head Start supported staff. It's going to be for everybody. In some of the places where Early Head Start could provide materials and maybe furniture for the classrooms, we were able to then bolster the other classrooms and make our money go further for the other classrooms. We share an outside, it's a big, beautiful outside area.

Tom from Mid-Willamette Valley Early Head Start is just like our hero. He came out right away and worked with our grounds people, and they really worked together to look at our outside area, and figure out how can we make it safer, how can we make it more fun. I know they put a lot of time and money in that, and we, everybody, even our moms, get to go out there, and receive the benefits of that. It's something that I'll share a little bit more about, but there's some things that are happening with the girl's conferences for instance, have been amazing. I'll share more about that later. The rest of our staff are going, we want to do that, can we do conferences. They've seen how amazing it has been and want to do that too, so as we continue on in this partnership, and seeing what's going to come up with our Early Head Start classroom, we're going to incorporate that as best we can into our center. All of our staff work really closely together. It's really not separate. This is a full center, and our goal is to serve each mom the best we can.

Amy: Thank you so much, Jenny. So heart-warming to hear your story. Karen, does United Way of Greater New Haven have a different approach?

Karen: So we have some similarities in our approach. We're pretty fortunate in New Haven, to have a very active and engaged Early Childhood Council. That's comprised of community members who share a desire to improve the lives of young children. Information regarding the grant opportunity was shared with the council, and then as a follow-up United Way held a forum for interested agencies and individuals to attend to learn more about the grant opportunity. As you can imagine, there were several follow-up meetings that took place after that. As Eva and Liz mentioned, there was a real emphasis on this being a team approach. For example, as the grantees, we were not going to go into centers or family child care provider homes, and tell you what you needed to change. We were going to work together to enhance or improve the existing space in practice. One incentive that I would highlight for both centers and family child care providers is the addition of a social service worker. What we call a family advocate. This position allows for the provision of real-life support for families and setting some realistic goals for them.

One example is the family advocate at All Our Kin is working with a family who are recent refugees, in submitting the necessary paperwork to reinstate state benefits. This would be really difficult for the family child care provider to do on his or her own, coupled with all the work that you do on a daily basis. There are definitely additional incentives for the family child care providers, and I'll let Jessica highlight some of those.

Jessica: Thanks, Karen. First of all, let me say this. So much of what our friends at Mid-Willamette shared resonates with us, starting with the emphasis on relationships and the way that you talked about the role your CCRNR played. We also are very protective of our family child care providers. We're very lucky in that we have an existing base of trust and respect with our family child care community. We've done a lot of work with that community to build capacity. We have a wide array of talented family child care providers, with whom we can partner in implementing this work.

Similar to what Mid-Willamette has done, we have really focused often on those newer providers for a couple of reasons when recruiting for Early Head Start. One is that it is truly extraordinary, all our family child care providers learn and grow, but the speed with which providers in Early Head Start improve is truly remarkable, so it's very exciting to get someone early and give them these amazing resources. The other reason honestly, is that sometimes our more established providers have their own way of doing things. It's a wonderful way. It's doesn't always map onto the Early Head Start way, whereas our newer providers are more open to this particular structure and system, and it works very well for them. Now, in terms of the incentives that we use, you'll see them up there on your screen but I want to talk about some of them. The first is training opportunities. I cannot stress enough how eager family child care providers are for opportunities to grow and learn and get better at what they do.

So to have the enormous training resources of Early Head Start available to them, the information about observation, individualization, assessment, curriculum planning, is a huge attraction for many of our providers. The other quality enhancement resources that we're able to offer, so that's scholarships for college courses for the CDA, but it's also materials for their children and their programs that they might otherwise not be able to afford. The third that hasn't been touched on yet, is professional recognition. Far too often, we overlook our family child care providers, we don't treat them as professionals. That happens on the community level, sometimes the family level. Early Head Start is a wonderful way for our providers to actually demonstrate the high levels of quality that they're able to meet, the very complex standards that they can actually master in their programs, and it's a wonderful way for them to convey that to their communities. That's something many of our providers have been very excited about.

