

Yvette Sanchez Fuentes: Good afternoon, I'm Yvette Sanchez Fuentes, the Director of the Office of Head Start. Since its inception, Head Start has played a major role in focusing the nation's attention on the importance of a child's first five years of life. The Early Head Start program evolved out of Head Start's long history of providing services to infants and toddlers through Parent and Child Centers, Comprehensive Child Development Centers, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Programs and other early childhood development and family support efforts serving families with very young children.

This year's expansion of Early Head Start services is unprecedented. It is the largest one-time expansion for Early Head Start in the history of the program and will support the enrollment of additional children and families, as well as create new teaching and other positions in Early Head Start programs.

Early Head Start received 1.1 billion dollars in funding, and, as a result, grantees will have the opportunity to serve approximately 50,000 additional infants, toddlers, pregnant women, and their families who are not currently enrolled in Early Head Start or Migrant and Seasonal Head Start. This expansion almost doubles the number of participants nationwide, and programs will be hiring more than 10,000 new staff members.

We, at the Office of Head Start, could not be more thrilled to welcome all of these new infants, toddlers and their families into Early Head Start, as well as the new staff members who will be serving them. It is truly a special time to be working in the field of early care and education. As we embark on this expansion effort, it's helpful to take a look back and reflect on the history and significance of the Early Head Start program. To do this, let's take a look at an excerpt from the video, "Understanding Early Head Start."

[Video begins] [Music] Narrator: What hopes and dreams do we hold for a young child, for her family, for America? It is widely known and accepted that the foundation for learning is set in the first three years of life. Relationships formed with adults during these years set the course for all future development. In 1994, Congress created Early Head Start to take full advantage of the potential for learning and development at the youngest ages. Gayle Cunningham was a member of the Early Head Start Advisory Committee.

Gayle Cunningham: I think if there was any turning point in this country's commitment to infants and toddlers it had to have been the information we were receiving about brain development. It was almost astonishing to realize that, in spite of all our efforts for three- and four-year-old children, very often we

were too late, because the needs for development, for stimulation, for good growth really came from birth.

Narrator: All children from birth to age three need early child development experiences that honor their unique characteristics and provide love, warmth, and positive learning experiences -- and all families need encouragement and support from their community so they can achieve their own goals, and provide a safe and nurturing environment for their very young children. [Video ends]

Yvette: As this video shows, Early Head Start was created in response to research that demonstrated that the first three years of life are a period of unparalleled growth and that a child's health and development are directly influenced by the quality of care and experiences he has with his family and other adults.

Based on this research, Early Head Start was designed to serve low-income pregnant women and families with children ages birth to three, providing family-centered services that facilitate child development, support parenting skills, and promote self-sufficiency. The mission of Early Head Start is to promote healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women, to enhance the development of very young children, and to promote healthy family functioning.

What makes it all worthwhile? For so many of us it all comes down to one thing: a passion for babies and the potential they hold. The infants and toddlers we serve are our nation's future. The work that we do is essential to getting them off to a strong start in life so that they are prepared for success by the time they enter kindergarten.

Providing services to infants and toddlers and their families is one of the best investments we can make in our country. Thanks to you, children and families across the country are thriving, and we're counting on your leadership to help ensure that they continue to receive the care and education they need.

Lillian Sugarman: Thank you, Yvette, for that wonderful introduction. And thank all of you for joining us today. I'm Lillian Sugarman, the Director of the Early Head Start National Resource Center, and I'll be your moderator today. I'm so pleased to welcome you all into the Early Head Start family, and help you kick off your exciting new efforts to serve infants and toddlers, pregnant women, and their families.

Today, you'll hear from our panel about the joys and rewards of working in Early Head Start, some of the lessons they've learned along the way, and the impact that the program has had on children and families they've worked with.

Many of you joining us today are brand new to Head Start and Early Head Start. Others have been with Head Start, Migrant Head Start, or Early Head Start for many years. You may have had an existing Early Head Start program, and have now expanded your efforts to serve additional pregnant women, infants, and toddlers in your community, or you may have had a Head Start program, and are now reaching out to serve pregnant women and children ages birth to three, or maybe you've been serving babies and toddlers in Migrant and Seasonal Head Start.

No matter what your circumstances, the most important thing for you to know is that you are not alone. You have a terrific network of colleagues across the country who stand ready to support you, to cheer you on, and to offer whatever assistance they can to help ensure your success. And I have some of them with me here today.

First, I'd like to introduce Angie Godfrey. Angie is the Infant and Toddler Program Specialist at the Office of Head Start. Angie has years of experience working with Head Start, Early Head Start, and infant and toddler programs, and staff. She worked with American Indian and Alaska Native programs for several years, supporting both Head Start and Early Head Start.

Next, we have Sharon Yandian, Early Language Specialist for the Office of Head Start. And Sharon's work focuses on improving the quality of services offered in Head Start and Early Head Start to children who are dual language learners.

And the third person we have here today is Dora Jones. She's the Program Director of Cheaha Regional Head Start in Talledega, Alabama. Dora has served as Cheaha's Program Director since 1999, and wrote the original application in 2001 to get their Early Head Start program off the ground. She is also a licensed Nurse who brings her many years of experience as an OB-GYN nurse to her program's support of pregnant women and expectant families.

And finally, I'd like to introduce Magdalena Rosales Alban. She's the Assistant Director at LULAC Head Start/Early Head Start in New Haven, Connecticut. Magdalena has 13 years of experience with Head Start, including 10 years working with Early Head Start in two different programs. She had the

opportunity to start up, implement, and see the two programs grow over time, so she has lots of wonderful stories about those experiences to share with us today. Welcome to all of you.

Today's webcast will feature a discussion with our four panelists, and we'll also have time at the end for a live Q and A. If you have any questions for our panelists, you can submit them by typing them into the Q and A field on the right side of your browser. You may also send any comments or suggestions you have to the e-mail address you see on your screen now: ehswebcast@esi-dc.com.

Angie, to start our discussion off, I thought it might be helpful if you gave us a little context. Can you share with us a bit about how Early Head Start differs from Head Start, and how the developmental needs of babies and toddlers drive those differences?

Angie Godfrey: Sure, Lillian, and thank you, and welcome again to everyone. For 45 years, Head Start has provided comprehensive child development services to low-income children and their families. For the past 16 of those years, Early Head Start has completed the circle of care by serving pregnant women, children ages birth to three, and their families. It might be helpful to see some of the differences between the two programs. First, let's take a look at a typical pre-school Head Start classroom -- something that many of you are familiar with.

[Video begins] Teacher 1: Can we say, "Good morning, Miss Dushayla?"

Teacher 1 and Children: Good morning, Miss Dushayla.

Miss Dushayla: Good morning.

All: Good morning. [Singing] These are my friends and my friends are your friends. The more we get together the happier we'll be.

[Lots of talking in classroom]

Teacher 2: Did you finish your milk? Okay, wait for your friends. Stay in the chair. Wait for your friends. You will brush your teeth all together. [Video ends]

Angie: That was a wonderful but complete look at what a Head Start classroom might look like. Now let's compare what we just saw to a typical Early Head Start classroom. As you will see, there are several

differences between classrooms serving pre-school-age children and classrooms serving infants and toddlers. As we look at the center-based option for Early Head Start, we can talk about some of those differences. One is the environment. Early Head Start classrooms look and feel different.

