

Lillian Sugarman: So maybe the chairs over there have tacks on them, Victoria, because I don't see anybody sitting over there. That's strange. But I'm very happy to see everybody sitting here and here and upstairs. High up there. Yes. People are very, very interesting when they come and find a chair. Okay. Did everybody have a good time yesterday and last night? [Applause] Good. Good. Did everybody write in any evaluation, fill out your evaluation? I forgot to tell you that we read those evaluations and we actually take those evaluations and give feedback to the presenters so that what you say on those is very, very important. And it helps for continuous improvement for presenters, and it also helps continuous improvement for those of us who plan the Birth to Three Institute and take the time to do it and know that your opinion is very important and very much valued. I'm just going to give you a few housekeeping notes. I mentioned the certificate of attendance yesterday. They will be at the continuing education counter. Those who are getting continuing education credits probably know where the counter is. But it's right out sort of to the right of the registration and Linda Lateman is sitting there and she'll be happy to give you the certificate. Folks who are staying at other hotels, you may bring your luggage with you tomorrow on the bus. And there will be a station where you can leave your luggage during the sessions tomorrow. Today, the CDs I mentioned yesterday, with all the handouts, are going to be distributed with your lunchbox. To get a lunchbox and a CD you need to use your yellow ticket that you should have for lunch. And there is a lost and found at the information, our information booth. If you've lost sweaters and there was I thought a calculator or something, and various and sundry items, not everything gets to the lost and found. I'm looking for a Blackberry. A Blackberry. Anybody has it, take it to the information booth, please. And finally, before I turn the program over to Angie Godfrey, who is going to introduce our parent panel, I want to remind everybody about the movie Babies tonight. It's a free movie. Starting at 7 30 in this room. It lasts 90 minutes. And I think it will appeal to most people. So if you haven't seen it or want to see it again, come, tonight, Angie. I want to tell you you didn't get to meet one of the most wonderful folks at the Office of Head Start. You met a lot of wonderful folks yesterday but Angie Godfrey, the Infant and Toddler Specialist at the Office of Head Start is one of the wonderful folks there and she's our Federal Project Officer and she's here this morning to greet you and to introduce our parent panel. Please give her a big warm welcome. [Applause] Angie Godfrey Good morning, everyone. It's wonderful to see all of you. And I'm so, so glad you're here. I had a wonderful day yesterday, and I hope that each of you did, too. One of my favorite things about head start and Early Head Start is that we work with babies and their families. That nothing is finer about the work we do than the fact that it's in the context of the whole family, of who the babies are and who the toddlers are that we work with, and most importantly, who their families are and what gifts they bring to us, because we know in Early Head Start that our work with babies can only be sustained and can only continue if that work includes, involves, engages families every step of the way. And some of the most talented staff that I've met across the country are staff that truly listen, understand, engage and grow with families. When I was a director, every new family was so exciting for me. I knew it was going to be a new adventure. I knew there were going to be new challenges. And I knew that together we were going to work on behalf of their child. Each child who was in the program. And it was always wonderful to learn from families in the way that you're going to learn today from the parents who are up here. And one of the focuses -- I talked to Amanda who has done this for years and has -- she's just the best person that I know for working with families. And she sent me a few little notes. And one of the things that I was so glad this session was going to talk about was what it's like to work with at risk families. All of you know that you work with the most vulnerable families in the communities that you work in, that you live in. And it's not always easy work. But we do know from the research, as Amanda reminded me yesterday, that the more successfully families are engaged in the Early Head Start program, the greater the outcomes and the impacts for both the child and the family. One of the things that I believe it was Helen Riggs talked about yesterday was that there are often greater impacts in the research for home-based programs. And for those of you that work with home-based programs, you know the kind of trust, the kind of intimacy, the kind of welcoming that both you and the family have to engage in, have to build with, in order to come into their home every week and really support how they parent their babies. It's just a remarkable privilege to be in a family's house and to be working with them around their baby in that environment. So we've learned a lot from the research about the kind of work we need to do and the kind of work we need to improve upon in working with families. And I think these folks today are going to help us understand. I'm here today for Kiersten Bligle [phonetic] who could not be here. She's my colleague and she's in the Family and Community Partnership. She's the specialist. And Kiersten is the project officer over a center that you heard about yesterday the national parent and family engagement center. We are so excited about that, I cannot tell you. And there is so much thought and planning that has gone into it. And I know she's going to be sad because she can't hear the three of you. One of the things Kiersten has done the last two years has been amazing for all of us at the Office of Head Start is bring, go to families and bring families. It's been a conversation between the Office of Head Start and

head start and Early Head Start families. And that is the foundation of the philosophy and framework of this national center. So I think there's a focus that may have always been there in terms of understanding our role working with families. But I think it's coming to life in a way that it hasn't come to life in the past. And we're all very excited about it. And you'll be hearing more about it as the centers get up and running and begin working. But I am going to sit down now because I want you to hear the stories we've heard about why your work is so important and why and how it is that we work with engaged families and listen and learn from families, even those that are facing the most incredible challenges, because we know that babies will have better and more wonderful lives when their parents have better and more wonderful lives. So thank you and you're in for a real treat. Amanda, I'll turn it over to you. Amanda Perez Thank you so much, Angie. It's such a pleasure always to be here and of course we have an extraordinary panel for you all today. We always do. I'm just going to give their names here for a second. My PowerPoint. I don't have PowerPoint, which is totally cool. There it is. So here are our families. I just want to introduce them so you can put names to faces. This is Sara Villavicencio. This is Jayson Farris. And Yvonne Andersen and again, yes. [Applause] And again, they're just extraordinary. We're going to have a chance to hear a lot more from them and about them in a minute but I do want to talk a little bit about how we got to this particular panel today. I think it's a really important piece. So in our history together, and many of us have a long history together, right? We've been doing this for several years. For those of us who are new, welcome to the history. Welcome. This is a fabulous place to be and an exciting time to be here. But in our history together, we've talked a lot about the longitudinal research that's come out of Early Head Start. They followed babies beginning in 1985 and they kept following them over time and we've learned quite a lot about services to families within Early Head Start as a result of that particular work. So I know some of you were at the research plenary yesterday and you got to hear that we saw some of those impacts still at grade five. So it's really exciting to see how that worked with the smallest children and their families make such a tremendous difference to families over time. So lovely to see. And as we've heard about that research, and Angie alluded to this a little bit, as we've heard about it, we've also talked about various levels of risk for families. Right? So you all in programs, and Angie said this as well, are serving families who are the most vulnerable in your communities, and you have a lot of variation in how you decide who those families are, how you determine who those families are, who it is that you're going to serve in your families, who is going to be, given priority in your enrollment. So when they were doing the research, they were looking at some different kind of research. It's a national study. So they really wanted to look across the nation at some demographic issues that do seem to define risk in the demographics. So here's the look of risk factors that they looked at. There it is. So if families were teen parents, we knew that was a risk. If there was a single parent coming in, we knew that was a risk. If those families were on welfare or using TANF also a risk. No high school diploma or GED we knew that was a risk, a risk in the literature as well. Not working or in school or in job training, that was also defined as a risk. Now, one of the really exciting things is the families in Early Head Start, we know from the