

4 Tips for Empowering Families! (Part 1)

Operator: Good day everyone and welcome to the Four Tips for Empowering Families conference call. Today's call is being recorded. At this time I would like to turn the conference over to Amanda Perez. Please go ahead Amanda.

Amanda Perez: Thank you so much Elizabeth and hello to everyone out there. On behalf of the Early Head Start National Resource Center I want to welcome you to today's audio conference. We are thrilled that you are with us today. And I want to let you know that you're on the line with program staff from all over the country as well as Federal staff and Training and Technical Assistance providers. If you know folks who might want to hear this call at a later time as Elizabeth said, this call is being recorded, and will eventually be posted on the ECLKC.

So I want to direct everyone's attention to the supplemental materials that we sent registrants. You'll see the objectives for today's events listed on page 1 after you plow through those beginning documents there. And you'll find information on our incredible panelist on page 2. I want to give these two a brief chance to introduce themselves so you can connect some names with voices and faces and expertise. So first we'll start with Lisa. Lisa Desrochers.

Lisa Desrochers: Hi everybody. Thanks for having me. I'm happy to be here. My name is Lisa Desrochers. And I work at the Bravo 10 Touchpoint Center in Boston and also for the National Center on Parents, Family, and Community Engagement. My background is in early childhood education. And I'm thrilled to be here today and look forward to hearing your questions tomorrow.

Amanda: Lisa we are so glad you're here with us. And Lara, Lara Robinson.

Lara Robinson: Hi, good afternoon. My name is Lara Robinson. I'm from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And I lead the Legacy for Children Dissemination Projects. And I have the pleasure of talking with you this afternoon about some of the things we've learned about family empowerment from Legacy. So thank you for having me.

Amanda: Lara, thank you for being here. I really can't thank both of you enough. I want to do just a few housekeeping notes. So on page 3 in your materials, you see the Head Start Program performance standards that are most relevant to our conversation here, always good to have those at the forefront and a note below talking about the term empowerment. We really want families to know their role and their power. But we want to make it clear as we're having this discussion today that program staff, we as program staff don't give that power to families. Right? That is theirs. They have it. They bring it in with them. So what we're talking about here is supporting families – really recognize, and really recognizing how important and competent they are, their role supporting them and building their own confidence. Lisa, as we are thinking about this idea of family empowerment I wonder if there's anything we should be thinking about in particular as we consider expectant families and families with infants and toddlers.

Lisa: So I, you know, I think as you all know, expectant families have a lot of emotions going into, you know, expecting their child whether it's parents, or grandparents, or other family members. So I think right from the start we want to acknowledge and appreciate those emotions and any concerns they might have. We also really want to focus on their strengths that even though they may be new parents for the first time they may be coming in as, you know, existing parents that they're going to bring a lot of strengths with them. So, we want to encourage their confidence and their capacity, their competence of what they already have.

So as they're – as we're thinking about family empowerment as Amanda said, it's not something that we're, you know, we're handing over to them, that they actually already have it and that we're really just, you know, approaching them with that attitude of let's look at your strengths and what you already know. Let's look at, you know, what you have ahead of you in terms of everything that you are feeling already about this baby that's about to come into the world. And I'm really appreciating that it's a time of transition and a lot of emotions both for expectant parents and for parents of infants and young children, that there's going to be a lot of bumps along the way and that again we really want to focus on their strengths and establish a relationship with them where they really know that we're focused on the positive. And that will give them more space then to share with us their concerns so that we can support them when they feel, you know, ambivalent or uncertain or they have questions. So I think that's sort of how I would frame empowerment in those early years.

Amanda: Yes they've got that new baby on the way. And so, you know, how are they thinking about that baby or that new baby that's there with them. It's all brand new. Lara, Lisa talked a little bit about transition but you also had a point to make there as well.

Lara: Yes, this early time of development is so important because children are developing so quickly and their brain growth is at its peak that there are so many important transitions in development that we're seeing as parents and caregivers, and it just provides lots of opportunities for us to work together.