Finally and most profoundly important, is something that everyone here has spoken about already, which is, our providers are so dedicated to families. They go above and beyond for the families and the children that they're serving, but they can't do all of it. Being able to offer a nurse consultant for a child who has a special and challenging health need. A mental health consultant for a family who is struggling with different kinds of issues. A family advocate who can help a refugee family, a family facing homelessness, a family who has a parent who's been incarcerated, navigate those struggles. That's something that our providers are really eager for on their own behalf, and on the behalf of the families and children that they serve. For all those reasons, many of our providers find Early Head Start very attractive. At the same time, it's hard to meet Early Head Start standards, and I think one thing we have learned much more about after our first go-round, is how to be really clear with providers, up-front, about the expectations, about the very high-levels of quality and compliance that will be expected of them. About our willingness to support them, but also really asking them to reflect on whether this is a challenge that they want to meet, asking them to be very thoughtful about it. We're lucky in that we have a large network, so we're not turning people away.

We're saying, you can participate in our network generally, or you can engage in Early Head Start. Having that conversation ahead of time makes everything go much more smoothly once the program begins.

Amy: Thank you so much Karen and Jessica. In family child care is so dear to my heart, so it's so wonderful to hear about all the support that your network offers them, Jessica.

Jessica: Thank you.

Amy: Now let's really dig deeper into partnership agreements, about developing and maintaining them, and hear about all your varying perspectives. Jenny, I'd like to begin with you first. As a child care partner, could you tell us a bit about your experience in developing a partnership agreement with Mid-Willamette Valley?

Jenny: Yes, I think Eva has talked about it before, but we probably went back about 15 different times and sat down and went through the contract, back and forth. I think the most important piece for us was the relationship. I felt super supported by all of our folks that were on the other side of the table.

There was flexibility, there would be lots of things that because we're a high school, that we can or cannot do. I felt like there was a great deal of trying to understand where we were coming from. We will say a thousand times, it is not a one-size-fits-all model, and we found that out really quickly when we started in with our agreement. I remember sitting across the table from Liz, and I really felt like we were a team, trying to make this happen. A lot of hard work was put into it, but I would say for anybody out there if you're going through this now, it is so important to have good relationships with the people that are on the other side of the table. We went to conference together. They feel like family to me. I know there's never been one time, that I haven't had a struggle, or something's happening, or we can't make something happen, and I've gone to our partner and it has been received really well and we've all worked really hard to make it work. I would say the biggest thing that we got out of that is just how important building those relationships are.

Amy: Thank you, Jenny. Is there anything that you would recommend for changing when the agreement is renewed for the next year?

Jenny: We will take some more spots. (Laughter) Not right at this point. I feel like we really took a ton of time to make it work, maybe our partners feel differently, but right now, I think things are going pretty well.

Amy: Thank you. Liz and Eva, I know you started first with the center, with Jenny's center, how did you develop partnership agreements with your other child care partners?

Eva: Well, actually, Salem-Keizer Teen Parent helped us so much by being the first. We worked through so many details, and figured out a lot of ways to work together that we could perpetuate in our other partnership agreements. It took us a couple months to really nail it down, and it's a really solid plan. So we used that as our foundation, but we individualized with every partner, because like Jenny said, it's not a cookie-cutter. We have different pay rates, different agreements about staffing, we had to work individually with every partner and meet them where they were at and provide what it was that they needed most, and also incorporate their values into the agreement.

Amy: Thank you. What types of changes or revisions do you think that you might make when you renew your agreement?

[Multiple speakers]

Liz: I was just going to say, with our family child care providers, looking at some of the professional development. How are we going to fit their trainings in, and how that fits more into what their contract says that they're responsible for, and also, holiday policies. They all want to take their holidays at

different times, and their vacations, and so just how that looks, and making each a little bit more individualized.

Eva: This is Eva, this has been a year of learn-on-the-fly for us, so we didn't have a plan for what to do when providers wanted to take time off. We gave them a minimum number of days of service, and we just figured it would work out. Well then, a provider says, I want to take all my optional days at once to take a trip, and we didn't know what to do, because we wanted to provide a sub to take care of the kids, but family child care homes, having a sub in your home is not such an attractive proposition. We needed to figure out what to do. Do we pay the provider even though they're not working? Do we provide alternate care for the kids? So we want to actually really hammer that down in the next iteration of our partnership agreements when we renew.

[Multiple people talking]

Jenny: Amy, can I say one -- this is Jenny, one thing that we have looked into changing is what we provide in the summer because we go by the school district calendar, so our Early Head Start partners asked us to do a survey. They're really trying to tailor their summer programs to what our girls want and need. Another huge part about this whole partnership for us, is that our moms feel like they have a say. They do have a say, we're tailoring our summer programs to what they want and need from us. Wonderful, so it was really all about that individualization and what people really need, and meeting them where they are.