research that the families in Early Head Start have three of those three risk factors Early Head Start does an amazing job. We see huge success rates with those families, great outcomes. What's interesting if families have four or five of those risk factors we don't see the kinds of outcomes that we'd really like to see with families. But here is the exciting part. Here's the exciting thing. Are you ready, Jayson? Here's the exciting thing. We know -- and Kiersten would be so happy to hear you all know this, if you engage those families in meaningful ways, the outcomes for those families is much better. The outcomes for the children and families is better depending on how those families are engaged. Wow. Wow. Right? So that's something that you all can do and can go back and learn a little bit about, right? So here's what we have here today. We have families who came in at the highest risk. These are families who showed four or five of those demographic risk factors as they came into the program and some other risk factors that we imagine some of you are seeing in your programs and identifying in your eligibility work. So they had four or five of those risk factors. They got engaged, successfully engaged with those programs and they're doing amazing things right now. We really wanted you to have a chance to hear from them, to hear a little bit about the strategies that were used in their programs and how they got engaged and what was successful for them in their work. So as you're listening, I want you to invite you to do three things, first is to consider what strategies you guys are using in your programs and successful in using in your programs to engage all the families you serve. Particularly these families at highest risk. I want you to consider what you hear, what you want to like rush home and put into practice when you go home. Very important to do that. And some of this requires planning. So also what you're going to sit down with your team and think about as you go home. And the third thing is that I want you to consider for those of you who have been doing this work for a while I want you to consider how the stories of these families echo some of the stories of the families that you are serving or have served in the past. You know, we only have space on this panel for three families. And they're amazing. But we know that all of you together, collectively, have served a number of families, right? There are thousands of stories sort of in the space of this room that you all could share about engaging these highest risk families.

Because we can't have everybody here, I want to make sure you guys have a connection to that relationship that you've already built as well. And you remember how important the work that you're doing is. Yes? Okay. So we're going to start with Sara today. Sara Villavicencio was enrolled, I'm going to read this -- Monterey County Office of Education Early Head Start in Salinas, California. It's an urban program. Thank you for being here. Sara Villavicencio You're welcome. Amanda Perez We'll start with you, we spent some time with families who come in at the highest risk and it's important to understand where you and your family were when you first got started with Early Head Start. What was going on in your life at that time? Sara Villavicencio I had just left a domestic situation. Amanda Perez Let me ask you, can you all hear her in the back? No. I'm going to -- Sara Villavicencio You're going to make me talk louder. Can you hear me now? All right. Well, wake up and get closer. Just kidding. [Laughter] So I had just left a situation. There was a lot of domestic violence. And we no longer felt safe there. So we just had what we had on our back and decided to up and leave. And at the time I was with a certain agency, and they supported us and stuck us in a shelter. And then that's when they saw my kids. I think they were two and three. Somewhere around there. And I have twin daughters. So they got involved in Early Head Start after my son got involved in Early Head Start. And it was just a really tough situation. No car. No house. No education. And very low self-esteem. That's where we were at, right there. Amanda Perez Okay. So a lot of things were going on for you in that time. And we know that there are a lot of the demographic risk factors, but also domestic violence. Also homelessness as well as you moved into that shelter. Sara Villavicencio And the fact that a young parent, had no clue what it took to raise a child in a stable home let alone in a situation like that. And having three, you know, really close together, it was a challenge. Amanda Perez Very tough experience for you. So we have a picture of Sara from that time. That's not it. But see. I did not push the additional button. Tell us who this is. Sara Villavicencio The one in the pink and the one in the teal PJs, those are the twins, Nicki and Savannah. And then there's Isaiah, who is a rambunctious little boy to this day. I think we were just staying from place to place by this point already. They were just whatever we could get our hands on is what we got. There was just something else right there. Amanda Perez You did have some developmental concerns about them at this point. Sara Villavicencio Yes, because right there, those two, I think they're already a year and a few months, but they weren't fully walking. And my son was pushing two and he wasn't speaking. He was doing one or two words here and there. And that was basically it. And Nicki, the one in the pink, was constantly screaming -- like nobody else could hold her except for me or she would just do repetitive behavior, like rocking, flapping her hands. There was a lot of concern there. No communication, nothing. Amanda Perez A lot of things were going on developmentally with those kids. And one of the interesting things that you did is that you really tried to get your hands on whatever you could for your children. Sara Villavicencio Even though I was noncompliant with my head start provider at that time. She can vouch for me right there. Amanda Perez Let's back up a little bit. How did you get connected with Early Head Start? Sara Villavicencio I think when we went to the shelter that's when it started. Because I think it helped so much that they had a head start center. Because other than that I would have been one of the families that fell through the crack and we probably would have been somewhere in the corner. So after getting my son in there, they noticed that, hey, you've got two more little ones, let's get you involved with the Early Head Start. But that was not an easy task, because you're homeless. They're asking you for your residence and you're trying to get established with some type of welfare, Medical, something, just to get you going and no transportation. Trying to meet with the family of the parent person, because there was an in-home thing. I was like where are we going to meet? There's just no place. And after a while getting involved it kind of -- you kind of saw the difference. At first I was very resistant, though. I'll tell you that much. I just wanted to hide from the world. Amanda Perez: You bring up a lot of things. In some ways what you're bringing up is how difficult it is for families with some of these incredible risk factors to come in and become a part of the program. And some of it is logistics. Some of it is you don't have the papers that you need to get into programs and that can be very complicated, and we know that there's some information coming out from the Office of Head Start about that particular piece. But some of it is where is your energy going, what are you doing during that time. Can you talk about Mr. Less. Sara Villavicencio: First let me say something before that. A lot of the times people don't realize that that's how bad it is, because you're in it. So you don't realize that, well, this is a crappy situation. All you're doing is just trying to get day to day. That's the main thing that you've got to remember that you do not see how bad it is. Other people do and some people see -- some people I know, my family and all that. And I think that's one thing to remember. Amanda Perez: Could you talk about Mr. Less. Sara Villavicencio: I met the Mr. Less family, and it's his husband Mr. Less, which is Mr. Job Less and his wife, Mrs. Home Less, and two kids Mr. Car Less and Penny Less, their daughter. And the only one that loved me was their foreign kid, which was Mr. Wire Less Pager. So they were the only ones that were connecting with me, and that's the Mr. Less family, and I'm sure a lot of families have met it and even many educators have already met it especially in this time. That right there is something else you have to work against. Amanda Perez: So you were enrolled in this home-based program, as you said, about a month before you

left the shelter. There were some issues there. But you didn't get engaged. So we can talk about involvement, right, which is sort of one level of getting families engaged. But we're really talking now or the language I've been hearing from the Office of Head Start is family engagement route. Now we're really talking about getting folks involved and engaged in a deep and meaningful way within programs. Now, you were living in a hotel for a little while before you found stable housing. So can you kind of describe that time in your life after the shelter and as you're sort of transitioning to new housing. Sara Villavicencio It was exciting, because then you see something like, just to move forward to, to get a stable place. But even getting a stable place took a while as far as getting things settled, because then whatever hotel we were at, the provider went in there and tried to do the home base there. And that was kind of hard, because it was in a hotel room. That's really small. And there's a sink, you know, a bed and that's about it.