There is a difference in the furniture and in the equipment. There are cribs in the classroom, there's fewer furniture in the classroom. Another environmental difference is a little more subtle, but very intentional. Infants and toddlers can be easily overwhelmed and over-stimulated by their environments, so Early Head Start classrooms provide calm environments, without too many bright colors or bright lights, or too many distractions. The environment supports the ability of babies and toddlers to move and explore and grow in a warm environment.

A much more obvious difference is the noise level. Just like with colors and light, in Early Head Start classroom, voices tend to be softer. The Head Start classroom is filled with many more children, and many more group-oriented activities. Pre-schoolers need the stimulation of a variety of materials and equipment that are appropriate for their learning and playing experiences, and their daily interactions in center-based care.

You may have also noticed there are fewer children in the Early Head Start classroom. That is because Head Start Program Performance Standards mandate a 4-to-1 child-teacher ratio for Early Head Start. There is a maximum group size of eight children in a classroom, so there are two teachers per group of eight children.

Early Head Start environments for center-based, home-based, and family child care are all designed to support the unique needs of infants and toddlers and what we know about how they develop. We know from research that relationships are essential to babies' healthy development. It is through relationships with their parents and other caregivers that babies come to know the world and understand their place in it. They learn what others expect of them and what they can expect of others.

Babies are constantly communicating with adults in all kinds of ways -- babbling and cooing, making eye contact, crying, moving around. It's the caring adult's job to observe all of those signals, to notice them, and to understand what it is that a baby's trying to tell us, and then to respond appropriately.

When we do that, babies learn that their efforts to communicate work. This encourages them to communicate more, through gestures and sounds, and later, through words. Babies also learn to trust

that caring adults will be there for them. This gives them the confidence to explore their environment even more. Lillian?

Lillian: Thanks, Angie. You've mentioned some very important aspects of development that occur during the time infants and toddlers are enrolled in Early Head Start -- and you've shared some distinctions between Early Head Start and Head Start for infants and toddlers and Head Start for pre-schoolers.

These last few examples you mentioned -- learning about communication and relationships, and learning to trust -- make me wonder if they create some differences in how the Early Head Start home-based and family child care program options compare to the pre-school Head Start. Could you talk a little bit about some of that?

Angie: Sure, Lillian. You've highlighted an important point. Developing relationship, communication, and trust are very basic to a child's development and affect everything that happens later on for a child.

In Early Head Start, program staff are present in families' lives at a time -- and in a way -- that can influence and support the development of healthy parent-child relationships. This is particularly true in Early Head Start home-based option. The weekly visits in the home really support a positive aspect of the baby's and the family's development. Let's take a look at a short video about the home-based program option.

[Video begins]

Shawn Liedley (Isaiah's father): She's helped me learn that, you know, you can always not -- you never give too much. Sometimes I'll get frustrated, and like when I -- when she first started coming I'd get frustrated when he'd do something, and it just helps me out a lot and gives me motivation to -- to keep giving it a whole bunch of efforts and pays off. It's cool.

Home-based Teacher: The focus for me is to -- ignite, so to speak, a parent's passion and love in supporting their child, and it's a lovely example of success for this young mom with her toddler when maybe other parts of her life are a challenge and a struggle.

She's doing a lovely job and it's like filling her cup so she can continue to fill her child's cup. [Music] My hopes and my dreams for Chenay and Shawn is to stay true and strong to their goals -- that they stay true to their child and their support in being there for him as he continues to need them throughout his life. [Video ends]

Angie: Responsive relationship-building is the foundation of Early Head Start in center-based, home-based, and family child care options. Relationships in Head Start build on the relationships that have been created in Early Head Start. Sharon, is there something you might like to add?

Sharon Yandian: Sure, thanks, Angie. It is so wonderful to be here. Because research has shown that relationships are so essential to babies' healthy development, Early Head Start emphasizes continuity of care. The concept of continuity of care minimizes the number of adults that a child interacts with. This supports attachment between caregivers, home visitors, parents, and children, and it can happen in a number of different ways.

For example, one caregiver or home visitor can follow the child from the time of enrollment through their transition out of Early Head Start. Think of how important that history together can be. The important thing is that the child has as little disruption in their daily life as possible. We know that infants and toddlers thrive on routines that teach them what to expect, and how to make sense of their world.

Continuity of care is also important to the trusting relationships that parents develop with caregivers. Caregivers should learn from parents how their baby is cared for at home and any cultural practices or special words or songs they use to comfort their child. Doing this is one important step in helping babies feel more secure in your care.

At the same time, parents may learn from the caregiver about what happens during the day, and when the baby does something new. Open, genuine communication increases the bond the parents and caregivers have, and helps ensure stability and security for the baby.

This is very important to babies' development because when the babies feel safe and secure, they can use their energy to explore the world around them and try new things, and that's really what makes their brains grow and develop. So that's why you'll see continuity of care as an essential part of any Early

Head Start environment. Also, it's important to remember that the idea of continuity applies to the home-based option, as well.

Because we want the relationship between the Early Head Start staff and the parents to provide a model for the parent-child relationship, it's important to have continuity in home visiting staff so they can maintain strong relationships with parents the entire time they are enrolled in this option.

Angie: Thanks, Sharon. When we think about continuity, it reminds me to mention that for all Early Head Start programs -- program options, babies and toddlers are served full-day/full-year. There are many questions from all of you about what full-day/full-year means, and we are working at it at the Office of Head Start. We're trying to develop more specific definitions through the revision of the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

But let me say that continuity of service throughout the day and through the -- throughout the year provides ongoing and consistent care to babies and toddlers, and supports families in your community. We should also note that the Prog -- Head Start Program Performance Standards require all Head Start programs have a written curriculum, and the Early Head Start curriculum looks very different from the Head Start curriculum.

Infants and toddlers learn new skills through their everyday interactions. They need to explore their environments -- including both the materials and people in those environments -- at their own pace using all of their senses in order to make sense of the world around them. We're not going to spend a lot of time with curriculum today, but it's important to know that your curriculum should be developed through observations, conversations with families, and thoughtful planning that supports individual experiences for each baby and toddler.

It is designed to support the comprehensive development of each child, and is integrated throughout the daily experience of each child. It's not our goal to discuss these concepts in detail today, as I said, but I think it's helpful to have at least touched on some of the key principles of Early Head Start, so we all have a common framework for our discussion today. Thank you, Lillian.

Lillian: Thanks, Angie. And I'd also like to let our viewers know about the 3-part webcast series called "Building Blocks: The Essentials of Early Head Start" that the EHS NRC produced last year. I think they could be very helpful. These webcasts went into great detail on many of the topics you and Sharon have

touched on today, and can be accessed on the ECLKC. Now, Dora and Magdalena, I'd like to turn to you to hear about what principles that Angie and Sharon shared that you can tell us about -- that look like -- how they look in action.

So, let's see, why don't you give us a start telling us a little bit about the background and history of your program. What was it like in the very beginning? Magdalena, do you want to start?

Magdalena Rosales-Alban: Thank you, thank you, Lillian, it's an honor to be here with you all. Early Head Start came to our community in 2001 with 48 slots, and to an existing Head Start program. The start-up time took longer than what we expect. A lot of community education needed to be done. Families were not ready to leave their babies in hands of somebody that they did not know. They also were not ready to accept it was essential for them to be in, because at that time, child care for infant and toddlers was rare in the community.