Amanda: Absolutely and to really support folks in recognizing that this is a time of lots of transitions. There is a lot happening. And so, you know, of course it makes some sense if folks are feeling a little nervous about how to operate in that time. Let's just draw a line here. How, Lisa how does supporting families and recognizing their own role and sort of power at this early time feed into success in the preschool years and sort of beyond that to school readiness?

Lisa: Well, as you all know and we know certainly, you know, it's clear that healthy interactions between parents and children beginning with sensitive care-giving in the early years that's the foundation for learning and healthy development. So we have the opportunity to reinforce positive parents parenting early. And that will go through as we reach the pre-school years to support healthy development and then eventually bring children into the place where they're ready for school. So again we want to think about any opportunities we have to really reinforce the mastery of parents during that time. And part of the way we think about doing that is that,

as Lara and Amanda have both said, that there's so many transitions and development is so bumpy for families that there can be times when they're very, you know, uncertain or feel disorganized about what's happening. And so at any point we want to help them think about what they've done that has worked and then also maybe think about, okay, well what can we try that might be different for this period of development? I also think as Lara will talk about more that this is also a time to connect with other peers and social support networks so that both in the, you know, the very early years and then through pre-school that you have people around you so that it's not only us as staff that are supporting people but it's also their social networks that are helping them feel more confident and competent along the way.

Amanda: And we'll hear some more messages about all of that today, absolutely. I want to set a little bit of context here. Lara you've done a lot of work in developing and testing a model called Legacy for Children. And through that process you've learned quite a bit about what helps, what works in helping the families served in early Head Start, in migrant and seasonal Head Start. Programs develop this sense of empowerment. As we get started though, will you tell us just a little bit about Legacy, what it is and how it might interest the folks on the phone?

Lara: Yes, I'd love to, thank you. So Legacy for Children is CDC's evidence based public health approach aimed at improving child outcomes by fostering positive parenting among low income families – mothers of infants and young children. Specifically, some of our intervention goals include promoting mother's responsibility for investment and devotion of time and energy, promote responsive sensitive parent child relationships, support mothers as guides to their child's verbal and brain development and support mom's ability to influence her child's behavioral and emotional regulation. And then our last goal is really about promoting each mother's sense of community.

So this model that's designed and rigorously tested as an evidence based approach to work with mothers to impact child development. Legacy goals are achieved both through mother only and mother child time together and one on one sessions to reinforce the content. We also have participation and community events that are critical to the whole Legacy model. To date we have two curriculums that have been tested as meeting the Legacy model. These are the UCLA and the University of Miami curriculum. And the UCLA curriculum runs prenatally until the child's age of three. The Miami curriculum runs from about birth till the child is about five years of age.

So beyond the original, randomized controlled trial research testing of legacy, we've also been able to do some feasibility testing in five early Head Start programs across the southeast. And this work has really demonstrated that that legacy can be implemented in this setting with some preliminary support for some of its impacts on families. So we're really excited about our work with Legacy and our partnership with Early Head Start.

Amanda: Yeah. So it's important for folks to hear that this is an approach that, you know, they might consider as part of their programs. I do want to say a few things to our audience. First, as

you hear Legacy was developed for mothers in particular. And we're going to highlight strategies today that we think are applicable across to mom's, to dad's to grandparents. But Lara is a scientist. And to be accurate about what was learned from the testing of this model, she's going to talk about mothers here for the most part. Right, Lara?

Lara: Yes, that's correct.

Amanda: And I do want to note that there's, sort of, as we say, that there's an expectation from the Office of Head Start that folks who implement Legacy or models like it really consider how their program brings in all members of the family in really meaningful and comparable way. So if you're doing something so intense with mothers we really need to be thinking about sort of how we're supporting fathers also in that context and what programs are providing to those folks. The second point here is interestingly in developing Legacy the CDC came to an approach that reflects a lot of the ideas in the parent family and community engagement framework. Right, Lisa?

Lisa: Yes, many of the strategies and the outcomes that are articulated in the PFCE Framework are closely aligned with Legacy. So the model certainly has a lot of elements that really ring true for the way that we think about engagement.

