

**Foundation for School Readiness:  
Supporting American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) Early Head Start Programs**

Carol Mills: Hello, everyone. Good afternoon. My name is Carol Mills. I'm a senior training specialist with the Early Head Start National Resource Center, and I will be your moderator today for this webinar, Foundation for School Readiness: Supporting AIAN Early Head Start Programs. Our goals today will be to gain a better understanding of school readiness and to explore how the tribal community can support school readiness, and to look at how partnerships with families help parents to succeed. And then we will look at how to connect the five domains with infant and toddler development.

I would like to introduce to you Donald Wyatt. He has joined us today. He is the American Indian and Alaska Native program specialist. Hi, Donald; welcome.

Donald Wyatt: Hi, Carol; thank you. And thank you for joining us on this important call today. When we think about this important webinar, there's opportunities to gain knowledge in all sorts of ways. This particular webinar shouldn't be looked at as an ending point, but as a point of providing some baseline data to stimulate your thinking about Early Head Start and about school readiness as it relates to Early Head Start and preschool children. The National Resource Center is one of the National Centers that focuses on that particular age group, 0 to 3. Present – presently, there are approximately 48 Early Head Start programs in – in Indian country, two of which are operated as EH-only programs.

There is an IM that talks about school readiness and about its importance. Some of the – some of the important information will – you will hear today. Tribal communities often mention children as being their future and their most important resource, and assisting families in their efforts to have their children school ready is a noble goal for any Early Head Start program. School readiness can lead to school success, which helps prepare the next generation of tribal children assume the leadership roles in their Tribes and in their communities. Every tribal member has a role to play in this endeavor. Every program specialist in AIAN, every TA provider, every National Center should have one consistent goal as it relates to Early Head Start and preparing children for school, and that is excellent. We should and you should expect excellence at every level.

As we go through this seminar – I'm sorry – this webinar today, take notes, ask questions, write your questions down, and each of your questions will be addressed. If you find something in the PowerPoint that's not quite as familiar to you or you've seen it written some place differently, make a note of it. There might be an error or two someplace along the way, and we certainly want to get those things corrected if that is the case.

So, I welcome you to this webinar; and have fun, learn a lot. And with that, I'd like to introduce Angie Godfrey, who has been with us for quite some time – spent a lot of time in the American Indian and Alaska Native program branch, as many of you know. So, Angie, as a colleague and friend of...

Angie Godfrey: Thank you, Donald. Thank you for your opening and for those wonderful words. Those of you who know me know that AIAN is my home in many ways, and I appreciate every opportunity to speak with all of you. And I'm really glad to be here today. I also understand the importance of the foundation of school readiness for infants and toddlers in tribal communities. Donald, I love what you said, that – and I think it kind of says for me – oh sorry...

Donald: You can go, Angie.

Angie: Sorry, all. I'm still learning how to – you know, I'm working with machinery while I'm talking. And I just changed the slide, I did it. So, thanks for your patience. I – again, I love what Donald said about beginnings and excellence because I do think that that – this is – well, I work with babies. I think that each day is – is a beginning I particularly love the work that I've done with Tribes because I've been in so many programs where, talking to people in the communities, the message is loud and clear that babies are a sacred trust, and they are what – what we plan for. And why we're here is to make a place for the future. And I think that that message is always so clear in working with tribal programs.

And I also love that Donald said "excellence," because I think that's exactly what we each should be striving for. And I think for Early Head Start, I see excellence as – at its root and growing to the relationships we have with each other. And as I – I'm going to talk to you about Standards. I love the Standards. I think that one of the things that can support individual tribal communities more than many other things are the Head Start Standards because they're a structure and a framework that believes that each individual community can implement that framework with the greatest knowledge of what the children in that community need.

So I appreciate, once again, the opportunity to be with you to talk about how relationships bring to life the Standards I'm going to mention. And this is 1307; we put them all up here. What I want you to know is that today's webinar is going to focus on the piece of 1307, which is primarily 1307.2 and .3, that focuses on school readiness. There are many other regulations in 1307. We are only going to talk about school readiness. And the reason that I think it's important to talk about 1307.2 and .3 is because it very clearly states that school readiness goals – goals are for all children served in a program ages birth to 5; and I'm not sure that language exists clearly anywhere else. It's wonderful language.

It should be a message to all of you in Early Head Start that you are the foundation of school readiness goals. Your program, your work with infants and toddlers in your community is the beginning of a path that we all need to follow to ensure that, as we're working with children birth to 5 in Early Head Start and Head Start, that those children are on a very successful path to school readiness. So, I'm going to focus on those two. I'm not going to – I'm only going to mention them because I have – there's someone who's much more exciting than I am who's going to be talking to you about more – more specifically about them.

What I want you to know is that, yes, if you are – if you serve children birth to 3, you are required to – I did it again. Okay. You are required to develop school readiness goals. I think if you think about the individualized goals that you have for children and if you understand how those goals help you not just plan for individual children but for groups and for your program, then this will all make sense to you. And it may be some additional work, but fortunately we have a director with us today from an AIAN program who's going to talk to you about how much fun it is too; right Misty? [Laughter]

So the next two slides, really, I want you to go onto the ECLKC and to look at them because these slides will really help you do what you're required to do with your school readiness goals for all your children birth to 5. And that's aligned with the revised framework. And we spent a lot of time working with EHS NRC and colleagues at the Office of Head Start to ensure that our materials and resources are current and can support you in your work as you're developing goals. Also that you align with state guidelines; and I know that we're talking about tribal entities here, but I also know that as part of state early

learning guidelines, those are great resources – in some states, not all – that can really support your work.

And then to really focus on the five essential domains that are so essential to the work that you're doing. And again, just briefly, the – the four steps to community assessments are – I'm sorry, I'm getting confused – but school readiness action steps for infants and toddlers, which is on this screen. And the five domains are very important. I just want to draw your attention to it. There's the overall four action steps, but these school readiness action steps for infants and toddlers will really help you as you begin to look at setting your school readiness goals and setting them around the five domains.