Amanda Perez: Wasn't much there. You also said there were a number of programs that you were feeling sort of stretched and you were going to mediation and court hearings. Sara Villavicencio: Like I said the situation I had left, left us with having to do court, having to do the restraining order. Having to get assistance to get a home, because there was no way, like I said. The Mr. Less family was really in the way. And of course you need some kind of financial income in order to get anything. So I don't know how we pulled it all off, but we got our first little apartment. And it was pretty neat though after we got it. Amanda Perez: One thing you told me, too, Sara, you said that it was tough to get everything together so that you could be at those home visits but that socializations were really good for you and you said you really liked being there and having the respite, having somebody watch your children for those couple of hours or spend some of the time. Sara Villavicencio: They had all the classes and all that. I think that was the biggest motivation, when they had parenting classes for like car seats or child development. The effects of violence and whatever else came with it. My biggest motivation was not to go listen but just the fact they had day care. And it gave me a break. But I didn't know -- that's just my mentality at the time. I just thought of, great, feed my kids dinner. Send them home and we're good to go. But after a few notes and it just -- you really ended up getting a lot from it. You have no clue of half of it. Amanda Perez: It's hard to know -- what's going to bring families in. It's hard to know what that is going to be. I do have to make one clarification about something I said, because we know socialization are really that parent child interaction. So this was a different sort of thing where there was a parent education experience and there was child care for the children. Sorry. Not good. Yes. So you told me that sometimes you dreaded home visits. And as a former home visitor, I really find that hard to believe. Sara Villavicencio: We were just talking about that last night. We think that the providers took a class for the CIA or something, because they're like hounding you right there looking for you. You're trying to hide. You're like I see you and you're like no! You're trying to just get away from it. But, no, they're there at seven in the morning. I know you're going to be here so I'm here. Home visit today, she's like, yeah, so we were just talking about our issues. We need a support group for that. [Laughter] Like remember? And we started sharing stories. I'm sure you'll hear theirs in a minute. But oh my gosh. And they're like all cheerful and your life is miserable. They're with their bags and toys. And I'm here all happy about it. And you're like Why? [Laughter] seriously it's too early and it's like can we go back and PJs, cheerio all over the floor. Persistence is one key thing that I have got to give them credit for, because we would not be here. I have got to give them credit. [Applause] Amanda Perez: Yeah, we've heard it again and again really. And sort of putting together this panel how important that persistence piece is. We know it's incredibly important to always have that person there. [Laughter] As a part of the services you provide. That consistency. Dora was telling me a story about showing up early one day and you're packing the kids in the van, getting ready to go. Yeah. Sara Villavicencio: In the house or I'll go with it, which is it? Amanda Perez: So tell me a little bit about Dora. What was it that eventually won you over other than the amazing persistence Sara Villavicencio: The FBI training, no, just kidding. The fact not only persistent, but the smallest things that I really appreciated was when she called and left voice mails out of random saying, hey, I know this is tough but you're doing a good job. That simple little thing made a huge difference, versus hearing constantly -- you got it all over saying you're doing such a bad job. Look at your situation. It's constant put down. So when you got something, somebody believing in you, it was just a motivation right there. And then like I said I really didn't know how to raise the kids. I just knew the basics. And one thing that she did teach me is something called floor time. And that's one of the visits that I really dreaded, because I'm like wait a minute I have to let you in on top of that I have to sit on my floor? Can I just watch you? She's like no you need to sit down here. You are not going to give up on your kids I'm like fine. And after a while I got it. I got what it took to make them successful and see how happy they were when you engaged them. Just to watch their faces. And at that time you're getting a lot of negative feedback from doctors saying your child will never talk or speak or walk, and you got like a lot of negative. And you hear that I love you from my daughter for the first time it was something. Amanda Perez: You were told she would never tell you she loved you. Then you got down on the floor and were playing with her engaging with her and she said I love you now every day? Sara Villavicencio: Pretty much. [Applause] Amanda Perez: I guess we didn't get to that point. So your

children did acquire some diagnoses. Sara Villavicencio: Yes. They have one of them is at the time was severely autistic. Which I had no clue what any of those things meant. I pretty much could write a book about it because they're 10 and 11 now. So then my son was diagnosed with numerous things along with physical health and mental health. And that took like a lot, just like I said there was a lot of negativity from doctors and other agencies. So to see now my children are just amazing. I can't emphasize how much it was. Amanda Perez: Do you have another picture? This is Dora and Sara. Sara Villavicencio: That's Dora, all cheerful. [Laughter] That was the first day of Head Start for all three of them, which I finally got a break but I had to go to work right after for the first time. Amanda Perez: Did you hear what she said? She got a break when the kids went into Head Start, but then she had to go to work. [Laughter] I do want to say something about the Head Start piece because one thing we've learned from the research is that particularly for families at the highest risk, if we can then engage them in formal care, after Early Head Start. Head Start is of course a wonderful option for those particular families. But how important was it for you to have that program that went birth to five for your family? Sara Villavicencio: I didn't know about the Early Head Start until they turned two. I think it would have made a huge difference. I don't think we wouldn't have waited as long to see it because when you're in it, like I said you don't see it to see how bad the situation is with them. And I think things would have been a little bit different as far as engaging with the children when they're younger. They might have walked sooner, who knows. Who knows what would have changed. Amanda Perez: So you're talking if they had gotten into Early Head Start earlier. Sara Villavicencio: Yes, because I think they turned, what, two, a little after two years old when we finally got all the paperwork done and you need this, you need that. You need copies of your ID and just everything by the time they were I think just a little over two years old. And then I honestly believe it would have made a huge difference. Amanda Perez: Then you did get them engaged. Sara Villavicencio: We crammed it all in that little bit of time that they were, before they turned three. And then they continued to Head Start. So it made a huge difference that we stayed connected