Amanda: Awesome. And I think folks can see the alignment on pages 4 and 5 of their materials. There are some pages there that really speak to the PFCE and how legacy sort of moves across. But let's get to those four tips. I think that's what folks are really waiting for here. And to structure our conversation today we went to four areas of parenting that CDC found particularly important as they were researching this model and as they were sort of thinking about what it was that they could do through this model that would support the health and development of young children.

So I want to refer you all to pages 6 and 7 in your materials. And this is a tool for you as you listen. We're not going to have surprises today. There you're going to see those tips listed on those sheets and a few starter strategies under each of them and lots of space for you to jot notes from our conversation and also add your own ideas about strategies to use in each of those areas. So we're hoping that you guys can really use this as a tool as you're listening today. So Lara and Lisa, let's start with tip number one, support each family's sense of self-efficacy. Lara, what do you mean by self-efficacy? What does that mean and why is it important here?

Lara: Right, yes. So parenting self-efficacy is really just a parent's set of beliefs about how effective her or she is in the parenting role. So it's essentially if you're thinking about moms, maternal self-confidence in her parenting role. And we know from the research that self-efficacy is associated with increased positive parenting, lower parenting stress and a whole variety of positive child outcomes.

Amanda: Wow, so a lot of things that are really helpful to both the parent and the child there. And Lisa this is an important part of the work that you mentioned that Early Head Start and migrant and seasonal Head Start providers do with families.

Lisa: It is. And, you know, the role of self-efficacy is very important in terms of how parents kind of shape how their children are learning and how they feel about their own parenting. So when we think about for instance self-efficacy and goal setting or thinking about, you know, a family coming in and things is really what I want to achieve for my family, for my children. And when a parent has a sense of, you know, a strong sense of self-efficacy and they believe that they can make a difference and they have confidence and they're not sort of bogged down in a lot of stress they're more likely to be able to reach their goals in partnership with programs.

Amanda: Nice. So we know actually I think as we hear about self-efficacy what we hear is that it's really reflected, this idea is really reflected in the way that Head Start program performance standards have set up a system that really honors a family's role, that really celebrates that role and looks to them for leadership in both the program and sort of in any work around their child. So we know that this is a part of what you're doing is part of following those Head Start program performance standards. But I think that there are some strategies that we can think about as we're doing some more group work or one on one work with families. Lara you really looked at this as an important component to your model. What strategies did you all use in Legacy that support a parent's sense of self-efficacy?

Lara: You know, self-efficacy is really core to Legacy. And so there are several ways that Legacy helps to promote material self-efficacy. First there's the fact that Legacy is really founded in this belief that there's no one single right way to parent. So Legacy, a Legacy group session would never tell mothers how to raise their children. Instead in the group sessions they're really allowed the opportunity to explore, discuss and try out a variety of ideas and practices that have been already associated with positive outcomes in the literature. So this allows the moms to really decide what is right for themselves and their children. We really instill this idea of mothers being valued and supported as their own child's advocate. And the mothers often take the lead during these facilitated group discussions. So they're making these positive choices that are right for their own family. The Legacy group is also a very safe, non-judgmental environment that supports successful parenting opportunities. And we know in the literature that successful experiences with your children really help to build this self-efficacy.

Amanda: Nice, so lots of strategies that I think can be used in Early Head Start and migrant and seasonal Head Start programs in terms of really making sure that we're thinking about what families are sharing with us. We're not approaching folks with an idea that there is one right way to parent. We're really asking them what makes sense for your family and here are some ideas that we've got that we can offer you. Someone wrote in to say in the, in our registration she wrote in to say that she needs to get families advocating of their children. And she finds that sometimes that can be a challenge for her. And I think what you're describing Lara here too really speaks to her issue, really starting this idea that it's important to really start from making

sure she knows her importance. And you do that in a number of different ways through the work that you're doing in Legacy. Lisa what would you suggest for direct service staff trying to support a families sense of self-efficacy?

Lisa: So, you know, I think going back to the core of engaging families with a strength-based perspective starting with really looking at what they feel good about. You know, I'm thinking about the question and also what Lara said about individualized work with families and really finding out what's important to that family. So for instance, if they have, you know, a particular wish about having a, you know, a child learn two language and they're speaking one language at home and there's another language spoken at school really paying attention to, okay what's that parent's intention for that child and thinking about advocacy, how can we as programs whether it's in the home or in a center-based program support that role?