One of the things that always comes up is the largeness or the smallness of the five – of the domains in that pie chart. And one of the things that we know that is so foundational for the work you do is social and emotional development. And so, we want you to look at that in the context of your family, and like with the other Standards, meet the Standards but meet them within the context of your community.

So these are just two... I'm going to talk to you.... I'm almost through. I just want to welcome you all and give you an overview, and those are – I'll be mentioning resources. There's another framework, and that's the Family Engagement Framework. You're going to hear more about that later. I just want to say, if we're talking about relationships, and the thing that I love the most about working with babies, with infants and toddlers, is that those relationships are completely integrated with families. It's just not – not the caregiver and the baby. It's the caregiver, the baby, the family, how you're able to work together to support the healthy development of the individual children and to ensure that they're learning and that you could talk about what that learning looks like. It's so important that it's done with the family. So I encourage you to look at all the resources you're going to hear about today because the Parent and Family Engagement Framework really will support you in your work. And I think that that's key, also.

You know, I have to mention this because I know you are all out there afraid of this. Don't be afraid of this. You do ongoing assessment all year long. You've always done that. The difference now in 1307.3 is they're asking that three times a year you look at that data, you aggregate that data, you analyze that data. And you can start small. You can start with a group and see where were the children, where are the children going, how do we support their learning?

So, again, Sarah Semlak is going to talk to you more about all these things, but I want you to know this – this is somewhat new. It should not be scary. Call me if you're scared. I'll talk to you about it. It is some more work and – but as long as at the end of every day and at the end of each week you see those children, we can support you in doing that work. And it's so important that you're doing that, not because the Office of Head Start tells you to do it, not because 1307 tells you to do it, but because if you don't do it, the children in your community will not be ready for school and will not be successful. And that's what we're looking for. We're looking for the potential of each of the young children that you're growing with. So think about it that way.

Current requirements. Again, I'll just go through the last two slides. It's – that you must have an evidence-based curriculum. That curriculum also must be reflective of cultural practices. They're not dissonant. One does not exclude the other. You – you have and must have both. A curriculum that's evidence-based that you know will support the children and families but also is a reflection of the culture that each of your children live with.

Ongoing assessment – so I mentioned briefly that has to happen. And I think it's more than input from parents. It's what it says, but it's truly engaging with parents around their child. It's pretty exciting work. And then, that the results of the works that you do through ongoing assessment, through child observation, through working with families and building those relationships is the ability to implement change that's meaningful in how you will continue to work with children and families.

We have wonderful resources on the ECLKC and I want to make sure that you know those. You're going to hear about them. They really will help guide you. Don't feel frustration because you will – you will be guided through them. They're very easy to follow, and there are lots of folks out there to help you, especially now. It's a pretty joyous time right now because you're going to be seeing more people who can actually work with you around these issues. So, thank you very much.

Sarah, I went a little bit over, but I'm going to turn it over to you right now. And it really is my pleasure to introduce all of you to Sarah Semlak, who has been around at least as long as I have. But I won't say that, Sarah. But she's worked with AIAN programs for years, and I really want to thank Sarah for coming today and talking to you more at length about all these things. Thank you, Sarah.

Sarah Semlak: Thank you, Angie. I'm so excited to be able to have the opportunity to speak today with all of our wonderful AIAN representatives out there about something that is very near and dear to my heart, which is the school readiness piece. So as we're thinking about the overarching goal of this particular webinar, the idea that we're looking to gain a better understanding of school readiness for infants and toddlers, but as Angie was speaking and Donald reflected this also, the idea of these babies in the context of their families and tribal communities.

So again, thinking back to what we just heard a moment ago, Donald said, as you listen to this webinar, as you think about it, to ask questions. And as Angie was saying, to come back into the significance of what we have known for so long, which is the importance of relationship building within our centers, our home-based programs. Whatever entity is what you're using as you think about supporting your children and families to really come back into what – as we're going to be thinking about the 1307, that we have from a historic perspective the 1304 to come back to. That for many of us, as we're moving forward, which our world always requires a lot of movement, that we take a moment to look back and to just celebrate what you've been doing for so long in serving your children and families.

So today, of course, we're really focused on zero to 3 school readiness. But as we think about some of the language of 1307, to be reminded for 16 years since our revised Performance Standards came out in 1996, we had been looking at many of the critical elements that we'll be talking about today on the webinar that have to do with the new language in 1307, which in fact really is not that new. So as we define school readiness and we talk about things like physical well-being, we know within all of our community's health has been a critical piece that we strive towards as we get all children ready for school. So again, linking that physical well-being, the social-emotional development, as Angie moment – mentioned a moment ago, we've always focused.

But as you think about that pie chart, or in the next slide, the representation for me of the arrow moving forward, that we bring all of our children up with this as we're thinking from birth through 5. But coming back into some of the language that's within the essential domains, when you hear words like general knowledge, I think, oftentimes, for many programs, the 3 to 5 piece of school readiness has just been easier for them to digest as leaders within communities to kind of think about that. What from a birth to

3, but then a birth to 5 perspective, do all of these essential domains mean to the children and families in your tribal community?

So that's where we come into this idea of leadership. Each of you is a leader. Whoever is taking the time to participate in this webinar today to celebrate, whether you are coming from the family perspective, because we're hoping that everyone will own the school readiness piece. So as Angie mentioned, the family engagement, there's not one piece of school readiness for infants and toddlers that doesn't take us back to seeing that baby in the context of family and tribal community. So, seeing, thinking, acting as a unit to wholly support, as Angie said just a moment ago, the idea that babies are sacred trust for all of us. So as leaders, to think about that.