from Early Head Start to Head Start and I didn't have to explain the whole story all over again. It just transitioned. And it just got carried from then on we just kept growing from there and learning more about what to do next. Amanda Perez: Yeah, I think we can think about sort of the benefits in a lot of ways to the children and what can happen for the children as they go forward. But the thing about families -- and I've heard this from families over many, many years, and certainly it's in the literature, that if you have these very difficult stories to tell, telling them again and again and again to providers is very trying. So to the extent that we can keep continuity of care for the families, I think that's supportive of what they need. Sara Villavicencio: Yeah. Amanda Perez: Very good. Let's see. We have another picture here. That's not it. There it is. Tell us about this picture. Sara Villavicencio: We are -- like I said, the kids are involved in a lot of programs. I don't know if you guys ever heard of Special Olympics. But my daughter is a little diva now, the one in the red. We were doing a parade all the way down Marina, California. It's about a half mile long. And they got to be the guests there and ride the horses in the front. And they just had so much fun that day too. So much fun. Amanda Perez: They are very involved. Sara Villavicencio: As you can see they're smiling now and they were like happy and enjoying that day. We didn't get that. It was just -- I don't know if you have that picture, the one of the shelter. There was this one that you could just totally see their sad faces. These are like totally different kids right here. They're not the same. Amanda Perez: Let me ask about Linda, because Linda is also in this picture. Sara Villavicencio: Yes, she also has children with disabilities. And a bunch of women we ended up meeting just at one of the events, doctor events, I believe, and they all have children like that. And a lot of them have struggled. And sad to say a lot of them had no clue what early intervention was until after the kids were like six years old. And by that time they had tried so many different things and failed. Amanda Perez: So it was really a wonderful connection for you that you kept over the years. And one of the things that you told me -- and we know this is often the case for families who are experiencing depression, as you were, and families who are experiencing domestic violence, is that is a very isolating experience. And you talked about how at socialization it was amazing to meet other families and other friends. Sara Villavicencio: It's hard enough to walk into that type of community and you do get looked upon. You get looked like What is that? What are you doing? Take your kid home or you've got people coming up to you in the line, you're just shopping, minding your own business. They'll come up to you and tell you why don't you tell your kid to shut up. That's hard to hear. And you walk in there in programs like that and you don't get that judgment at all. You're just right at home. If anything, you intervene with them, because they know what to do because they have their own children like that. So that just leaves everything and you feel normal for a while. Amanda Perez: That was huge for you. Sara Villavicencio That was I think that was the first few years that was hard to do. Amanda Perez: You might have -- so tell us how your children are doing now. Sara Villavicencio That's deceiving. They were pulling each other's hair. We could never take a normal photo. I told the lady just start clicking, brush it in, do whatever it takes. Amanda Perez Who is in the center with you? Sara Villavicencio: That is my mom. She has helped out a lot. She's helped out a lot. She's at home right now taking care of them. Believe me we had

to take an Army just to make sure she had all the support she needed. So she has that. And then there's of course Isaiah leaning over. The one in the front is Savannah and there's Nicki and by that time she was already [Inaudible] Amanda Perez: Remind us about where you were where you did not get on the floor and play with your babies. That was something you didn't do. And so tell me about Lunch Nick. Sara Villavicencio: We started that because in a way sometimes you've got to get your bad situations and always try to be positive about it no matter how bad it is. That's one thing that I did learn about myself throughout the years. No matter how crappy it was, we always made the best of it. When we got our first apartment, we had no table, no nothing. And the kids were like are we that poor, we can't afford a table. I said no, we're going to be having Lunch Nick. They said what's that? I said it's kind of like a picnic. Lunch on the floor. So now it's kind of like a family routine. About once a month, we get on the floor and we just put our food there and we always pretend -- say if it's spaghetti and bread, just to get them keep engaged in games, I told them -- I said and I named one of the favorite foods that I love. And I just said chicken Alfredo. And then my son would be just again my children were still struggling. And so my son would say oh, I'm eating the best pizza ever. And I'm drinking ice cream. And we switched it around and we said let's do our worst food. So my daughter would be like I'm having sardines with, I don't know, broccoli. It was just a way to engage with them and creativity came more and more. And now it just became a reminder of where we came from and what we have. And now I'm here in Washington, on vacation, talking to everybody. Thank you. Amanda Perez: And you've become quite an advocate for your children. Sara Villavicencio: Ever since then I have been through so many IEPs because all three of them required it. So I've got from the mildest IEP to the most severe IEP, with the three of my children. And they have been on an IEP for about probably eight, nine years. And then along came that with -- I was able to help other families with it and support them with it. And get involved with it. Amanda Perez: You've really become a community leader. Sara Villavicencio: Well -- Amanda Perez: Yeah. Dora in the front row is like, yeah. It is so wonderful to have you here, Sara. Thank you so much for being a part of this. Sara Villavicencio: Thank you. [Applause] Amanda Perez: Our next parent is Jayson Ferris. And Jayson is here from the Visiting Nurse Services Early Head Start in Far Rockaway, New York, New York City. Ooh, listen. Jayson was 18 when he got involved with Early Head Start. Jayson, your story, like Sara's of course begins in your own childhood, right? Jayson Farris Yes. Amanda Perez: Could you talk a little bit about your experience growing up. Jayson Farris: Give you the nice version. Being in a tough neighborhood and not having much, not looking real promising, so it's a lot of things you can do. A lot of things and a whole bunch of things you'd love to do. My mom was on public assistance and my oldest sister was in a group home. My older brother was in jail. My father was battling drug addiction, and that left me as the youngest child in the family to like be like this front runner that I wasn't ready for. I said it to Amanda, it was like I was on a road trip and I had no map, no direction and was just plowing through life and putting it together the best way I knew how, which I really didn't know what was A, what was B, what was C. It was just to try to keep going day to day and to try to make the best of a bad situation. Amanda Perez: And when you were a teenager, you met Stephanie. And tell us a little bit about Stephanie. Jayson Farris: She's awesome. I feel like Tom Cruz. I want to jump on the couch but we don't have