Then, also, a lots of training and workshops needed to be developed for the care providers, and for the staff who work in the centers. They did not know how to talk to babies, and they did not know how to treat the babies. Many times they want the babies to be changed at the same time -- all at the same time. They want the babies to eat all at the same time, and that was not quite how it works. They are not ready to do that, so that was the main of the challenges at the beginning, and to ensure that they have quality care, and -- and that we are providing what they need.

Lillian: Mm hm, thank you. Dora, would you like to tell us your story? Do you remember from the very beginning when you started Early Head Start? How was it for you?

Dora Jones: Oh yes. Let me say thank you, first of all, for being here. It's an honor for me to be here today. Thinking back, I remember -- we started our Early Head Start program in 2001 also, and during the start-up phase while we were waiting to get started, we had to do a lot of education -- not just with staff and parents, but also with the community because we needed community support. So when we started we had 24 slots for infants and toddlers and eight pregnant women, and it was something that the community really welcomed.

We made partnerships with the high school because of teen pregnancy, and, in a way to help the teenagers to remain in school, Early Head Start was a big advantage for them to have safe, nurturing places to leave their baby, and that they could continue their education. The staff was really, really

interested and motivated. They worked very hard. The managers throughout the Head Start program in the different service areas were very excited.

We partnered with people from breast-feeding, and we partnered with different agencies in the community that could help. Our nutritionist was very involved working with the WIC offices. We wanted to learn more about proper techniques for a formula, and how to save it, and what was the best way to do it in the classroom that it would be safe for the baby.

The parents were educated. We brought them in. We showed films on natural childbirth, we talked about what it would be like to be one of the pregnant women attending the Head Start, and give them all the advantages for being an Early Head Start pregnant woman, so it really went well. It did require a lot of teaching, and I think all of the excitement from everyone in the community helped us to get the program off, and it was running very well.

We also had to empower staff, because each person that was taking a part in this, since it was new, needed to feel and to have an important role, so they took it upon themselves to learn more about what they could do in their particular service area so that families could really benefit and get the great reward of having their children in Early Head Start, and, as we know, Early Head Start really is the foundation for the learning point -- so that was a big start. We were excited and we still are happy about it.

Lillian: Yeah, that sounds great. Thank you both -- you -- for sharing, and it sounds like you and Magdalena had really motivated staff, but I'm sure it wasn't easy for them to begin working with infants and toddlers if they had never done so before. So Magdalena, you mentioned some of the fears that staff had about working with babies. What were some of the most challenging aspects of that, and how did you overcome those challenges?

Magdalena: Well, as I mentioned before, they were absolutely scared because they did not know how to work with them, and also something that I forgot to mention is about, we have to train them -- staff -- about how to deal with parents, also. How we overcome -- through a lot of conversation, a lot of training, explaining to staff that this is a process, that it was going to take time and patience, that they need to learn also, in order to pass on, the importance of developing the trust with the families -- it was key.

By helping them to understand how parents feel at that time, they really did start doing a -- a better job. Parents -- staff were used to deal with the parents who left the pre-schoolers and the classrooms and "Goodbye," and some of the children cry. And this time, they have to learn how to help the parents to overcome the feeling of leaving the children at the center, the babies at the center. So now they have to console these parents who were crying. There was a big change. There were, at the time, children crying. Now this time their parents are crying; they did not want to leave.

Many of them call many times during the day. They want to know how they're doing, and little by little, we have to explain to them that instead of helping, they are interrupting the relationship -- though they -- they did do a good job, but a lot of conversation, a lot of training, a lot of guidance because staff want to do a good job. It is up to us to provide them with resources and what they need in order to do that.

Lillian: Yes, thank you for sharing that, and I think you touched on some really important things. You allowed your staff to learn about trusting relationships, and you mentioned something about patience, which is very, very important for caregivers, and it sounds like you gave your staff a lot of your own patience to allow them to learn. Angie, you've been talking to a lot of programs yourself from across the country, and they're in the process of starting up. What kinds of things do they tell you about their experiences?

Angie: Well, I just -- I love what Magdalena just said when she was talking about the relationship with the families, and when Dora was talking about building relationships with the community, and I think it's so important. I think as programs are -- have so many challenges that they're facing right now: trying to pull their program together, hire staff, recruit and bring families into the program.

And I think that it's -- it is very difficult, but I like to think that what's at the heart of what programs are doing are building relationships with each other -- staff with their leaders, like Dora and Magdalena, and then staff with families, and staff and families with babies, so just the whole process of people beginning to talk to each other, discover what it is that everyone needs, and then meeting those needs with the focus being serving the infants -- the babies and the toddlers. So...

Lillian: Thanks, Angie. And Sharon, what kinds of things do new Early Head Start programs need to take into consideration for children who are dual language learners, and what kinds of questions do you typically get from programs when they're starting out?

Sharon: Wow, that's a big question. You know, I think the first thing is just -- even just thinking about what is the definition of children who are dual language learners, and for our Early Head Start children, it's really children who are acquiring two languages at the same time.

You know, depending on your program or the configuration of your staffing, and the languages that you are able to offer, you know, the child may be speaking another language at home, and they may be hearing that language in the classroom or in the home-base, or they may be hearing English. So we have two children -- children acquiring two languages at once, and I think the important thing is, we're talking about children learning in two languages, and we want to emphasize that when we're -- when we're thinking about children, those strengths that they bring.

And so I think the question that comes to mind is -- there are many questions -- but the first one that comes to mind is, "How can I hire staff that speak all of the languages?" You know, we see the deer in the headlights, you know.

Well, you know, in a perfect world it would be great -- 1-to-1 ratio, we'd hire -- and we know that that's not possible. And we also know, when we're talking about communication and relationships, we want to -- we want to try to do the very best at communicating, and so, you know, we're -- we're not able to do that, and that's -- and we realize that, but we have to remember that it's not just about the teachers in the classroom, but it's about the systems that you have in place that support the other staff and the parents, and the importance of policies.

What are we -- what have we been thinking about in terms of how we support our children and families who speak languages other than English? Across the way, you know, the transportation -- thinking about things we have in writing, what we make available? How are we -- what do we all believe around children learning in two languages? We have to come to an understanding about that -- what it means, understanding first and second language development.

As Magdalena was talking about training, you know, understanding how children -- how children progress, so, you know, one story comes to mind that is -- is related to this. You know -- a while back, I was visiting a program and I was -- it was early in the morning, and I was taking a bus ride and it was a -- it was fairly early in the morning, and there was the bus driver and a bus monitor, and the -- neither one of them spoke a language -- they spoke English, and we got, and we were -- they were transporting infants and toddlers and pre-schoolers.

And so, we got to the stop and the mom came out and she saw me immediately and she just started, you know, speaking away in Spanish, talking to me about, you know, some concerns she had for her child -- her child had been sick, it was -- you know, and she didn't stop until she was done. She was -- it was urgent for her, and she didn't, you know, she didn't care -- she needed to tell somebody and it was me. And so I was able to convey that to the -- the school, to the program, but I thought to myself and then out loud as I kind of debriefed with the program, "What do we do in those cases?"