As we look at this next slide and see that baby standing with its mother and father, the idea of what does school readiness mean for you. So just take a moment as a leader and reflect on that. What does it, at this moment in time, mean for you and your program as we see that baby in that family? Sometimes leadership takes us in funny directions. So if perhaps as you really think about that baby and that parent photo that we had up there a moment ago, that you're sharing your vision for infant-toddler school readiness and you're coming up against people who are like, "Hey, I think that's something we could order off the Internet, or maybe we just need more stuff."

Oftentimes with center-based programs, I know some of you as leaders are being presented long lists about this time of year that – things that – that – the staff, the teachers, home visitors saying, "If we only had this, our babies would truly be ready for school." When in fact something like what we see in this slide can distract from what Angie mentioned earlier, which is the significance of the relationship building, the opportunity to hear language – both the home language and the English they may be encountering in the center or within the home context.

Something else we want to be very careful of as leaders as we think about school readiness for infants and toddlers is truly this idea of being developmentally appropriate. As you link the school readiness to the 3 to 5 piece, understanding, as we all know, these are babies. And so, a definition that looks something like this, what you see on this slide, that we're ultimately looking for all children to develop an attitude by which they feel cared for, that they feel recognized from a cultural perspective. That's where the individualization for each of us as leaders has to be reflecting what it is that we know about the children and families in our tribal communities.

That – what drives babies to learn? There's always a lot of conversation about research – research, research, research. And I think just as Angie mentioned a moment ago about aggregated data, a lot of this feel so distant from what we know truly, you know, helps a child to move forward. But as we think about the school readiness piece and what oftentimes is associated with school readiness, and we think about the research that demonstrate things like babies can actually be really rational and not goal-oriented. They may cry because they have a need. The need isn't necessarily anything other than suddenly a trusted caregiver, an elder comes and they suddenly feel soothed by a familiar song or chant or voice. It's those sorts of things that while we can plan, can we always plan?

Looking at this little face – and I actually did have an opportunity to share this little face, and Donald is shaking his head because he has seen it and we had this conversation a few weeks back with some of the program specialists within Region XI about what is school readiness. And seeing this face, really being able to see from your own leadership perspective, what comes through daily routines for our babies that can connect into school readiness? Not everything is planned.

So as we are going to be thinking about – that babies come into the world, what is it they come into the world with and how are we going to connect that within our family, community, and what we're going to be looking at in a few minutes, which are the four steps of school readiness that are associated with the 1307 legislation? So, just before we begin to come back into the 1307, I just wanted to make sure we're all reminded as leaders: babies come into the world. They're ready, they communicate, they're competent, but very influenced by their surroundings.

So it's, again, as we're going to be thinking about the four action steps, today's webinar is really primarily focusing on the first two. So just to know, there are quite a few slides that we will be moving through but not necessarily spending as much time on; that this particular webinar was designed to be part one of a two part series. So, just coming back into some of the essentials that we need to set the foundation for the first two of the four steps of the school readiness process, the relationships – relationships. We know; we heard it from Angie. We know reflecting back into 1304 that the idea of trust has been something that was mandated way back 16 years ago but that is very much a part of our conversation today as we now move into the four step process around school readiness.

Something else that I just wanted to mention is Angie pointed out the various resources. So as we see these four steps, don't forget you have a document that has this particular four-step process discussed more in terms of infants and toddlers. So this is, again, where, as we're thinking about resources, really being able to think about, as Donald said, what are the questions, what do you know, what is it moving forward that can help you? That this is where that first step, setting up for yourself, reflecting back for most of our programs, to think about step one, which is establishing those school readiness goals. Most of our programs, I think on a national level, have done this. But really as a leader, thinking back, is this truly a birth to 5 set of school readiness goals? It's a part of, I think, what the resource that Angie mentioned around the four-step process but also something that Angie mentioned, which is a second resource, which is on school readiness goals for infants and toddlers.

So, a question that tends to come up quite a bit as we think about step one is we have five essential domains, but then how do we, if we have young infants, mobile infants and toddlers, really get to the essence of school readiness as we break out, whether it's through benchmarks or indicators is oftentimes the question that is related to what we see on this slide, the idea of a continuum. And as Angie was saying, this is not new. You have been collecting data for quite some time: looking at these 5 essential domains as leaders, making sure that you truly have at this point or moving forward your school readiness goals, these big umbrella goals.

They're programmatic. They are then what – as you think about your child level data that Angie mentioned earlier, they're connected. So, really being mindful of how do your program goals, those large umbrella school readiness goals, tie into what we'll be looking at in a few minutes but which are some of those other essential pieces that have to do with data and child data?

But I wanted to take a moment and come back into and really ask you as leaders, as you think about your birth to 3 goals, are they, as we see on this slide, cognitively, linguistically, and emotionally connected to the language and culture of your children's homes? Because that's where, again, as leaders, you know. You know the world you're working in right now, but really just taking a moment to think about that. What does it mean to you, and most importantly, what does it mean to the children and the families and the tribal communities in which you work? So, as you're reflecting on your – your school readiness goals, which as I mentioned a moment ago are really those big, those global, what it is

that we have as a vision for our infants and toddlers and how they are connected in if you are a birth to 5 program, so you're Early Head Start with Head Start.

But then as Angie was mentioning again a moment ago, how those program goals – and we'll talk about the aggregated data piece just briefly in a moment because, again, today's webinar is really just focused on the first two steps of the four-step process – but to think about that, how that data is connected into what is more of an ongoing data process. Because for our youngest of children, the ongoing observation and assessment that is required for infants and toddlers would be something that of course is not just done the two to three times a year. So we'll come back to that in a moment.