couches. [Laughter] Actually, it was a very interesting story. Being from an urban neighborhood, there was a lot of house parties. I had the privilege of going to one. And I was outside, waiting to go in. They would check people, make sure nobody had anything they shouldn't have had. And there was this loud guy coming down, making a whole bunch of noise. And I was with two of my friends. I'm like who is this guy talking to? Lo and behold he was voicing his frustration towards me. I was like maybe I'm kind of cute? [Laughter] So this young lady comes out and she said excuse him, he's been drinking a little bit. Don't pay him no mind, I was like who are you? To make a long story short, she was his girlfriend. So that you said the ante a little bit for I would like to get to know you. But I really didn't say it. But I was thinking it with the inside voice. And I had the opportunity to meet her later on in life. And here we are now. Five beautiful daughters. Married for 10 years. Together for 18. And it was a very pivotal moment in my life but I really didn't understand it. Sat back and just looked at everything. Amanda Perez: Well, and you had two daughters with her. And then -- and what you told me was you weren't really sure how to be a dad. You said that you thought that it was your role as a father to provide for your family. So tell me about that. How did you do that in your situation? Jayson Farris As I stated earlier, I was not in the best place to kind of like be a financial provider, mentally, physically, spiritually. Everything. Like mixed up. So you know me, being the kind of resourceful guy that I am, to put it nicely, I was kind of a street pharmaceutical kind of guy. [Laughter] And it worked for me at that time. But at the end of the day I always knew that it was more that I could do and do it in a positive way as opposed to a negative way. Amanda Perez: Could you talk a little bit about your niece? Jayson Farris: This was like one of those pivotal kind of moments in my life. My older brother had a daughter. It was a situation where we were at a crossroads. Either you could be an out standing individual life or fall off the map. There was no middle ground where I was outside hanging out with some of my friends. Someone was running up, because we were like in a project. So we had like terraces where you could see for

miles. People coming. I was like who is this lady running down all anxious. She was like where is Jayson, where is Jayson. I'm just hearing all this commotion and this yelling. And I'm having a great time. I'm not going home. So you better leave me alone, don't look for me. And when she got closer she was saying that something happened. I said what happened? His mom's at the emergency room and I'm like what's going on. And another person came closer to me, let me know that my mother's first grandchild and my first niece disappeared. And we found out where she was she had wandered up to the roof and fell off the roof. It was a mad dash to find out where everybody was at to try to let us know before we found out by walking up on the situation. And that was like a moment where you could either go to the left or go to the right. There's no middle ground. It was do you want better or do you just want to be in a horrible situation. And it was I would say now that it was a blessing in disguise. Because it made me be here to stick around.

Amanda Perez: From what you told me, Jayson, is that your brother was in jail during that time and missed essentially all of this piece of both his daughter's life and funeral services. He was there for a short time but he missed a large part of that. And you said when I have a family I'm not going that way. But you didn't have all the information about how to go there. I mean, that was the other part of your story was that you were running your street pharmaceutical company but it was the option that you saw for providing this father role model to your children. That was the option that you saw for that. So what really strikes me is that you were really trying to learn what you could be a good dad. That was your goal during all that time. And you met David Johns from Visiting Nurse Services in New York at that time. You met him before, though, you enrolled. Jayson Farris Yes. Amanda Perez: At some community meeting? Yes? Jayson Farris: Actually, the network system that Early Head Start had was awesome. We met inside of a room, a little room inside of a church. Saint Rosalima, met David. And it was like she stated earlier, you guys take lessons from the CIO, but I say it was like severe stalker status. [Laughter] But what made it easier, you guys always were smiling and trying to keep us engaged. And we're like, listen, I'm not here, all right? I'm not here, please leave. We could see you, we can hear you, you're there we really need this paperwork filled out. But the constant persistence with love it was like really okay, these people really care. So I'm going to slow down. I'm going to give them a try. Amanda Perez: And so when Stephanie got pregnant with Umani your third baby, you got involved with Early Head Start. Jayson Farris: Yes. Amanda Perez: What did you talk about. You talked a little bit about David, can you talk more about what drew you into the program? Jayson Farris: What drew me in was the honesty. You could tell when someone's really sincere or they really do care. You know when somebody's faking it to make it. And it's like you know what, I really don't have time for you so this little relationship that you're trying to build is over. But it was just the honesty, the sincerity. It was like I was telling you a story about this incredible young man. He was like have you ever thought about driving? Yeah, I drive now. Okay. You drive. But do you have a driver's license? No. [Laughter] He was like, so, getting a driver's license or what it takes to get a driver's license? Yeah, that would be very interesting. And I like I committed myself but not knowing that I actually committed myself to getting a driver's license. And if I wasn't sincere, he would have seen through it. But he was like, okay, okay, that's very interesting. He was like do you have the book? I was like, yes, I do. So he was asking me questions. I'm reading it David, I understand. Amanda Perez: He was testing you? Jayson Farris: Yes. And I had a little goal there, but I was faking it to make it. I would have fell. He would have seen through the BS. Before I know it I'm down at the DMV taking a test. I'm like how did I end up here? You're very persuasive. Who do you work for again? So I ended up doing that. And I'm official. I have a driver's license. If I'm pulled over, I don't have to say well I don't have my wallet on me. I just left the house. I'm just going to get milk, like trying to make excuses. You want this, the driver's license? Here you go. But it was just awesome. The little setting a goal. You really don't think about goals, you are just plowing through, putting it together. You really don't have any directions. So goal is the last word you want to hear. You think about goal, I'm a football guy. Think about field goal. That's it, one point, extra point, that's okay. But you're talking about a progressive process you have to take in order to accomplish the ultimate goal, which for me it would be a touchdown. But that was awesome. Amanda Perez: So there was a lot of work that David did with you around sort of helping you set goals, identifying goals and in some ways, in some ways what you described to me sounded like you didn't really think that you could have a goal like getting a driver's license. That wasn't what the other guys in your situation were doing. And so why would you do that? So it was sort of an educational piece about, you know, you can kind of come this way and do it for yourself and drive legally. Yeah. And there were a lot of pieces to that relationship that happened. Can you talk a little bit about the dads group. Jayson Farris: Fathers group. I was telling Amanda when we were speaking, about the book three men and a baby. That's how we started out. It was me, David and Albert and his son. We would meet in this little cubicle, this little partition area. We would sit there and talk and everything. Okay, this kid is wet. Who is going to change him? Are you going to change him? I'm not changing diapers. It was comical in so many ways. Because if it was a BM, we were like come on, I don't want to get dirty I'm trying to go somewhere after this. So it was like a toss up. It was awesome just to get to see men be sensitive, and it not being corny. We were