Eva: This is Eva, I just want to say something about working with the teen parents, if I can. These are young women who are in high school. I feel like in all aspects of their lives, they're treated as less than an adult in a lot of ways. When we entered in to recruit them, for example, every girl when she filled out the application where it said Parent, they put down their own parents' names and not their names, because they don't feel like they're the parent. They feel like they're the child. That was the big clue to me about what was going to be different working with these moms. Empowering them to be the decision-maker for their child, being on the policy council, making decisions about what they want to do for the summer months with their kids. It is really important for them to have that input and feel valued as adults.

Amy: Eva, that is just so powerful. Karen and Jessica, I'm going to ask you with the United Way programs, your experience in developing a partnership agreement was a bit different since you partnered together before. How is your partnership agreement different now from about five years ago?

Karen: Sure, so we were able to use our original Early Head Start contract for the partnership agreement as a base, but it's certainly evolved since 2010.

One example to think of, is my role, the role of the Early Head Start Director. It's moved from more of a compliance role, to include more of a training, technical assistance, and a support role. We wouldn't really be able to do that without the help of All Our Kin, and that strong relationship that we have, that we could share information back and forth on what was working and what wasn't working. This partnership agreement is a little different as well because United Way will take the lead on some of the comprehensive services. For example, we will hold the contract for a mental health consultant, and for a disabilities consultant. The consultants will work with our partners and the children and families to

make sure that we're meeting the Head Start Performance Standards. This was really done in an effort to then provide some of the services being implemented. All

Our Kin contracts directly with the family child care providers, and Jessica can share more on that front in just a bit.

[Multiple speakers]

Jessica: Would you like me to talk about that now, or do you want me to hold off?

Amy: Yes, please.

Jessica: I think when we first started in 2010, we did what a lot of people do, which is we reached out to programs that were already working with family child care providers. One wonderful program was kind enough to share their contract with us. So we began with someone else's contract, and we have modified it over time. We go through a process of dialogue with our family child care providers, pretty much every year, we take a look at the contract and we say, what's working, what's not, what could be clearer. We reflect together on how to make the document more accurate in its description of what we do together, and sometimes to change those expectations. For example, maybe our payment schedule isn't working for the providers, how do we restructure that to best support their ability to serve children in their programs. I think the contract serves a few key functions for us that are worth calling out. One is, it is a great way to clarify expectations.

As we can talk about later, the expectations for Early Head Start are so different from the expectations for state licensure. They are so much higher, and the contract is a great place to call out some of the most important differences, such as staff/child ratio. We create a really good dialogue where, in reviewing the contract, you can talk about the differences, and make sure that both partners are on the same page. I also think it's a great place to talk about communication, how are we going to make sure that you're letting us know if children are absent or if a family is having certain challenges. As our friends at Mid-Willamette mentioned, expectations around professional development, how that will be structured in such a way that family childcare providers can participate fully without compromising their ability to serve children and families, and make a decent income.

Finally, being mindful, as has been mentioned already, that while a contract needs to work for everyone, and be the same for everyone, we want to build in the maximum amount of flexibility that we can within the performance standards for the unique characteristics of every family child care program. We do that through dialogue, we do that through re-visiting the agreement. We have something now, works really well for us, but that for another program, would probably also need to go through that process of modification, dialogue, and individualization.

Amy: Thank you Jessica, and I love hearing about how your providers are a part of that feedback, giving feedback on what they think what's working and what's not working. Karen, are there any changes you think you would need to make in renewing your agreements at the United Way?

Karen: Yeah, I think so. We do expect that the agreements will continue to evolve. We only began serving children and families in September, but so far, we do know that we'll be making some amendments centered on fiscal reporting. For example, we realized that we'll need more information on the families' abilities to access that CCCPG funding, including the dates of the subsidy certificates,

and any status changes on access to the subsidy dollars as they occur. It's really a trial and error. We're seeing what works and what we can improve for the next time around.

Amy: Thank you. Eva and Liz, I'm going to move on building relationships. Thinking about how do you build relationships with your child care partners at Mid-Willamette Valley, while supporting them to meet the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

Liz: I think where they're at, so each individual provider meets with my specialist and they just start from wherever they're at, and we go from there. Without that piece, it wouldn't work. We have to find and meet where every individual provider wants to go with their education, with their centers, with their child care in general.

Eva, do you want to add something to that?