Something else I think that for all of us as leaders thinking about school readiness today is we want to also be mindful of the question that tends to come up around program options. Do we truly have a separate set of school readiness goals for our various program options? Remembering our babies are our babies, our toddlers are toddlers, whether they're served through the center or home-based; what we're looking at are those global, big pictures in the five essential domain areas. The way they are then implemented, as we saw in the slide earlier, and connected into not just the child data but what we saw that connected them, the experiences. That's where your program option piece is going to come in.

So again, we have some slides that are included for resource for future, but to just kind of keep in mind what some of those key pieces of 1304 along with 1306 and 1308 have done for us as we think about school readiness is to remind us of the holistic nature of our school readiness process. We have, of course, the health that includes the medical, dental, but also those family-focused activities that all connect in to the school readiness process.

So moving forward to that four-step process, and again as leaders, who has been a part of developing your school readiness goals? Do you, as you think back, have a leadership team that truly was reflective of the children and families in your tribal community? Were they individuals who know the birth to 3 piece? Were those goals also connecting to the 3 to 5? Do you have parents represented as part of your leadership team, tribal community, and perhaps non-tribal community depending where children transition for kindergarten? Were some of – when we think about health center people a part of your leadership team?

So, coming back into – for all the leaders, what are we looking at as we think about that four-step process and right now as we're about to transition into the second step from step one of the four-step process? The idea that we need everyone to really focus on this question: how are the children doing? I can't imagine there's one person who took time from their busy schedule today who didn't really start to do the work they do to the – at this moment in their tribal program, whether they began as a parent, as a volunteer, without a true caring nature for the babies in your program.

So really helping as leaders on a team and thinking about planning, what is it that shows us? What are the questions we want to ask that show us, that help us to truly know that every child is doing as well as we think about child outcomes as we would like them to do? That planning requires, as we think about 1304.51, to think about management systems, communication, self-assessment. I know these are not new concepts, but again, they can be tricky.

So just making sure as you come back into the guidance that our 1304, again within 51, give us, as we think about the second step in the four-step process, we need communication within the plan for families, for governing bodies. All of this is a piece of that part of 1304; that we want, as the slide

reminds us, for our action plan to be intentional. So as we think about management systems, how we ultimately, as we look at child outcomes and school readiness, can improve whenever necessary in a mindful way things like the quality of the adult-child engagement. Do we have, for example, opportunities for staff to stay with children through the entire day? Do we have as we think of that 1-4 ratio and group size of eight in our center-based care? Are those adults cared for themselves? Are they able to get down on the floor to truly be in a situation where they nurture those babies? Or for our home visitors, to feel that they can get out and to really spend the time that they need? Is there evidence as we think about school readiness of things that we as leaders and managers could do to help them?

That's the direction we're heading as we think about steps three and four. Culture, culture, culture. Again, just thinking about, from a systemic perspective and planning, how incredibly important, as we look at this particular slide, that cultural differences can actually be a source of stress for children, especially when the home language and the culture do not match the expectation and practices of school. I think for all of us as leaders it's a huge "a-ha." Having worked with some tribal programs where there are multiple Tribes that are served within one grantee, never taking for granted that any particular practice or language piece is going to be necessarily common to all children. There are terms of endearment, there are ways that we hold, we nurture, we feed our babies that make such a difference for them as we're thinking about their readiness, their feeling of security, and ability to engage in their immediate world.

So as we think about the plan, data collection, we're coming to the end here of the second step; and again, we have the four-step process. We'll only be talking briefly about the last two steps just to, again, think of that data collection plan. Who from the Policy Council is going to be a part of the plan? Who as we think about community partners? How will families be engaged in the planning process to really keep all of that in mind?

So as I mentioned earlier, of course this webinar is focused on the first two steps. So, we're just briefly going to mention the latter two of the – of the four-step process, and that's where, as Angie was saying earlier, don't be afraid of step three. As we think about digging deeper, that is what the data – the information that you have been collecting, you always have since 1304 came out and you were required to do ongoing observation and assessment of children; that you take the time as leaders and plan and be able to know what questions you are needing to ask so you can be sure that every child is doing as well as he or she should be doing, whether it's that infant, the toddler, or preschooler. Because really looking at that little baby on the slide and saying the data should help us to know when is that baby going to be ready. Are they truly ready? Are they getting all the support from the family and community that they need? And if not, what is it that we're doing?

That's what's step four is asking us as leaders: to take an opportunity to think about what's the next step. How can we – and we always know that we can – plan for improvement? What is the data telling us? That we have again gathered the three times a year, unless you're a program operating less than 90 days, and that would be the two times a year. That's the way the 1307 and the four steps are – this particular – step four, asking us to go back and use, again from a systemic perspective, that data to make those plans for improvement. Because ultimately, as we said earlier, we want to ask: are all children...

So, seeing from the data and then making the changes that are necessary, whether it's to give our teachers, our home visitors more training, whether it's to think about the outdoor environment and opportunities to play there. That the data, having teams of people within our programs who embrace

the data because they see themselves as leaders, whether they are individuals who are working in the kitchen to help prepare food, whether they are individuals who greet parents because they are at the center in the morning. Everyone wants to be curious about the data that's collected. We want to emphasize feedbacks of using the data with all of our planning so that ultimately we make, as we think about the school readiness goals, changes to program goals. Because ultimately, as Angie mentioned earlier when she showed the reference for this particular resource, we see how complex the school readiness piece is in relationship to all of the services provided within our program. That ultimately, by providing the highest of quality services within our tribal communities, we will have children who will follow the path of their ancestors and work like them and be successful.

So with that, thank you. I know Angie apologized for taking a little more time. I think I took even a little more of the more time, but thank you.

Angie: I think we're right on schedule, Sarah. That was great.

Sarah: Thank you. So, I want to turn it over now to Carol. Thank you.

Carol: Hello, everyone. I'd like to once again welcome those of you that joined in a little bit later, and welcome to Early Head Start programs and Head Start programs and other leaders and administrators that have joined us in this webinar. I have just a few minutes to – to reflect. So let's – let's reflect for a minute. And as you reflect, think about what you heard.