real men. It's like, okay, we're doing this, we're change diapers and you know what Anthony is doing so well. And it's like we're thinking now, we're not just these big guys that have no emotion and are not able to connect with a child. We were like laughing and giggling, okay, you change a diaper. I want to feed him now. Give him to me. I want to burp him. You know if you burp him there's a possibility he might spit up on you. We were all in it. It was one of those moments if I was to have a child this is what I would do. Amanda Perez: How many blocks did you walk for those meetings? Jayson Farris: 30 blocks. And it was just I was starved for input and knowledge and any kind of answers that I could get that wasn't negative. You know? Looking for something very positive. And it made a difference. When times are hard and I was changing my life and not doing the things that I was normally doing. And you know what, it's either go out and fill out a prescription or walk. It was like, you know what, I'm going to walk. And in that walk I was putting together I got this idea or I want to see what Dave has for me. He's going to have something for me today. He's going to have something as far as child development or what to look for, if you think your child has a delay. I was just starved but you know what in order to get -- I gotta put some effort into it. I would walk. And I would think. I would have questions. I started putting goals for myself together. Okay. Now I'm thinking of my goals. So this thing is kind of working out for me. So it was just determination. Because at the end of the day if you don't want it, you're not going to get it. You have to want it for yourself. You have to want it for your children. And if it's really not on your to-do list you're not going to do it. But if it is, you're going to do whatever you have to do. [Applause] Amanda Perez: And I guess I should say one thing about this, because David and I had some conversation before this panel and I kind of asked him what is it about teen dads? How do you engage teen dads. He said exactly the same thing you said Jayson, you'll be glad to know, he said it has to do with authenticity. You have to be very authentic. We talked about strength-based work. But what that requires is knowing a family well enough to be able to identify their unique strengths. If I said to David, or Jayson, you're such a good dad today, such a good dad today that doesn't have as much meaning as wow look at the way you diapered that baby. It seems to be important. This authenticity to it. I heard it from mothers we can smell a fake. It's not hard. So I think that piece of it, particularly in hiring, is really important. Who are you hiring? Do they know how to identify these folks and can really engage in relationships with families that are really meaningful? And the other piece about this, and Yvette spoke about this yesterday, is staff support. So if we have this expectation that we're really going to get to know families and we're going to be persistent with families, we have to offer staff some support around that. You said that folks need a support group. And I think that's right. They need some reflective supervision, some time when they can really talk about the work that they're doing so they can reflect on what that is and how it's going to support families in the long run. A very important piece of what I've been hearing. So let me see a picture. So this is you and your three oldest daughters, right? At an Early Head Start event. So who is there? Jayson Farris In the pink is Jayana. My oldest, 14 now. She knows everything like she's older than me in her own brain. Like she's been here longer than I have. And I'm like, okay, you know it all. You've been here. 14 years. Okay. And in the middle with her white top is Leilani. She's awesome. In her last year of middle school. She goes to high school next year. And then I have Emani, fifth grader. She's a diva for real. She really has brought the diva out in me. [Laughter] Like this girl she'll catch me at the most uninviting kind of moment to like slow down and paint her nails and to brush her hair. I'm like, listen, I really don't want to do that right now. But you're very convincing and cute so I'm going to brush your hair, paint your nails. It's just awesome. I didn't know having daughters could be this much fun. Amanda Perez: Well, we have more recent pictures of them. So there are five pictures here. Can you start from 12 on the clock and go around? Jayson Farris: Yes, that's Lailani at the top. Emani. Marlani in the pink and Gavani in the black and my oldest Jayana is this one. Being in this was like really, really a blessing to my life. And you know staff knew the support system and just being honest with yourself first because you really can't engage a family if you have a preconceived notion about fathers. Men, period. Everybody has an issue. But in order to really engage families effectively, you have to leave your baggage at the door and meet this family where they are. Amanda Perez And that has to be -- [Applause] Amanda Perez: Yeah. And it has to be everybody's job. Not just the person who is designated as the fatherhood person if such a person is in your program it has to be everyone's job, right? And you talked some about that as well. There's beautiful Stephanie. And those five gorgeous daughters. Look how happy. So he sends me this camera. There's like joy falling out of this camera. Jayson, tell us what you're doing now. Jayson Farris I'm being silly. Actually, you know, I'm like [Inaudible] and letting everybody know that dads have a voice. We care about our child's development. We care about what they like and what they don't like. It's not just go to work, pay the bill, sit at home, that's it. Like I mentioned -- I said to Amanda as we were talking. I'm like the ponytail king. Who would have thought that I would be jumping and doing ponytails? And painting nails whenever someone is getting some kind of award in school, perfect attendance or spelling bees. Dad, I have this tomorrow, I'd like my nails to be done. Okay, let's go. Get the little kaboodle with all the stuff and dad's going to do nails. I sit there -- [Laughter] -- and I laugh and I say to myself, you know, you should