In this case it was a -- a program that had a large number of Spanish-speaking children, and so there probably were some things they could have done a little better in terms of making sure those supports were there, particularly when you're transporting the youngest of -- of children, which we already know is quite -- quite challenging. So in that case, there were other things they could of considered in terms of their staffing pattern, you know. If they had a full day, you know, who starts the day, you know? Who goes on the bus?

And -- and it really just -- it struck me, you know, what are some of the things that we can be doing if we -- if we weren't able to do that? Was there another way we could have communicated with Mom in the morning? Is there a system we could develop to say -- a check-in? If we know that we have bus drivers or those that aren't going to be able to communicate, how can we make parents feel more comfortable? So that's the the one thing, you know, in terms of bringing language resources into our -- into our classrooms -- our Early Head Start classrooms.

You know, we can think of bringing others in the community in -- in a very purposeful and intentional way. You know, you can -- you know, I would just stress that when we have volunteers -- oftentimes, you know, people come and volunteer, but we -- we forget that we really need to provide some very good training for them in terms of, "What are you asking them to do?"

Many people are willing to volunteer, but they do feel a little insecure, even though it's for you -- you and I, we go into the classroom, but, you know, they go in there and they -- they stand there, and they know they're volunteering, we're getting in-kind, you know. How can we help them? "We'd really love you to -- to read with, you know, one-on-one with this child. And this what we mean when we're reading to a toddler, and how, you know, and it -- it -- and your language is very valued."

"We want him to hear the sounds he hears at home, that rhythm, and you are the only one who can bring that, and that's very special." So many people are willing to do that. I think the other thing is, we need to understand the family environment. I think it's very important. We talked about the continuity

of care and -- and we know how intertwined language and culture is, and if we -- we have many families who, you know, they were born in the United States and others who are not, you know, what is their story?

There's a long story you learn about -- you -- we forge those relationships, as Magdalena was saying, and then we learn a whole lot that we can use in in our work with the child and with the family to build that trust and relationship, so anyway...

Lillian: Well, thank you, Sharon; you've given us an awful lot of things to consider. I'm going to ask you if you can think of any resources other -- you -- you mentioned folks from the community coming in and reading, but what would you recommend to programs who are looking for support in working with children who are dual language learners? I know you did a few webcasts yourself.

Sharon: Great. Well I'm always looking for an opportunity to profile what we're doing. Actually, one resource I would recommend -- it's called the Program Preparedness Checklist, and it's something, actually, that we developed back when we had the Dual Language Institute a year-and-a-half or two years ago, and what it does is, it just helps programs take a look at their systems and services to see how they are supporting children and families who speak languages other than English, and so of course there's a piece on the classroom in there and other.

But it really is to -- to do your own self-assessment, and once you see how you think you're doing in those areas, you can develop a plan of action, and I would use that. We've had some programs use it very successfully, actually, and it's really -- they realized they had some gaps that they weren't aware of. The other thing, I guess, Lillian, you did mention the Ready For Success series that we have going on right now. Actually, Angie and I did a -- a webinar recently.

We just recently had a -- what I thought was a very successful webcast on language development, and it did it did talk about the Birth to Five. That's available on the ECLKC, and you can look for other opportunities throughout the year. We also are about to put out the updated Multicultural Principles. I think that will be a very wonderful resource for programs. So I would say, if you check the ECLKC under the Dual Language Learners tab on the left, you might find some resources.

Lillian: Great, thank you. Magdalena, building on what Sharon's said about working with children who are dual language learners, you were telling us earlier about a toddler who came to your program

speaking only Korean -- a language that none of your staff speaks. And could you tell us what that experience was like, and how you all supported that child?

Magdalena: I think my opportunity to share the -- this story about Leon -- it's going to really open doors for programs to be flexible in things, and what they are doing. We have to, you know, be open in -- in dual language, and families who come with a different language than us. Well, Leon -- Leon was a toddler, and he started in the Early Head Start program when he was 30 months. He has a few words -- several words in English -- but the mother did not speak English, and the father is speak limited English.

We work with him, we did everything possible to help this child to transition in a smooth way. However, he was not too happy, and we want him to be happy. He was crying and crying and crying, and one of the staff who was really following instructions and learning how to observe babies, and noticed that he was going to the play area and using the phone. And always when he used the toy phone he was very calm and happy, and he used the words that he used at home.

So he -- she mentioned at the -- in the afternoon to the father, and said that, "I noticed that Leon goes to the phone, and that's how he calms down. So I invite him to call you and he had a good time, so can we call you once in a while?" And the father said, "Oh, absolutely, you can call me at any time but I have something better." He said, "That's how we communicate with him since we came to the United States. We got him a cell phone and he knows how to do it. And he knows how to call Mommy, and he knows how to call me."

And well, we discussed about how we are going to use properly the cell phone in the classroom and incorporate into what he was doing. So, before nap, the teacher/guide would allow the child to call and said goodnight to the father, and the only words that he -- we understood that he was saying is "Night night, go night night," and that was really something that helped him to calm down, and, actually, after two weeks of being in the program, he finally have a good nap. [Laughter]

Then another thing that we really need to change in the way that we were thinking, and in the way that we had implemented things in the classroom, the way at the time of lunch he was "No no food" and "No no food." That was the words that he learned to say it. A lot of conversation, the relationship with the mother -- guide us to understand that he was not -- he does not eat in the same way we do it, and he wanted to keep his plate in the air, and the teacher was telling him, "No, you have to put it on the table."

"You have to put it on the table," and that was something that he didn't -- was not used to at home. So again, talking to the mother, and we also have to be flexible with him. He was an expert. While all the other toddlers spill the food when they trying to put the plate up, he was fine -- he did wonderful -- and after four months he was fine, he really did a wonderful transition. After that, we absolutely told the teacher the wonderful job that she had been doing, but the most important thing in care is that -- when Leon got happy and established in the -- in the center.

When a new child comes into the classroom, and when he sees the child crying he just goes to them and hold their hands or guide them to get the phone. [Laughter] So that's what he does, and other children like look at him and, "Okay, now what I do with this?" But that's how is the way that he received the message. You know, "I was welcomed this way, here I'm welcoming you, I don't want you to cry."
[Everyone agreeing]

So I -- I know there might not everybody be able to, you know, change and do this, but invite people to be creative, and to really look and have a conversation with how we can meet the the family needs, and it is easier than one would think, you know.

Lillian: That's a great story. That's very -- that's wonderful and it so much connects with what we were talking about earlier about being attuned to the child and responding to their needs to help them feel secure.

Sharon: I had a question, Lillian. I was wondering, did you actually, after a while -- did he need the phone anymore, or, you know, because obviously it was a very individual approach with him, did he need the phone or did he end up, you know, scaffolding off of it?

Magdalena: No, no, he did not need the phone anymore. He was sharing his phone with everybody else.
[Laughter]

Sharon: He -- he didn't need to talk to his father every day. Okay, that's good.

Magdalena: No, no, no. The relationship with the teacher now was so strong that he was, "Goodbye, Mommy, goodbye, Daddy" and -- and be ready to be and share with everybody in the classroom.

Sharon: Mm hm, absolutely, yeah, that's nice, that's wonderful, that's great.