Think about the importance of helping to prepare our youngest children, our infants, our toddlers, and those that are pregnant, the life ahead to succeed in two worlds; and we know that. Also, how do we do this? One way is by giving them experience and skills, as much as we are able to, and that's what some of this webinar is about. Who can support us on this journey? As you have heard and you will hear again from our next speaker, Misty: the tribal leaders, the community partners, the Regional Office, and the Early Head Start National Resource Center, and of course most of all, the Office of Head Start and the new TA system.

And this is – this is another reason why we need to do it. We need to do it for our future leaders. We need to do it for the next generation. I too – I had been a parent in Head Start, and I too – and now, I'm a grandmother. So, it is so important for the next generation. Who knows, maybe this little one will be tribal chairwoman of her community in 30 years from now.

At this time, I would like to share with you – before I have our next speaker, I was thinking about the whole process of school readiness and I was trying to find an analogy, something that we can or that I can relate to, and I was thinking about some of our ceremonies and the feast. And that during, maybe, the day of the feast – it doesn't begin there. It begins maybe the day before, the preparation; and it may even begin before that: preparing the food, growing the food or maybe hunting for the food, or gathering or picking, or fishing the waters for the feast. So, we know as people we know how to plan. We know the importance of planning, as well.

So at this time, I would like to introduce – I am so thrilled and I feel honored to be able to have with us today, Misty Horne. She is the program director of the Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma. And as Donald had mentioned earlier, one of two Early Head Start programs standalone. And she has come today to join us from Perkins, Oklahoma. Hi, Misty. Thank you. Welcome.

Misty Horne: Thank you, Carol. And thank you for this opportunity to tell you about our journey that – that we are on with school readiness. First, I wanted to talk to you about what does school readiness look like in developing of our goals. In the beginning, honestly, it was just our small group of individuals, of our managers and myself, with our education goals in front of us. As we began reviewing the information sent out by EHS NRC, we started to realize that we needed to broaden our goals.

We needed to utilize our families with our goals, in both our individual program goals and our broad program goals. We needed to share with our families the outcomes; and sometimes during the sharing of that it included things that they do at home. And oftentimes as caregivers and professionals in the field, we found ourselves using the – the big developmental words and sometimes parents weren't quite understanding what we were talking about. So, we made a point of bringing the goals and the ideas to the parents in real life situations: things that we did in our community and that they might have done at home.

I think the most important thing is our local partnerships. When we sat down and began to look at the different partnerships throughout our community and Indian country, at one time or another we had reached out to both our tribal and non-tribal partners and agency. Some of that may include our tribal government, our community LEAs, and also the opportunity to work with our Part C partner, and also our HIS and our ICW department. All of us were partners in deciding what it is that the community looked at when it came to educating our children from the very beginning for their upcoming years in – in the kindergarten. And at first we didn't realize it, but we started to look at it and noticed that we already do this. And like Angie and Sarah said, these are things that we are doing and many of you are probably already doing on a daily basis. Try to focus on what it is that you're already doing instead of worrying about what we haven't done yet.

One of the most important things I think we have – we've learned in this journey is thinking about the services we've already provided for our families. And the more we learned about it, the more we realized that all we really needed to do is sit down and put a system in place, that we were – we were working this school readiness every day of every week. It was just getting the system and the documents to support what we had already began doing in our own communities.

I think one of the most important things that we needed to do was talk about how our children learn and focus on the way our children learn and center our goals around that. Center our goals around what it is we know our community's entry is for kindergarten and look at our children in how they learn and listen and how we ensure that they're going to be successful when they get to kindergarten. I felt like this was an opportunity for us to look at the new talking children.

One of – one of the things that we had in our program was we had a child who was learning both of her Tribe's languages and she was a new beginner. And one of the things that new talker – and one of the things that we noticed was we thought maybe she wasn't talking yet, but then realized after talking to the grandparents and the mother that she was telling us things in both of her languages. And so, that was an important key for us – is to not just listen to the children and see what the children are doing, but listen to the parents and the grandparents and those who are around the children and start building those goals around the things you see happening in your own – in your own classrooms, in your own families.

Our next step as we began to review and willing to admit that we – we didn't have all the answers is we move forward in implementing our goals, but we – one of the things we did is we reflected back. We

reflected back on where we – where we are and where we need to go. And one of the things we did is we began by saying, you know, we really do need to train our staff on our state readiness goals and alignment; the Performance Standards mandate us to. So we have gone and decided to – to train our entire staff on alignment. And it's not just the frontline caregivers. We're training all of our staff – our management team, myself – so we're all on the same page and hear all the same information when we come to the table with our group. We are working towards building that and educating others on it.

And it's also become an opportunity to become a mentor for all children in our community, not just the children that we serve internally in our program. We do plan on meeting on a regular basis with our group team that we are building. It's not complete yet. We're still learning every day, just like everyone else. And I also think it's important that we use our program specialists, that we utilize them as a partner in this process. They're just not the other person at the other end of the phone. They truly are our partners and can be a wealth of information for us.

So, I would like to take this opportunity and tell you a little bit about one of our partnerships, and that is with our tribal library. One of the things that we noticed that is a lot of times our families are not able to get either to the tribal library or the community library, just because of responsibilities – working, school, whatever the – the family's responsibilities may be. So, our – our tribal librarian came up with a wonderful idea in order to continue our literacy and school readiness is to bring the library to us. So she set up little buckets, as you can see in the pictures, that are actually library books from our tribal libraries that families are welcome to come and check out at any time on any basis and utilize them.