Eva: Well, we have two really amazing child development specialists that are paid staff for our programs, and these ladies go into the child care homes and the centers on a regular basis. They're required to go twice a month, they go a heck of a lot more often than that. They have just helped each provider in the way that they need to get established, whether that means placing orders for them or being there when the truck arrives and unloading the things, and helping set up, whether that means going out to measure the playground and make decisions about what modifications they want to make there, introducing them to the curriculum, introducing them to observation. We're able to take a slow pace because we have this 18 month start-up window, so that they can build stair-step fashion with each provider and introduce a new thing, help them gain competence with that, and then introduce the next thing. I think that is really confidence-building for the providers.

For us, if we didn't have an 18 month start-up window, we would already have folded this program, because it is so essential to allow people that time to get there and to meet Performance Standards. We didn't even have to meet goal at the beginning of the program, and we weren't. We were funded in January, we started serving kids in April at Salem-Keizer, and slowly after that, with family child care. If we didn't have that 18 month window, this would have been a failure. I just want to say, I hope that's really recognized, because if we have to add a new provider, if we get expansion and we're looking for additional providers, or someone doesn't want to do it anymore, we need to replace them, they need that 18 month period of time also, to get to that point of meeting standards. That's probably the most unique and important thing about this grant.

Liz: Another thing I want to say too is, we partnered a lot with our CCRNR to provide a lot of the training and work alongside with our specialists. So providers who are in our network and having to go to training anyways, weren't feeling like we were going, oh gosh, here's another training I have to go to. We were really working hard to make sure those trainings that they were getting through CCRNR met the requirements that they were needing for Early Head Start, as well.

Eva: That's true, we tried to fold in with the Network, and enhance what they were already doing with some additional Early Head Start pieces, and in fact, that allows for providers who weren't in our contract to also have those educational experiences and enhance their child care centers as well.

Amy: Thanks so much, Eva and Liz. Jenny, I'm wondering about you as a child care partner, with the Mid-Willamette Valley, how has this support been received?

Jenny: I would just echo the child development specialists and our family educators were huge in this. Estella, who's our child development specialist, Eva's right, we see her a lot, a ton. I feel like they believe that their job is to help make that implementation easier for us. Every step of the way, I feel like our hand has been held. So that has made it so much easier to meet some of those standards. They make us color-coded timelines and notebooks that have all the paperwork that we would need to have in the classroom, and help our staff to find ways to find room on the wall for everything that needs to be put on the walls.

All the different ways we need to be doing certain things in the classroom, I feel like they come into our center, see where we are, look at the space that we have, look at the people that we have doing it, and tailor their training to what we need, and really, the time that we have to do it. I will say that our child development specialist must put in a ton of hours doing things for us, so that she can just hand it to us, instead of us having to re-invent something. There's been times when she'll say, "This is how we do it in our centers, you can change this, here's some things that need to be on it, but make it fit you." All along the way, I feel like this is super important for anybody out there that's going to be a partner, is that never have we felt like, we are less than, or like, we know what we're doing, and we're going to tell you how you should be doing it. They're doing that without sacrificing the standards that we need to meet. There would have been lots of times where we would have stopped doing this because it would have just been too hard in those areas, but they make it really easy for us to do our part. Conferences just came up, and our staff was very nervous.

Estella came and met with them for a couple hours, and then came back and practiced with them. That made it so that I didn't have to do those things, and I would do those and support them in any way I can, but I don't have a lot of time to do that, and so they're making it very easy for us to do what we can. We do our part, they do their part. The things that were big and scary to us and our staff don't seem that big and scary anymore, because we're really been walked through with our partner.

Liz: This is Liz, and to add onto what Jenny said, when the specialists go in, is not having that clipboard effect. Go in, arms open, ready to get dirty like they are, like Eva pointed out, unloading the boxes, being that one-on-one with them at every level.

Amy: Thanks so much. Karen and Jessica, is there anything you'd like to add to this?

Jessica: Yeah, so I just want to say a few words about family child care specifically. I think everything that has just been said is right on, I would just say, in family child care it's even more so. The first thing that I would stress is, respect. Recognizing that with a family child care, you're actually in most cases, walking into someone's home.