Lillian: Yeah, that's great. I know you all have lots of stories like this about the children and families you've been working with, and the impact of Early Head Start on their lives. And, really, that's what makes it such a joy to do our jobs. And Dora, are there any stories you'd like to share with us?

Dora: Oh Lillian, there are so many. Working with Early Head Start, as Magdalena has said, one of the things the caregivers had to learn is the patience and the difference between Head Start, and one of the most important things was to observe the children and learn their individual differences, and it reminds me of a story.

We had a baby that was enrolled, and this baby must have been about six or seven months at the time, but the teachers noticed that the baby was not able to sit independently, but, through their observation, they also noted that the baby would always seem to fall to the side, and it was always the same side. So they mentioned it to the health coordinator, and the health coordinator -- they met with the mother, and they talked about this, and the mother said "Okay." She was very open and receptive to this, and really glad that they had observed the baby so closely.

So she took the baby back to the pediatrician, they checked the baby out, and the baby was diagnosed with a mild case of cerebral palsy that may not have been picked up if the teachers hadn't been so observant. And in the Early Head Start, we sometimes with the bigger children don't do this, but with those little ones we notice so much, and we learn from them what is normal, what is not normal. They learn to expect from us so they know.

And I was thinking, as she was talking - you walk into the infant room, when they hear the cart coming down the hall with the food on it, they all know. And what is so good, what I notice and commended the caregivers on -- when the cart arrives at the room, the children don't get all excited and want to run to the cart. They sit there so patiently looking at the caregiver, because they know they're going to feed them, and I think that's a big part of that trust.

It also reminds me of another story we had of a baby in Early Head Start, and this baby tended to always favor that right arm -- always using the right arm for everything. Once again, the caregivers noticed it, talked to the mother, the mother took the baby to the doctor, and the baby did have some problems with that muscle, and after the doctor diagnosed it and told the teacher some things that they could do so the baby would have to use the other arm.

It was just such a great start that this was noted early, and that foundation that I talked about -- it is clearly established in Early Head Start, and there are so many stories that I could tell you that, if it was not for Early Head Start, some of these things would have gone undiagnosed or unnoticed. So the trust level is really important, and building that relationship because in both cases that I told you about, it was not only good for building trust for the baby, but for the parent. Other parents noted that, and that made them feel safer leaving their child.

They thought, "Well, wow, they really do a good job in observing." So that in itself was an education on both sides.

Lillian: Yeah. That's great. What a wonderful thing, and it's really important to be able to make those observations, and share them with the families, and also get the right specialists in to check exactly what's going on out. That's great. Magdalena, do you have any stories -- I'm sure about -- that you do -- about the families that you've worked with that you want to tell us about?

Magdalena: Well, going back to what Angie was saying about the difference between infant and toddler and the pre-school programs, and I think this is important. I'm going to share something about what happened with one of my staff, because it's important that programs are prepared -- maybe they do not have the infant and toddler experts coming to the program, but, you know, we can help them to get there.

Her name was Jessica, and Jessica was one of those natural caregivers, and all love and happy, and very active in the classrooms, and she decided that she want to work now with the infants and -- and toddlers. We say, "Are you sure you really want to do this?" She say "Yes, I am going to the infant and toddlers." So, we did the arrangements, she start working in the infant and toddlers classroom.

And after one week or two, she just came to my office and say, "Magdalena, I do not want to lose my job." And I say, "Well, what is happening now?" And she said -- I said, "Well, I am happy with what you are doing, and what is your concern?" She said, "Well, all the time, when you go to my classroom I'm doing nothing. Or when the supervisors come in work -- to do observations, I'm doing nothing."

And I said, "Well, why are you thinking that way?" She said, "Well, the -- the classroom's very quiet." I look at her -- she had at that time very quiet babies. [Laughter] "The -- the classroom is very quiet, it's -- it's not happening too much, and I really don't think I am doing a good job, and I am sitting on the -- on the floor when people come to do observations, so I am thinking that I am not doing anything. I do not want to lose my job!"

So I said to her, "Well, have a seat, Jessica. Let's talk." And this is also something that I want to say. You know, put the papers aside, and let's talk with our staff. Let's tell them, what is their concern and help them -- and what is happening. I said, "I -- I have a few questions before you lose your job, Jessica. Let's start." She said, "Okay." "Are you ready?" She say, "Yeah, yeah, I am ready." And say, "Well, do you -- do you feed the babies?" She's like, "Oh yeah." And I say, "And usually do you talk, talk, talk all day? So, do you talk to the babies?" "Yes."

And I say, "And when you talk to the babies, do the babies to smile back to you?" "Yes, all the time. Some of them are 'que que'..." and I say, "Oh good." And I say, "Do you change the diapers?" "Of course I do, Magdalena." And I say, "Okay! Well, then, you're doing your job. You are doing your job. This is what we want you to do. We do not want you to rush, we do not want you to put them on a schedule."

And I said, "So you feed them when they are hungry, and when you want to eat." "Oh," she say, "Oh no, no, no - when they are hungry, they let me know when they are hungry!" [Laughter] And I say, "Well, then, good -- that's what we want you to do. I want you to know that you are doing an excellent job, that -- which is going to have maybe more training so you can relate what are you doing to what we actually want you to do, but I just don't think you're losing your job. You're gonna have a job forever if you keep doing what you're doing."

So there might not be many of -- providers that come to your program with the knowledge of infants and toddlers, so let's talk to them. Let's train them. Let's -- let's help them to see that the job that they're doing is a wonderful job and they have to continue doing that.

Lillian: Yes. Thank you for sharing that. It's so important to praise our staff and help them know that what they're doing is exactly right. You know, one thing we haven't talked about very much is working with pregnant women and expectant families, and that's something that's really very different between Head Start and Early Head Start programs, although some Head Start and Migrant and Seasonal programs do encounter pregnant families.

The Head Start Program Performance Standards require that Early Head Start programs provide services to pregnant women. Tell us a little bit about what it was like working with pregnant women when your program was just getting started, Dora.

Dora: Well, one of the things that was really good for us -- my background is in OB-GYN nursing. That helped the staff to relax, because we work together as a team, and our health coordinator was involved in getting out there and doing what we needed to do with the pregnant moms, and the expectant fathers. And one of the things that I think was really most helpful for us was that, when we started, the pregnant women that came in -- since I was a nurse and had a nursing background, it helped them to relax a little bit.

There are so many questions, as you talked about, and so many personal things, and people don't always feel very open to share some of this information. Having a nursing background, and I would tease them and play with them about being pregnant, and how you're going to grow, and the importance of knowing each step of it before happens so they're not nervous about it. They kind of -- it's like the babies, to know what to expect, especially the teen mothers.

And always when we enroll them, we ask if they want the father or the significant other to be involved, because being pregnant is the whole family, not just that one person, and when we talk about doing things that could help: reading to the baby, talking to the baby while it's still in the womb -- that is important to get them all involved. I think what was really relaxing on that, again, is that we invited them to come in to training.

Not only did they come into us for training, but with some of the agreements we had at the school system, we could go to the school and have some of the trainings there, so the nurse and the counselor there was also involved. And the more education they got about it, the more they relaxed, and then we would have nights -- they came -- it wasn't all just training, they really could just relax and talk to each other, and that seemed to help.