She also took it a step further and made take-home packets for families. And each one of them are centered around a different activity or theme, if you will. And she put all the information in there, from a book to a take-home activity, to a little – like the one in the picture, the zoo – there's pieces, and a puzzle, and there's also in some of the packets a little journal where the family can write down what they did with that packet and it stays for the next family to see. So, it's sharing of those ideas as the packet moves along. And they're all infant-toddler friendly, very age appropriate. And that is another way that we have begun utilizing our tribal community to include school readiness and one of our partners, which is our tribal library, on school readiness.

So, I just want to encourage each of you to realize you truly are not in this alone and you do have the answers. In the beginning, we were all scared. I'm not going to lie. [Laughter] We were all scared. And some of us even thought, "School readiness? What does that have to do with Early Head Start? That's a Head Start issue." And it's not. I mean, like Angie said, we are the foundation. You think about all the developmental things that go on from the moment a child is born, and the relationships, all of the skills that we provide them for – from birth to 3 is everything life is going to build on from this day forward.

So I just encourage each of you to keep continuing on and reach out to each one of your colleagues and just ask questions. That's how we all learn. And don't be afraid to say, "I don't understand this," or, "I don't think we're doing it right," and be able to reflect back on what you've done. And – and look within your own community; you have all your resources there within each other. And continue to work on it. Each one of you know what's best for your community. They're all very different. We may be all tribal communities, but they're all very different. And just continue to do what you do on a daily basis, and that is to care for the most important resource and that is our children.

Carol: Thank you, Misty. Miigwech; thank you. And I'm taking a moment to reflect what we heard, what we felt, and how we will move on. So at this time, Angie will – I'd like to send it back to Angie and she will reflect. That's a picture of Angie when she was younger. [Laughter]

Angie: I wish that was a picture of me when I was younger. Okay. I guess, you know, Donald and I have known each other for years and he knows – we've worked well together and – and we both know we can rely on each other at any given time around the work. Sarah and I are the same way. We – we've worked together on and off for years and she brings the most amazing spirit to the work. And Carol, thank you for the reflections. And I'm sure I'll talk more in my summary, but Misty...

One of the things that I've learned – and I won't even talk about how many years I've worked in this field – is the – the ability of each of us in our life's work to learn from those that we think we serve. And you really did talk about it in a way that brings it to life, and I just – I appreciate so much that you took the time to come. I appreciate EHS NRC because we need time to sit and talk about these things. And your ability to talk to us and then to talk to your peers does make it more meaningful. Because it is – I loved when you said, "Know what you're doing and then develop a system." That was – that is just key. You – you knew you were doing things.

We're very good in the government at, like, scaring you with lots of new regulations and new words; right, Donald? [Laughter] And then you – you looked at it all, you internalized it, you brought your community in, and then you brought it back to us, and in a way that made a lot of sense. And I – I spend a lot of time – I work with Sarah Merrill, particularly around school readiness, and spend a – we spend a lot of time thinking, "How do we make it clear so that these are the Standards you must meet but that it's also meaningful for people?" And I think that you really brought that.

The other thing you said that I just loved was, "Work with your program specialist." I think the strongest programs I've been in were programs that had these incredible relationships with their program specialist where they each understood what was happening. And Sarah mentioned earlier that they had a session with program specialists before this one and I think, again, it's trying to build a path. And I know we will – we will get there. I think it's so important to understand how to bring school readiness goals to life. And you really did that; and I want to thank you for that. It's a lot of information.

Sarah and I were talking, we wanted to make sure that we were – we were careful, not rushing it. And I just felt that you really looked at it in a way that's so important and that's broad. One of the things that I think that we've spent a lot of time with is: what does it look like birth to 5? And I appreciate that you're birth to 3, but I think your language around the broadness was very important because programs need broad goals that then look differently for – for very young children.

You know, when I think about language and I think about – I love what you talked about the children learning dual language. Some of the best language experiences I've had visiting Early Head Start programs were tribal programs where – where children were kind of embraced by their language, by elders who came in, by staff who knew the tribal language as well as English. And – and that there was so much importance for babies particularly put on listening. And I love that, because as – as babies listen, they will learn how to talk to those around them. So, I thought this was really great.

Only because he's older than I am, I'm going to defer to Donald for our final set. [Laughter] Oh, is there another – oh, okay. Is this your slide, Donald? No? No, that's it. Okay. Okay, and then – oh, Carol's telling me I'm not done yet. [Laughter] So these are – oh, okay, so I am done. Okay. Thank you, Carol.

Donald: Thank you, Grandma; appreciate it. [Laughter] Misty, thank you for that presentation. Hearing how you talked about your program, it was truly like hearing an angel speak. I think everyone felt exactly what was going on at the Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma. And having had an opportunity to visit your program, it was exactly on point. I appreciate – I think everyone really felt exactly what was happening in your program, and everybody should take that to heart.

And I do understand – I remember your fear factor. So, overcoming all of those obstacles is key to operating a very good school readiness program. And one – one of the things that Misty said in her presentation was: inquiry, ask the questions, questions, questions, questions. That's what we do; that's why we're here. That's why Sarah is here. That's why Angie is here. That's why Carol is here. That's why I am here. We are here to assist you and answer the questions that you have around – around this initiative of school readiness that most of you, as that Misty said, are already doing.

For closing, I just really want to thank you for taking the time to participate on the call and I really trust that it was worth the time that you invested in your children and families. And even though this webinar is ending, the learning is only beginning. We in Region XI, our staff, our TA partners at – at FHI 360, the National Centers, are all ready to assist you as you go forward. We really, really appreciate the time you spent. Good luck to you. And we have another presenter who – I'm giving it back to Carol Mills, who has been our hostess with the mostess.

Carol: Thank you, Donald. Thank you. At this time, we will be able to answer some of the questions that have come in. But I would like to say, also, thank you, Donald, and thank you to Angie, and thank you to Sarah, and to – thank you to Misty. So we do have a few questions that have come in. And I believe the first question, Angie – Angie will address that.