So to take the time to listen, to look, to build that relationship, and to recognize the difficulty and the importance of the work this person is doing, probably by herself, often for many many hours a day without a lot of recognition and support, so to give that honor and respect to her from the beginning. The second, which goes along with that, is to take a strength-based approach. It can be easy to look into a program and say, here's what should be different. It's a lot harder to walk in and say, here's what you're doing that's great, and here's how we can build on it, and build on your commitment and your mission. That's what we really try to do, and what I think has made us successful. The next point is around cultural sensitivity. Family child care providers come from many different backgrounds, to honor and respect those backgrounds and the unique experience that each of them brings to the work, and to honor them by bringing excellence yourself, so we heard some great examples of that just now,

in how Mid-Willamette works. We do not ask our providers to meet standards that we don't hold ourselves accountable for as well, so to model in everything we do, the principles of excellence, of accountability, really sending in people who know so much about both child development and how to work with adults, and never sending anyone into a program who doesn't bring both those skills with them when they walk in the door. The last piece I would just say, has come up, but I want to call it out really explicitly. We know that the way teachers get better is through coaching and mentoring.

So if we can go in with that coaching and mentoring approach, rather than a compliance mindset, can work on focusing our efforts on growing quality over time in a deep and internalized way. So it's not just about having our providers meet a number of items on a checklist, that maybe won't be when we're not there to watch. But a process and partnership and buy-in, where providers take full ownership for the quality of what they do, and we know that that quality will continue whether we're there or not.

Amy: Thank you so much, Jessica, that's such words of wisdom. I know that our time is really evaporating in front of us, as we were planning to end at 4:00. I was wondering if we might want to share any pearls of wisdom, and I'm going to turn it over in closing to Eva and Liz, on behalf of Mid-Willamette Valley, is there any words of wisdom you would like to share?

Eva: Yeah, sure, this is Eva. I think we've really touched on most of this already, the important pieces are building the relationship first, and working from a point of trust. As Karen was just saying, respect for the providers, utilizing our partnerships and the strengths that we have in our agency to enhance services in the community, rather than trying to hammer in our own version of child care and make it fit. I think those are really important pieces. Do you have anything Liz, you want to add?

Liz: I was going to say, I think we've said several times, meeting the providers where they're at, go in with an open mind, and being willing to support the provider all the way through, knowing again, like was said, respecting that these are their homes, this is their lives, and they're very proud of what they do.

Eva: And know when you can be flexible, and be flexible. And know when you can't be flexible, and that's where you have to insist on certain things. You don't have to come in and say, this is the form you need to use to record children's attendance. If they're recording children's attendance in a way that works, then they can continue to do it that way. We need to conform where we can to what they're already doing as well.

Liz: Also being willing to say, I don't have the answer for that. Not going in like we have all the answers, but being willing to say, let me check on that, let me find out, let's work on this together.

Eva: Yeah, I think all of our providers are very clear on the fact that we're learning and figuring things out as we go, that this is a program in its infancy, and it's going to continue to change as we encounter new situations.

Liz: Building that trust for them to come to you when they have issues is a big piece too. If they can't let us know what's frustrating them, we can't help them work through it, so building that relationship to have that open communication.

Amy: Thank you. Karen and Jessica, do you have any words of wisdom, pearls to share, from the Greater Valley, sorry, from Greater New Haven.

Karen: Sure, in addition to what has already been said, I would also encourage grantee partners to develop collaborations with local and state agencies that can support this great work that we're doing. We have great relationships with our local child welfare agency and our WIC agency, as well as community organizations like the Diaper Bank, who provides free diapers for the children enrolled in our programs. I would also encourage (audio breaks up) to reach out to your regional office staff for guidance and if you have questions. Regional staff have been so so supportive in this process, and have really shown us through that support that they truly want us to succeed. Again, I think it goes to the transparency piece, and Jessica has one more thing to add.

Jessica: Yeah, so I just quickly want to put in a plug, I'm guessing that a lot of the agencies on this call are partnering with family child care programs already. If you're not, I really want to encourage you to make the effort to do so, for two really important reasons. One is we have seen that by bringing Early Head Start into family child care programs, we have these incredible spill-over effects, so it's transformative for the children in those programs, but it's also transformative for the non-Early Head Start children.

We're able to have this enormous impact because in bringing in Early Head Start, we transform the quality for all of the children enrolled in that program. The other thing I want to say is that I think through using a family child care program, we're able to reach sometimes, very hard to reach families, that otherwise might not have access to Early Head Start because of barriers of transportation, because of scheduling, because they need flexible hours, or just because they don't know about those center-based programs. Family child care is a great option for many of our lowest-income working families, and it's a great way to find families in neighborhoods and connect them to the amazing system of support that is Early Head Start.

Amy: I would like to take this time to thank our wonderful presenters today, for sharing their innovations, and making strides in their Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership. Thanks so much to Karen, Jessica, Jenny, Eva, and Liz, for your time, as well as all you do. I hope those of you who joined us today have learned some new strategies to try in your work, and will share your innovative ideas with us too. Shannon, I'd like to turn it over to you for your closing remarks and reflections.