be doing this to Stephanie, saying in my head you should be doing this. But you know what I feel honored that they're choosing me to do it so you're going to be jealous right now. And she was saying to me I'm next. No, my girls first and I'll think about you later. But it's just awesome. I just enjoy every moment of it. Amanda Perez: So from provider, from being the provider, to being the provider and the ponytail king and the painting nails guy and the perfect attendance dad and all that stuff, right? . Yeah. And you're working. Jayson Farris Yes. I work for the Board of Education now. [Applause] Actually I have another story. I was at work and one of my friends, he's still into his pharmaceutical business, called me on like I'm in the yard. He calls, have my ear piece in my ear. He said I see you out there trying to be Joe Montana with the kids. I said I'm a role model now. So I gotta look good. So he's like I see you out there tossing a ball in the school yard and where are you when I'm at work and you're interrupting me actually. He was like you're a wise guy, aren't you? Yeah, because I'm at work and you don't know what work is right now. But it was kind of cool. It was one of those moments where I got to sit and just actually see where I came from and have all the kids around in the yard and it was just awesome. [Applause] Amanda Perez: Jayson, thank you so much for being here. We so appreciate it. All right. Our third parent is Yvonne Anderson. She's from a little town in Elko, Nevada. And I'm going to read this again. Her children attended the Early Head Start program at the Head Start of Northeastern Nevada there. And you grew up in that area and for other families we know it was a little bit of a rocky beginning for you. So can you tell us a little bit about your life before you had babies. Yvonne Andersen I had dropped out of high school in ninth grade. Me and my mom and my little brother moved to Niagara Falls. I was 15. I got kicked out. I was kind of doing odds and ends and doing things just trying to survive. That was for almost about a month. And finally my grandmother, who had stayed in Nevada, I got back in contact with her. And she said come home. And I went back home and thank God for her, because I didn't have anywhere to go. I had nothing. No education. I had nothing really to fall back on. So she was a big support for me at that particular time. Amanda Perez: So you went back home to her. And as you describe that Yvonne, and I think we've heard that in a variety of different ways. Some pretty traumatic experiences for a young person at that time. And I think one of the things that certainly happens with families and families at highest risk, too, is that they come in with long stories to tell but they have to trust you first before they'll tell you the stories. Yvonne and I were having that discussion yesterday about really needing to trust somebody before you give them all the odds and ends and the whys of their story. So it really speaks, I think, to the enrollment process of Head Start, which can feel very intrusive. And we need to be very cautious about that, how important it is to really go in gently and with a lot of risk factors for what families are coming in with. Now, a few really important things happened pretty quickly when you got to Elko, came to your grandmother. You found some friends in Elko who maybe said they weren't the best influences, you told me. Yvonne Andersen: They never are. Amanda Perez: You spent some time you said partying. Yvonne Andersen: Yes. Amanda Perez: Then you got pregnant and you had a little boy. So here's a picture of Matthew. So tell us a little bit about him. Yvonne Andersen: Oh my gosh. He is amazing. He was my joy. I mean, as soon as I found out I was pregnant I was like I'm going to do this, I'm going to do this. Oh my gosh as soon as I had him I was like what am I doing? My grandmother -- I did, though -- she had a little bit of time with him in the beginning. That was very nice that she was able to be involved in our lives at that time. Amanda Perez: So tell us what happened with your grandmother. Yvonne Andersen: She developed pelvic cancer. I was actually pregnant with my daughter. I was eight months pregnant when she was diagnosed and admitted into the hospital. I could not be there for her. Amanda Perez: Could you talk about why? Yvonne Andersen: She was undergoing chemotherapy and because of my pregnancy it wasn't safe for me to be around her. So -- Amanda Perez: So you weren't able to be with her when she died. Yvonne Andersen: No. Amanda Perez: That's a very complicated kind of grief. So this is somebody who you said was the one person who you relied on. And she passed away and you had a little girl shortly thereafter. Yvonne Andersen: Yes. Amanda Perez: But a very complicated kind of grief. And you told me that you were depressed. Yvonne Andersen: Yes. Amanda Perez: There's Becca. Tell us what happened with Becca. Yvonne Andersen: She was eight months old and I had some friends over for New Year's Eve. And me and his wife had run to the store. And he was at home with their son and my kids. My daughter was sleeping. And I was only gone for about 20 minutes or so. Came home and went upstairs and checked on her she was still sleeping. Went through our routine for the night. The next morning she was lethargic. She wouldn't wake up. And I didn't know what was wrong. Her head was swollen. I thought she was sick. I thought oh my God, maybe she has like a brain tumor or something in her head or what's going on. And I called the ambulance. Went to the hospital. She was life flighted to Primary Children's in Salt Lake City, Utah. I couldn't go with her. I was being held for child abuse of my daughter. And on the way to Salt Lake they wouldn't let me life flight with her because I was so upset. They said I wasn't safe. On the way to Salt Lake, I got a call from the police department EDCF. They said we have a person in custody that -- on the way to Salt Lake, they said that -- right here. Sorry. They said we have the person in custody and he has admitted to hurting your daughter. And basically the scenario that went down while we were at the store she

woke up crying. And he had stopped her crying. He had shaken her and slammed her head into a wall. So went to the hospital. She underwent three surgeries to stop the hemorrhaging in her brain. She was in the hospital for about a month. They told me that they didn't know what kind of brain damage she had sustained. She was so young that -- thank you -- she was so young they didn't know what was going to happen. And she did sustain an injury to her leg. So walking was delayed a little bit. A month later she was released. She was undergoing treatment. She had to take blood thinners to make sure there were no clots forming in the brain. It was a very, very tough time. Amanda Perez: Unimaginable for any family, especially for a young mom. Feeling lonely? Yvonne Andersen: On, yeah. Amanda Perez: In the midst of this, we haven't talked about risk factors, but you met all five of the risk factors that we described in the beginning. And you enrolled at the center-based program at Early Head Start. So tell us how you found Early Head Start. Yvonne Andersen: Actually, one of the people I was hanging out with, their children went there. And it was kind of like, oh, yeah, free day care, they take the kids during the day. I was like sweet. I was not aware of the program. I didn't know what the program was about. I had no idea what it involved. I was just like, okay, I'll check it out. Amanda Perez: So you came in. You were working off and on during that time. Yvonne Andersen: Off and on. Amanda Perez: You were going to school off and on during that time, too. Yvonne Andersen: Supposed to be, yes. Amanda Perez: But what you said is that it did take you a little while. Your staff person -- your staff person, Kim Garcia, said had to be part of that support group. She was very persistent with you, very happy. Yvonne Andersen: They had to be. Amanda Perez And very positive with you, which was extremely important. And you said that you recognized Early Head Start as a haven for your family, for your children during this time. Even though you were still partying and doing some other things, but you said it was a haven for your children. Yvonne