Angie: Hi. Yeah, it actually is about school readiness, the action steps. It's – someone said that I mentioned, when I referenced the action steps, that there were some for infants and toddlers. And – I would – and that many AIAN programs have both Head Start and Early Head Start programs and it may be helpful for them that there are – to know there are four steps that should be applied differently for infants and toddlers. And I would answer it by saying that I think that they – they give you guidance.

I always – when I talk about school readiness, I – I think it's important to talk about what it looks like. What does it look like for an infant-toddler? What does it look like for a preschooler? I said to folks, you know, who work with kindergarteners, "Every time you see something a kindergartener is doing, you should be able to follow all the way back to what happened when that child was a baby that helps them to do the things they do, whether it's sitting or reading or writing. That – that didn't just happen when the child turned 5, that there was a long road to get there."

And so, I think one of the things that we did with the – the school readiness for infants and toddlers, the four action steps for infants and toddlers. And again, I – I do have to thank – many people worked on those. Sarah Merrill, the Early Head – the staff of the Early Head Start National Research Center that have spent a lot of time working on these things, put a lot of time into it, and I appreciate all the time that they did.

And I just want to say that when you look at the four action steps, those are across birth to 5. But when you look at the action steps for infants and toddlers, I think one of the first things it says is that when you're setting – when you're setting goals for infants and toddlers, it's important to understand that

those goals should reflect the rapid growth and development of infants and toddlers and that you see those goals as foundational. If – you know, if we look at language and literacy and the goals in language and literacy, they look very different for a baby than even a toddler; and then you think about preschool. It's what I said earlier: so much of language and learning for – for babies is the – the sounds of the world around them.

It is having, certainly, books in the classroom, but having the – the songs and the prayers of their members of their community, of their families, in their mind; having, you know, someone talk to them when they're feeding them about what they're eating. All of that support of receptive language leads to a child's ability to express language. So listening and receptive language is what you would look for around language development with an infant. You might have the same broad goal, is that you are expecting children to move forward in their development of language, but it – but it changes over time. How does a toddler hold a book? You know, that becomes part of what we're talking about when we're talking about understanding language.

And then one of the things, and I think back – I'm not sure which goal it is, but one of my favorite things in an example of a goal was kind of the explosion of words in toddlers. How, you know, when the child can be 2, can be 3, can be 3-and-a-half, suddenly the words just start to pour out. And it's very different from the kinds – how we expect a preschooler to use language. We just are understanding that we want to see the growth of language.

I always think of a story – this is not quite related, but I think it's how we learn, by – by listening and observing. And I was in a – in a group of adults and children, and there was a little guy – he was, I don't know, maybe 14, 15 months old – and people were eating. And he walked up to his mom and he said, "Cracker come." And I thought, "Oh, my god." There wasn't a person in the – in the room that did not know that "cracker come" meant I'm hungry and I want that. You know? And – but it was just – those are the kinds of things where if you're setting goals – preschool goals and expecting toddlers and infants to meet those goals, then they're not foundational. And it's what Misty was talking about. So, it's important to think about that.

Sorry, I gave a long answer. But I do think that – that EHS NRC, the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning, and the other folks have worked – worked closely to align and build. And – and as you work on those documents, I think you'll find that. And if you have any questions about – I think every time we talk about the new TA system over here people get very excited. And the National Center is here to help you, so just know that there's a lot of support to help you develop your goals. And remember what Misty said: you're doing the work, just build the system around it. So, sorry if I took too long.

Carol: No, you – you didn't. Build and they will come. We have a question in, and I believe Misty would be able to answer this question about how she's serving children with disabilities and the relationship of Part C. Misty?

Misty: Well, I think this is actually a two-fold question; if I misunderstood your question, I apologize. But I think as we start partnering with our Part Cs and around school readiness, it's important also to realize that these children will transition into our LEAs or your local school program, and that's where we have the opportunity to build those partnerships that I was talking about. And as we build these partnerships, it opens up the door for us to talk about each one of the children. And it's also our opportunity to – to let your school know how your children learn. As we know, most native communities, our children learn

by watching and listening and learning from – from their environment. And a lot of times, when you go into the public schools and they want everyone to sit down, be quiet, and just do this, and – and our children are more hands on.

And I think when you're working with children with disabilities, that we need to look at – we've had these children, some of them since – some of them since conception, and then we know these children very well and it's our opportunity to offer that continuous school readiness. Tell those LEAs and use your partnership with your Part C to broaden your partnership with your LEA and build on that. And giving the schools the tools they need to better serve the children that you have been serving for so long and – and love, it's almost like passing the baton, but telling them how to run with it. So I think that's – that's really important when we're working with, not just children with disabilities, but all of our children.

Carol: Great. Thank you, Misty. We have another question pertaining to steps three and four – question about data. Sarah, would you be able to enlighten us a little bit more about data and the analyzing of that data and what data should be used? Thank you.

Sarah: Sure, and I don't want to give too much away because the next webinar will focus on steps three and four. But coming back, since the question came in, and really thinking back on to the third step, which, as we were talking earlier in the webinar, asks programs to assess child progress. So that's something, as Angie had said earlier, you have been doing as programs on an ongoing basis. And so, that's all a part of the language of the third step. But the piece that appears to be new, and I've had – heard some people say – instead of the word "aggregate," they confuse it with the word "aggravate;" that people tend to get a little aggravated with – is this idea of what is it when we talk about aggregating data do we mean. And a colleague of mine, Bob Stetchek does a lovely job of explaining.

So I wanted to just take a moment and use an example that he oftentimes uses, which is how we live in a world of aggregated data. And one of his favorite examples, so I think it will help us all as we think about step three, think about it as far as child data, but what we're really talking about is, oftentimes, in our own world, things like gas prices – that we'll read in the paper what on a national level is the average of cost of a gallon of gas. But what we're really oftentimes more interested in as consumers is what, by state, by community, the average cost for a gallon of gas is. And I – and I compare that to some extent with kind of what's happening with the aggregating of data.