Shannon: Thanks Amy, let me add my thanks to yours, for the panelists, and I want to say, we've gotten some questions in the chat box.

Some of them are pretty specific about compensation, sharing eligibility standards, and even some best practices kinds of things, like how do folks deal with the medical leave needs of family child care providers. So what that's making me wonder is whether or not we can set up opportunities, almost like office hours, where people who have these kinds of very specific questions can talk to people who might already have worked through them or be more experienced with them. We have these questions that you guys have submitted so we'll talk about we can get more information out about these topics. I have a few reflections, having listened. I think that what you've heard here exemplifies several things that we know are happening with these partnerships. First of all, I think that Jessica was referring to this just a minute ago, the benefits that accrue to many more children than just the enrolled children. During this call we've heard about new curricula being opened, we've heard about environment improvements, that improve the outdoor environment, the common space environment,

not just of the kids who are in Early Head Start classrooms, but other kids in the centers. We heard about family advocates being available in centers, which not only provided direct help to the Early Head Start child care participants, but also raised the capacity of child care provider in general to understand how to support families by referral.

So those are things that we were really hoping would happen with these partnerships, and we definitely see it. The other thing that really struck me is this idea that motivated us, which is: Early Head Start is currently only reaching 5 percent of all the infants and toddlers in poverty, but a very large number of the 95 percent of infants and toddlers are already are in some kind of care. We can bring some of what's great about Early Head Start directly to those kids where they are. Whether you are talking about the partners that were recruited for this, I think about Ms. Bertha, who it said, was already in the field for 15 years, she's a long-term worker in our field. When we build her capacity, it really builds capacity for everybody that's going to be served by her now, and into the future. The last thing that didn't get mentioned today but got mentioned on our prep call that really spoke to me, was one of our panelists said that the partnership had brought a sense to their families that they were entering into a system of care, that it wasn't going to just stop, it wasn't just an arrangement that works for right now, for this year, for this job. Because Early Head Start really is a continuous three-year program, and there would be a glide path into Head Start, and that once they had enrolled in this, they now felt like they were going to be supported until their kids entered kindergarten. We talk a lot here at ACF about a continuum for birth-to-five, for families and for children, that really to me, was a prime example and a great illustration of how Early Head Start has that idea of continuity.

As a mom myself, I didn't really have that, but just that sense of relief, if I had been able to enroll in something when my child was an infant, and knowing that system of care was going to carry me through to kindergarten, is a huge stress-reliever, and that's what our panelist mentioned on the prep call. Those are just a few things that stood out to me, I know everybody will have their own insights. I would just mention a couple of things for your consideration. First, I want to let everyone know that, I mentioned our commitment to learning. The evaluation questionnaires for our Early Head Start- Child Care Partnership evaluations have gone out electronically. They should be hitting people's in-boxes. This study is going to be able to send a questionnaire to every single Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grantee, which is quite unprecedented, a universal sample of the grantees. Then it will be a representative-ish sample of the partners, so not every single partner will receive a questionnaire, but every single grantee will, and then quite a few partners.

So if you are on the line and you have received it, I implore you to fill it out. We will share results with you along the way, we're all learning together, and it will help us really understand how we (audio cut out) Then I would just say as I mentioned at the beginning, we're going to be doing future webinars, and a couple of upcoming ones will include things around quality improvement, professional development, meeting ratios and group sizes, and meeting standards, all of which has been a little complex in the partnership context, so that's a preview of things to come. I know we're right at the end but I want to turn it over to Rae Anderson, our Project Director at our Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Project National Center, to say a little bit about how you can connect with them.

Rae?

Rae Anderson: All right, thank you very much Shannon. I am mindful of your time, so I'm not going to go through the slides, I'm just going to say to you that this conversation does not end here, and I invite you to go to the website. You can find our resources on the Child Care Technical Assistance Network,

or the Early Learning Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. I hope you're familiar with both of those websites. We have a newsletter that's coming out soon, which will highlight even more partnerships, and it's chock-full of information, and you can learn more about that, we have a Partnerships phone line, question and answer system that's available, so as Shannon mentioned, there's many more webinars to come.

The next webinar featuring partnerships and grantees will be in April, so we look forward to having you on that call. I have written down all of the questions, we have a transcript of the questions, and we will be talking about how we will respond to those questions. Thank you all for signing on today and participating in the call.

[End video]