The pregnant women in our program were able to go on trips, if we arranged it with some of our community partners, that they could come and shop, or shop at the mall and they always prepare for it and help them feel good, because we know that emotional part is just as important as the other things that we do. And having them feel free to come in and just talk to us -- if you notice some strange

feelings going on -- they could call. They could call our health coordinator, and the family advocates were involved. If they went to the hospital in labor, they called them.

We went to the hospital to visit, and immediately after the baby were born, they were always there. Believe it or not -- and you know how rumors spread -- as one pregnant woman was in, and really supported through this pregnancy, because sometimes, let's face it, we may be the only support they have during this time. So it was really important that we build good, strong relationships with them, and then to assure them that once their baby was born, they would come into the Early Head Start program, and they felt safe about that.

And that was always helpful to bring that in. The nutritionist would meet with the pregnant woman and talk to them prior to birth so that they would know about that, and talked about good eating, good habits to have, and just care. We've talked with them about how to bathe the baby, how to hold the baby when you feed it -- so, anything that we could do to help that pregnant mom or the expectant father to really relax and feel comfortable and make it natural. It was just helpful to educate them.

Lillian: Wow, thank you, that's great, Dora, and I think the opportunity -- did you want to say something, Angie?

Angie: Well, go ahead, I can join in.

Lillian: I was just going to say that I think that the opportunity that you all had to develop strong trusting relationships with pregnant women you serve is really very, very important, and after all, as we've said several times today, relationship-building really is at the heart of the Early Head Start program. Go ahead, Angie.

Angie: And I did want to say that, you know, I just love the -- the stories, but also, it's an example of the practice that you're both doing, and I -- I think that's so important because we know so much anecdotally, and we really have built in strength into Early Head Start based on practices of programs like yours, and I think it's so important for the audience to hear that, because Early Head Start is hard. There are many comprehensive services, and yes, you are expected to meet the needs of individual children and families,...

...to integrate family culture, and practices, and traditions into your practice, and integrate family language into your practice, as well as health services and -- and supporting each family, and it is comprehensive. And one of the things I think that programs are challenged by sometimes is trying to look at the Head Start Performance Standards. We know that full implementation of Head Start Performance Standards provides the best outcomes for Early Head Start families, as well as Head Start.

But sometimes, when you're in a program, you just wonder if maybe you could do it a little differently, or change it. You know you've felt that way! You know you have -- and change it just a little bit, but I think what your stories show is that we can do it with reflection, with support. I love what Lillian said at the beginning, that you're not alone -- and I think those are all very important messages, so, I love the stories. Sharon, I know.

Sharon: You know, the one thing that struck me when both of you spoke was about the quality -- the qualities of the staff. You know, you obviously must have known that Jessica could go from being a pre-school teacher to an infant/toddler because, you know, of what you know about human nature, what you know about her. There are certain qualities, you know, the same -- you talked about yourself, the comfort level. What did those teen moms need at that time?

And so I think that, you know, the interview process -- how we actually hire those that work with infants and toddlers -- you know, maybe we have -- you know, you probably do this already, because I know, Dora, you know -- you know, do you have -- you have parents on your committee? Do you have, you know -- who do you have on your committee? What are the qualities? It's... you can't just take, you know, the interview questions for the pre-school teacher and just, you know -- so that's a whole 'nother -- another aspect that just struck me that you both had talked about.

Dora: And that is so true, and that is so helpful when you are doing that interview process, is to have some parents involved, and it's especially good if you're hiring for Early to have a parent involved that was a pregnant woman.

Angie: Absolutely.

Dora: And I was thinking back as you were speaking, one of the big advantages for us also was that we visited other Early Head Start programs in our community. There were probably about three or four at the time we were funded, so the education manager, myself, and the Early Head Start coordinator -- we

visited other Early Head Start programs. We actually sat in classrooms and observed, took notes, and monitored. We looked at their policies, we looked at their procedures.

Even though we wanted to do things differently that were unique to our program, some of those basics - it was very helpful to visit those other programs and bring trainers in, so that by the time we opened, our staff was comfortable, we had some parents involved, they were relaxed, and that -- that trusting relationship started prior to the first baby coming to the program.

Lillian: Excellent. Magdalena, what about you? I'm sure you have some experiences you'd like to share as well.

Magdalena: Yeah, well, Sharon was mentioning about having the parents being involved in the program from the beginning in the interviews, I -- came something to my head. I have a wonderful parent who has the child since he was eight weeks, in the program. Now he is in the pre-school program, but -- and her name is Kiesha and she is just wonderful. She is always in the interviews that I have at the center, and she goes there, she talks to the -- the people that is going to be interviewed before.

And many times I say to her, "Kiesha, what do you think?" She's like, "Oh, she's good, Magdalena." And -- and -- and that gives me some -- how can I say? -- comfort and -- and trust that she is looking as a parent, as a mom: "How do I want somebody to take care of my child and my baby?" So I always say, "I cannot do this without you," and she says, "I look for -- I look for -- and look for quality, Magdalena," and... [Everyone agreeing]

Lillian: Yes, that is wonderful. Thank you for that. That is very important, not just to include but to show that we respect the parents' perspective because we're taking care of their babies. Angie, is there anything you'd like to add about providing support to pregnant women and expectant families?

Angie: Well, I'm not sure that I can add much more than Dora and Magdalena did. Your stories were just wonderful. That is one of the more challenging aspects for programs, and one of the things that I'm encouraging programs for -- and I think all of us are -- is to really -- really begin to plan early, to begin early working with pregnant women as Dora talked about, and begin to plan early. You know, what are your program options? Is it family child care, home-based, center-based? And what are the family's needs?

And then to develop a plan with families, and to be flexible enough with families to support them through making decisions. And the other thing that both Magdalena and Dora have talked about is teen parents. We work with a large number of teen parents across the country, and they're a very unique and wonderful population, and I think there are -- there are unique issues around a -- a pregnant teenager. Who is involved in the work that we're doing with that family?

So I do think, again, programs can draw on the supports and the resources from the Office of Head Start, from EHSNRC, and also from other programs, as well as the TA staff that's out there and prepared to work with folks and their regional office staff, so...

Lillian: Yeah. Well, thanks, Angie. We've heard today about some of the challenges of getting an Early Head Start program off the ground, but also all of the joys and rewards, and if you had one key message that you wanted to send to new Early Head Start programs, what would it be? I'm going to start with you, Sharon.

Sharon: Sure. You know -- I only get one? Just one message? [Laughter] You know, I mean, I think you're hearing it around the table. It is, you know, for me, especially, again, because I'm sitting here thinking, you know, my role in terms of thinking about the language and culture, you know, thinking about the teen mom, and, you know, and the whole culture of pregnancy and the culture of birth. There's a huge...

We have to do whatever we can to be -- to be able to communicate with children and families, and it's not always easy. It's not easy, and if anyone -- you know, if you've been in a situation where you don't understand the language, you know, you know what that feels like, and we have to remember that that's what's happening for, you know, our -- our babies, our toddlers, and parents who you're trying to work with.

You know, you can start by making sure you're pronouncing everybody's name right, you know? Sounds very basic, but, you know, parents appreciate that. If you ask me, you know, my name is a little scary. The last name, even though it sounds like it's -- it's spelled, but after I spell it and they tell me to pronounce it, "Oh, it's just like it sounds." You know?