We can say "across a program;" so that's what, when we're aggregating data, we are grouping it. And so, there are going to be some interesting things that will come out of a global use of aggregated data that could tell us from a programmatic perspective what, in terms of school readiness, we might find. But then coming back down to some of the more specific things that might be more useful as you think about the school readiness goals for your program; so coming back from the national gas price into the state.

You might want to be looking more at what classroom by classroom or across your classrooms or across your case loads, what is the data looking like? Is it different depending on the number of years that a teacher has been employed in the program? Or does it look different by males and females? There are lots of different questions when you aggregate, when you group data, that can help you come back and move in to step four. If I'm beginning to see real differences – so if I'm in a community looking back at the gas price example where I'm paying very little, or maybe I'm living adjacent to one that's paying a lot, what's kind of leading us to that?

So coming back into what makes the difference for the child data, and then what as a program, as a leader, do I need to do? That's step four, to – to make it so that as we come back to the statement of earlier: all children doing well. So using Angie's example of language, is it perhaps that we're seeing lower language scores when we think about expressive language? So perhaps – coming back to the example of culture, perhaps we have teachers where – really speaking with the children. This is something that we're oftentimes coaching teachers around, because unless you understand that children learn through the relationships they form, they have to feel safe.

So coming back to Angie's idea, we want to see school readiness. What does this all look like? Well, coming back to step four, if the aggregated data is telling us that there are certain classrooms or caseloads where children's expressive language isn't where it should be, I would suggest that we come back and look at step four with the continuous improvement, look at staff training, look at some of the other factors that ultimately can bring all children to where we would like them to be, which is moving forward around all areas, but in this example, the language.

So that's where, I think, we just really don't want... I loved what Misty said. Look at where you are. You've been gathering data. You have from a systemic perspective, as – as we heard Misty say, been using this information. So just to make sure, as we think about the pyramid, that Framework, that you look at that school readiness piece in the context of all the other services. And ultimately, at the top of the pyramid, the yellow triangle at the very top, it's the child outcome. All of that is taking us to that step four. The continuous improvement has led us to the – where all of our children are succeeding.

Carol: Great answer. Thank you. Thank you, Sarah. We have another question that has come in. And I will invite Donald to address this question about – asking about TA, technical assistance.

Donald: Okay, thanks. As you know, AIAN Region XI has been without technical assistance for almost a year now. But over the last month, we've finally gotten our TA contractor in place, FHI 360. And the unfortunate part about being without TA for such a long period of time was it was just about the time that the school readiness processes were kicking off, which put certainly at a decided disadvantage. But nonetheless, program specialists at Region XI stepped up. We still held our school readiness calls. We still provided TA. We still did all of the things that were necessary to continue upgrading our American Indian and Alaska Native programs.

Now we have a group of colleagues that are ready to come on site pretty soon here to give you some on-site TA, to continue that growth and development, to continue the development of school readiness goals, and to help out with the four steps that were mentioned today, especially around the – the use of the data, the collection of the data, and what all that data means and maybe how to interpret some of that data, and then, more importantly, how to readjust your program based on that data.

So again, you know, we're just beginning. The TA contract has been on board for a little less than a month now. So, you know, you – be on look out for more information, for rollouts, and things like that. But we'll be in your communities really, really soon.

Carol: Great. Thank you, Donald, for that. Before we close, I would like to ask Misty if she would be willing to share her last thoughts, closing words – or actually, it may be a beginning thought because it's not the end, it's the beginning. It's the continuous of future generations. Misty?

Misty: As a closing thought, I would just like each of you to move forward and – and think that – think of this process as a journey. Just like I started telling you about our journey, each – each day is a journey, and it's our opportunity and our chance in this journey that we call life to – to be that special someone to move our children forward and get them ready for school. And, as we all know, the parents and the grandparents and – are our children's first teachers. But in the tribal community, we're – we're all a family. And we need to move forward as – as our place in the family and be part of our children's journey, and just allow school readiness to be – be the words and the wisdom that we're following as we do what we know is right for our children, and that is to prepare them for the future. So I would just like each of you to take that with you as you embark on your journey to school readiness. Thank you.

Carol: Thank you, Misty. Some – some of you may be wondering whether the slides will be available in this PowerPoint presentation. And – and yes, it will be. It will be in the near future.

Angie: Yeah. They will go up on the ECLKC. And again, we don't have a date for when that will happen, but when – when we do, they will go up and folks can access them. And we'll talk about if we can pull those slides out and send to people. I can – I – yeah, I think we probably could do that, too. So we'll talk about that, Carol. Thanks.

Carol: Okay, great. Great, Angie. Also, before we do close, I would like to invite you to... Tomorrow you may receive an email about an evaluation. This was a unique opportunity, and we would like to continue doing – providing you more webinars, perhaps. So if you would be willing to complete the evaluation, we will be able to continue to support you specifically with some of the needs and interests that you have been able to identify.

So with that, I would like to say thank you to all of you that called in today from all over the country – all over Indian country, so 27 states. Thank you. I'd like to also say thank you to Early Head Start National Resource Center. They have hosted this webinar. And I've been honored to be your moderator for this webinar. And, of course, we would like to say thank you to the Office of Head Start, Angie – Angie Godfrey and Sarah Merrill, and all those that are also there. And last but not least, Donald. We are so thrilled that Donald Wyatt has been able to participate in the webinar. But for those of you that know him, many of you know he is very committed and passionate and knowledgeable, and committed to serving you in your programs in Indian country. And he said I can give out his cell phone number. [Laughter] I'm sorry, I just couldn't help say that.

So with that, thank you to LimeLeap, who made this possible; they are our in-house IT folks. And we will see you somewhere sometime in Indian country. Aho.