Andersen: Yes, I felt very comfortable with my children there. Like night and day between the center and where we were staying. I can't say home, because it was -- our living situation was unstable at that time. But it was like I was so happy to know that they were going there and that they were in a loving environment. They were being cared for. And almost in a better way that I could at that time. Amanda Perez: Can I quote you to you? I loved this quote from you. You said the emotions and the environments in my home and center were like night and day. I felt so depressed when I was at home but when I took my children to school I just felt so much better. Almost in a way I wanted them to go because I knew they were in a safe and stable environment and not in an unstable one like at home. And I have heard that many times, particularly for families where there's an issue of domestic violence. We hear that quite a bit. That the issue of safe haven of the center-based program, quality care of the center-based program is hugely important for those families. So you talked about a gradual involvement in Early Head Start and it took a long time. But over time, with that encouragement, you decided that enough was enough. Yvonne Andersen: Yes. Amanda Perez: So you made a break, what you said you made a break from the people that you felt were bringing you down. Yvonne Andersen: Yes. I decided to cut all ties with everything. I totally let it go. Amanda Perez: You just let all of those people go, your close friends go, you just got rid of that community entirely. Yvonne Andersen: Yes. Well, a lot of it, I think the emotional attachment and it's not so much that I wanted friends. I knew deep in my heart they were bad for me. It was that I had nobody. I had no family. I had nothing to rely on. So for that emotional void that I had, I thought that if I at least had somebody there, it was better than nothing. And I didn't realize how negative and hurtful it actually was for me and my family. So it took a long time to realize that. Amanda Perez: One day the persistence wore you down. Yvonne Andersen: Yes. Amanda Perez: It got you. And you wrote that when you wrote your story, you wrote in a matter of a couple of years I was really starting to see a dramatic change in our lives. Can you talk a little bit about that change? Yvonne Andersen: Yes. My daughter was involved in Early Intervention Services and the Early Head Start because of her disability. She's visually impaired. She was going through PT for the first little while. And working with the family services, the PT specialist, the vision specialist coming in. And with the teacher involvement, advocate and everything, just seeing how everything kind of came together, it really inspired me that wow they really care. They really want the best for her. They really want the best for my children. And it was just seeing how everything flowed, and just seeing my kid, how much of a difference they were at home and how I wanted to bring that into my home and have them be as happy as they were at the center, while we're together. So I decided to start to build a family, parenting classes, which that's awesome. There were three sessions I finished it and I got a certificate. Everybody was so excited because I finished the parenting classes, and I was like yeah. And it's little steps. It's those small motivations, those positive things that people say to you, and it's got to build you up. Amanda Perez: So there are two things happening here, there's services for the family and sort of this engagement with the family and also engagement with the children. And I just want to go back to those child outcomes that we talked about earlier. So one thing that people kind of suspect, and we talked about this Yvonne. One thing that might be happening with families at highest risk is that when staff go into their homes, see them in the centers, they're so focused on what's happening with the family. Because there's so much going on there that it's hard to get, to focus on that particular child. And so you got involved with early

intervention, as a part of Early Head Start. That was hugely important for you. You said you had no idea that early intervention was out there for Becca. Yvonne Andersen: I had no idea. I didn't even know where to begin with her. I didn't want her to fall behind. I didn't want her to have any problems. I just -- I had no idea of how to go about that. Amanda Perez: So it was really important for you to have those services and those really quality care experiences, developmentally appropriate care experiences for those babies was so important for you too. I just want to say this, too. Just tell us very quickly -- let's see a picture. Focus, Amanda. Look at how sweet they are. Yvonne Andersen: My son's Cheeto face. Amanda Perez: I think we all have the Cheeto face, if we're lucky. Look at those beautiful children. Tell us about Becca's recent evaluation. Yvonne Andersen: She's still on the IEP with the school district. Social services vision specialist. They recently did -- we did our IEP meeting. She was evaluated by a psychologist and turns out she has an IQ of 121. And her cognitive skills are through the roof. [Applause] She's in a high reading level in her class. Of course, font has to be enlarged but her overall understanding of the content is amazing. And my son is very, very smart. They both are very intelligent children. And I believe 1 percent it has to do with them being in Early Head Start. [Applause] Amanda Perez: So finally you've had some professional change, too. You were doing odd jobs during that time and then what happened? Yvonne Andersen: I actually was told of a position at the head start by Kim. And she said why don't you come in and apply, why don't you try. You've been working in the classroom. You've been on the Policy Council, you've been involved. Let's do an application, see what we can do. I'm like okay. I was like after everything, I don't think they're going to hire me. But she tracked me down and she said let's do this. Let's try this. She's very positive, very motivated, because I honestly had no -- I really did not think it would fly. So she's like no, let's do this. And she's so outgoing and amazing and positive with me. And it's like, okay. I went in, applied. Got the job. I'm now in my third year teaching in head start. [Applause] I currently obtained my CTA just waiting for that in the mail. [Applause] I'm 20 credits away from my AA and ECE. [Applause] And eventually I'm going to be working on up there in my masters in early childhood education. [Applause] Amanda Perez: Yvonne, thank you so much for being here today to share your story. And thank you, again, to all three of you for being here. We cannot tell you how much we appreciate hearing from families as a part of this experience. Now, I want to tell you that we're about ready to close, but I know that sometimes there's like a bum rush for the stage to talk to the families. And they need this stage after us. So we're going to go quietly out into this hall and then you can bum rush them there, okay? Go ahead. Yvonne Andersen: Can you put on that -- sorry. I just want to say really quickly. Thank you. All of you. You may not think it. You may not see it. But at that particular moment in time but what you do will have an impact on these children and the families. It may not be immediate but it will in time have a very positive outcome whether you experience that with them or not. Just keep that in mind when you're having those difficult times and you're having those situations where you're not sure if it's working, it's working. [Applause] Amanda Perez: There's no better way to end. Have a great day. --End of Video--