So people really -- parents really appreciate you reaching out to them and asking them, you know, phonetically how to pronounce their child's name. So -- and we -- so around that, and I'll just add to my one key message to get it a little longer [Laughter] -- we need to really think also beyond the classroom, around language and culture, around those systems and services that are really making your program whole, and that's -- that's all I'll say.

Lillian: Okay. Thank you, Sharon. [Laughter] How about you, Magdalena?

Magdalena: Well, my key message -- I do believe in advocate for quality, all the time. And my definition of my recipe to have quality, it's always combine knowledge with great love, with great care, for the families that you serve, for the staff that you work with, and why not for you, too? You know, for it starts from the top, and be a good leader. Help them to develop. Their success is your success, and that's how -- how I measure. You know, if I have many people unhappy, then I may need to look at what I'm doing.

If I have parents who are not happy, maybe it's time to have a conversation with the staff. Let's, you know, work a little different. So advocate for quality, ensure that you do provide the support that -- define support, because it's not -- it's a word that not everybody understands the same way. You know, we tend to say, "Oh, I am supporting you," but that's not my -- what I need support with. So that would be my message: Advocate for quality. Quality can start with -- don't rush. Do't rush. Look for the things that make programs successful.

Lillian: That's a good message. And how about you, Dora?

Dora: Well, I ditto everything they said, and quality is very important. And I believe we start by getting the people trained. Let them understand clearly your expectations and the differences in working with Early Head Start. Educate the parents so that they will know what to expect, and get them involved.

And as I often say at our centers, "If I walk into a classroom and I look around and I see what's going on, if this is a place that makes me say, 'I would love to bring my baby here,' then I feel good." If the children are loved, they're nurtured, they're kept safe, and they're protected, then we're on our way. And that is really important. If something's not right in the room, you will know it. But when people walk by and look, and you have visitors, and see the children happy and being taken care of, and they want to bring their children to us.

So, that's one of the things that I look for.

Lillian: Thank you, and it's very important to keep in mind how much trust that parents have in leaving their babies with us. Angie, what about you? What's your key message?

Angie: Well, I -- yeah, well, I -- I'm going to be like Karen -- I'm going to be like Sharon -- I'm going to have multiple pieces to my key message. But the first one really is, and, again, I just so thank Magdalena and Dora for being here, and that they really are living Early Head Start, and it is hard, and it is difficult, but they're energetic and they look rested and wonderful, and they're inspiring. And that's what I want programs to understand, that in all of the stories that they've told today...

...it illustrates that we really do work with the most vulnerable families in the community, and we can never forget that. That's the key message, and that everything we do needs to build support for that family. And I love what Magdalena said: support looks different.

And so every day, and every baby is a unique challenge, and an amazing opportunity to do work that you don't often get a chance to do, and you don't often have the support of the Office of Head Start, and regional offices and colleagues that you can work with to really develop a community of practice for serving the most vulnerable families across the country. So, that was a long key message -- I'm sorry. [Laughter]

Lillian: That was a long -- that's okay -- a lot of rich ideas have come; there's wonderful, wonderful recommendations, and you've given us much to think about. So why don't we just take a three-minute break right now, and then we return and respond to the questions you've been sending in. So we'll see you in about three minutes. [Music]

Welcome back. We have so many questions that came in. We're not going to have time, I'm sure, to answer all of them, but let me pose the first question. We received this from Lauren in New York, and she says, "In your experiences, what are some effective strategies for engaging fathers?" And Dora, do you want to start off?

Dora: Okay. One of the things that we do, as I said earlier, when the pregnant mom comes in we ask if she wants the father, the significant other, involved, because we have to start from there. Then we also have a program that's headed up by a very good volunteer in our community. It's called "24-7 Dad," and they run twelve sessions on that, and it talks about the father and how they relate to the child.

And it goes into things like how to discipline the child, just things that a father can be involved to do with them, and that always helps, because sometimes with the expectant father coming in, especially if it's the first baby, they don't really understand how important it is for the father to be involved, and the things that they can do. Sometimes people are a little bit afraid, and -- and working with this volunteer, it sort of relaxes them, and he even invites them to go with him to the centers.

So that's one way, and then we do things that the guys like to do more, maybe talk about going to some games, and hanging out with them, and then you can gradually get into the training. So that's one thing that we do that really seems to work.

Lillian: Yeah, that's great, hooking the fathers with things that they'd like to do. And how about you, Magdalena?

Magdalena: Well, I am absolutely agree with what Dora said, you know, be creative, do what things that they like to do, and also maintain the communication open with them. Sometimes our programs, because the majority of us are women in the program, we forget that they are coming -- they just drop off and they leave, but the open communication, it's very important to maintain with them.

I have to share a little story about Manuel, and the importance, again, of the relationship between the program and home. We have -- Manuel is -- had a family of three: Mom, Dad, and the child. And he was attending to the classroom, and he was excellent: 100 percent attendance, 90 percent attendance, 99 attendance, and once they started going out, being absent, being absent, and the communication needed to be immediately put in place, the family service worker went to their house and they did not want open the -- the door for us.

We tried to get in contact with him, and he was not want to talk to us. But finally, the family social worker, they -- she -- based on the relationship, she got in contact with him, and finally he open. He said the wife was deported, so he was now the only father home, and he was by himself, that he needed some help. He did not have time to drop off a child at the program. So we really work with him.

We understood what was happening with him, we have at that time a very strong relationship with the Family Child Care Network, and one of them were willing to pick up the child and drop off the child from

the program so the father had the opportunity to have peace of mind going to work, and also know that the child was going to be picked on time, and he was going to. He was absolutely happy with us, he help us with "Breakfast for Fathers," letting them know how wonderful we are.

Again, they are our best advocates, and now our best marketing. We -- he start -- he had the idea of doing breakfast for fathers, and -- in the classrooms, and that's what we did for a long period of time. He also -- we were invited once to the University of Connecticut Child Book Fair, and he decided that we want to go, and he was determined that we should go, and we have to, you know, have buses available for them, and he took the leadership to have this trip.

It was a father and child activity. We went on a Saturday, and we had a wonderful time. Every father had a camera, and took pictures of the day -- the day that they spent with the child. And a follow-up activity we did, they wanted to construct a little book: "Daddy and Me Going Out." And that's how he is a leader now, he knows that he will have, you know, love forever as part of his life, so it is -- we have to be sensitive of what they like to do and -- and they love to sit around, and the children come to them.

Lillian: Well, from a closed door to a leadership role -- that's pretty special, that's for sure! Your talking about a book makes me focus on this question from Jennifer in Washington, D.C. You might not be able to make the connection, but I did. "Where can you find the Dual Language Program Preparedness Checklist?"

Sharon: Oh, Jennifer, thank you so much for letting me talk about it again! [Laughter] Seriously -- actually, if you -- it's in two places. If you want to look at any of the Ready For Success activities we've done this year, the webcasts or webinars, it's on each of those. It's on the ECLKC. If you go to the left-hand side from the home page, to the "Dual Language Learners and Their Families," get onto that page and it will be on the right-hand side.

It's in Spanish and English, and the other resources that OHS has developed are right there, as well. So thank you, Jennifer, for asking that question.

Lillian: And thank you. And I don't know where to go next because I'm watching my watch, and I guess we'll go to a question that we got from Hindy in New York. This is a several-part question. "Do you have any recommendations for assessing prospective hires' passion for children? It seems to be difficult to gauge in an interviewer reference check or even in observation, and what about supervisors' positions,

and not just caregivers?" And so, is there a way that we can -- what are key ways that we can learn to recognize?

Angie: Well, I can start, although I am interested in what Dora and Magdalena do when they interview, and I know that Dora talked a little bit about her interview processes. I think that's such an important question. We -- we know that we want infant and toddler teachers to have credentials for teaching infants and toddlers, but just as important, we want them to have competencies for working with babies and their families, and babies and their families as they grow into toddlers.

That's so important, and it is a little more difficult to gauge. You know, I was a Head Start Director many, many years ago, and I always believed that you -- that you could train a loving teacher, but it was difficult to bring love to someone with a degree, or to help them. You know, you have to have that spirit within you. And I do think there are ways you can pick it up in an interview through some of the questions you ask. I love that you include families in your panel.

Not just one person, but really understanding when you're talking to that person, what their work is going to look like, whether it's in a family child care home, home visiting with a family in their home, the kind of respect you need to go into a home, or working in a center. So, I'll let the two of you be a little more specific.

Lillian: Either of you?

Magdalena: Really having a conversation with the applicant you have an idea if this is a career for them, and this is a commitment that they have, or this is just a job that they want. And it's unbelievable the difference between the two, and they, you know, show commitment to growth, show commitment to learning, show commitment to -- to their job, the field. And when they do not have that, it's very easy to see -- how they talk about themselves, how they relate their study to something that it's not really children, or families.

When we ask about, "Share with me a story about a family that you work with," then they might not have an answer, so those are the key things that you have to look for it. And commitment, commitment to this profession, because it's -- we're knowing that we're not going to get any millionaires in this profession, but, however, every day you are a millionaire, and every day you go home with something new, and feeling good about "This is what I did," or "I have contribute with something."

Angie: And I -- I think that's the key, and it really is, because it's so important that we build a professional work force for working with infants and toddlers, and I think it -- the passion grows from the knowledge of really understanding what's happening with babies, and what -- what's happening with toddlers, so it really is a balance of the two.

Dora: I know one of the things being helpful is to have the parent on the interview team also, because sometimes we focus so much on the administrative side of questions, and it's always helpful when the parent -- if they feel free to just ask a question, because oftentimes they will ask that potential candidate a question that maybe makes them feel comfortable.

And that helps, because they know what it took for them to feel comfortable to leave their baby or their child with us, so now they can ask you that same question. And then to just have -- let them have some input into that decision-making process as much as possible, and that helps a lot. It also helps us to get more parents involved.

Sharon: I was -- I was going to say, the other thing is, you know, and I'm not sure if this is what the -- what our viewer is asking, but, you know, you may develop some scenarios that have happened in your program to see -- you know, write out the scenario and say, you know, "How would you -- you know, put yourself in the place of that teacher," you know, because, you know, I think that what everyone has said is that, you know, the baby and the family -- they're a unit, and I think sometimes we just want to deal with the baby in our care, and not the unit, you know.

And so, the scenarios allow you to see how they might respond, you know, to the situation.

Angie: And to the whole family.

Sharon: Exactly.

Lillian: Yes, because you have to love the entire unit, as you said, and show passion for, and respect for the whole unit. I'm thinking that we will try to have one more question, and I'm going to try to combine a question from Carmen in Texas and, also, Mary in Alabama, and they're really interested in understanding the challenges of having a successful program, and -- and "How do we know when programs are successful?" Either?

Dora: Well, I think that, like you said, it is a two-part question. Number one is that as long as we know we're operating the program in accordance with state and federal regulations, it gives us a basis to start from. The other thing -- way I know I feel that we are successful is that when you are meeting the needs of the families that you are to serve, you have to be flexible.

We have to look at each family as an individual family and not group them together. We have to show that we are sensitive to their needs, and not just making sure that we follow policy, because it's easy to get wrapped up in the policies and forget that we're dealing with people. So when we show sensitivity to that family, it makes them feel special -- it makes them feel unique. We can be in compliance with the regulation, but we're still providing a service for that family, and we're giving them some building blocks...

...to grow on, that will empower them in their life, in other areas, not just with the Early Head Start. Then I feel that we're being successful -- when we can help families get jobs, take good care of their children, reach out to the resources that are in their community so that they can get the support that they need -- then we can measure success.

Lillian: Yes, sounds great. Did you want to add something, Magdalena? We have maybe three minutes to...

Magdalena: Well, I -- I think that by sharing Wanda's story, it's going to really define what we think success means. And this is what I like programs to do -- measure your success, or define your success in the successful stories of your families. Wanda was teenager mother, came to the office very anxious, and with a five-month baby and a three-years-old baby. She came to my office because she was referred by the shelter, and she came with this attitude just like, "I want to be a good mother. I want my -- my children to eat every day."

"want to be happy. I want them to learn the A-B-Cs, and the shelter told me that if Early Head Start cannot help me, then nobody will." So, right at that moment, I know I have a responsibility, and a big job to do. So I ask her and say, "Well, have a seat, Wanda. Let's talk about this." And I said, "It's wonderful what you -- what you want." But I'm -- then she also ask me, and say, "Magdalena, can you do this for me?"

And I said, "Well, I cannot do that for you. You can do that for yourself. I can help you to get there." So she really change her face, she said, "Okay, and how're we gonna do that?" [Laughter] So I say -- Well -- we start talking about resources, partnerships, we contact the social worker at the shelter and she was able to help us with the paperwork because Wanda did not have even the birth certificates of the children. The relationship with the shelter helped us to move faster that process.

In two weeks the children were enrolled in the program -- luckily we had an opening by then -- and we start working with them, she got a job in the local [inaudible], you know, that was close to the center, and she started coming more and more and more to the program. She wants to be part of the volunteer trainings, and now she's learning about how families -- I mean, how babies develop, and so now it was time for me to sit with her and say, "Okay, let's see if you are meeting your goals."

And she say to me, "What are you talking about? What goals?" And I said, "Well, you -- when you came, the first time you talked to me about you want to be happy. I want to know if you're happy." And she say, "Yes, I am happy," and I say, "Well, good. You told me that you want your children to eat every day." And she say, "Oh, yes, yes." And I say, "Is there any problem there? Are they eating?" She's like, "Yes." And we revised every single thing that she had told me in the beginning.

She even didn't notice that I was taking notes. And she said, "Well, how did you remember all that?" So I did explain to her that we are successful because she is successful. She wanted to share her story with everybody, and she actually now has her CDA, she works for Head Start, she is planning to go back and sign in the community college, so that's what it is, successful -- being able to -- to put all the Early Head Start principles together in one family.

Lillian: Wow. That's a wonderful way to end our program. Thank you. Those really are all the questions and the answers we have time to deal with this afternoon, but I'd really want to take this opportunity to thank Angie and Sharon and Dora and Magdalena for joining us the studio. And, of course, I want to thank all of you for taking the time to be with us today. We know that you have a lot of hard work ahead of you to prepare your community's most vulnerable children to enter school ready to learn.

But as we've heard from our panelists today, the rewards of this hard work are immense. You've begun something truly wonderful, and you will get to end each day knowing that you've played a key role in helping children and families on their path toward future success. Thank you, and, until the next time, take care.

[Music]

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