So whether it's, you know, having the parent come in and do different things in different languages or talking about different cultural traditions really honoring what is important to that parent. And I think as we build those partnerships with parents they're more likely to feel the sense of self-efficacy and that really their voice can be heard in a really meaningful way in our programs. And, you know, I think that's true. Lara's talking specifically about Legacy and about mothers. But that's true for all family members. It's true for mothers and fathers and grandparents and, you know, whoever is really centered on what they think is best for that child.

Amanda: It makes me think actually about a family that I was talking to who had an experience where her child was just repeatedly diagnosed with autism. And she kept saying this is not what this child has. My child doesn't have autism. And the home visitor really supported her in that. They continued to find folks that could evaluate this child and really pay attention to this child. And in the end the child was diagnosed with a visual impairment which made a lot more sense to this family. And what you see in that is sort of what happens when a home visitor or a staff person is able to follow that family's lead, really follow that expertise.

Lisa: And...

Amanda: Go ahead.

Lisa: ...Amanda if I can just jump in, I think that that's really true that, you know, when we approach families we often come from our own set of expertise about what we're seeing. But I think if we listen to parents really carefully they really know their child best. And while we have expertise professionally they have expertise because they've been with that child from the very beginning. So if a parent says, you know, I really believe that this is what's true for my child and what's not true for that child rather than just sort of saying well, you know, they're in denial or, you know, they're not doing what we think is best for the child, really listening to them and hearing what's important to them. So I love that idea of, you know, the example that you gave Amanda about, you know, really trusting that the parent knows their child well.

Amanda: Yes. Lara you talked about families leading the charge in these groups as having sort of an important side benefit. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

Lara: Yes. Legacy is a little bit different from a typical case management model. Instead really mothers are supported so they can be their own resource of expertise. And for example instead of giving a mother a referral resource for a problem she's confronting the Legacy group is really encouraged to share resources with each other. So the group becomes a source of expertise. And if necessary the group leader may scaffold how to research resource or how to use a resource with the mother.

So then she holds that information and power for identifying resources she needs and the techniques to get them. And she can do that next time on her own. So we've really seen this helps build leadership and autonomy in other ways in other domains of their lives. For example, we've seen in our Early Head Start partnerships that some of these mothers become policy council mothers. It helps them become more, show autonomy and leadership in their employment. And we're really just trying to be thoughtful and think about how the mothers are building their own strengths and building their own autonomy and preparing for being without the program when, you know, even the best interventions have to end at a certain time and you want to really support mothers to be able to do these things on their own which they...

Amanda: I love...

Lara: ...can do.

Amanda: Absolutely. And I love the idea that resource book really having that – I mean it's helpful to family support workers. It's helpful to home visitors but to really make those resources available to families and helping them, know how to use them so that they really have in their hands the ability to contact the folks, that, you know, I think some of us are sometimes inclined to contact for them but really to support them and scaffold that for them as you say, very nice. Let's move on to talk about tip number two here which is supporting the parent child relationship. We know that this is critically important of course. We talk about this all the time here at the Early Head Start National Resource Center. Lisa can you talk about this as a strategy to promote health and development among the families served in our programs?

Lisa: Yes. I think that, you know, the parent child relationships is really the foundation for everything that the, you know, the child is going to be doing in the future. And when I say parent child relationship I mean whoever the primary care provider is or the core people in that family are with the child and so really thinking about those early sensitive care giving interactions as being the foundation for brain development, children's learning, emotional regulation, success in school and eventual success in life. So it's really the very crucial point of, you know, it's the child's sort of touchstone for everything that they do. So as children have this, you know, more and more strong positive relationships with their parent and other caregivers in their life they're building their own sense of self and their ability to really move into the world. And it's not that we want every single moment with a parent or a caregiver to be perfect. In fact we don't. We

want there to be periods of time when there may be some regression or some disorganization. And it's really about coming back together in relationships so that you really build a sense of, you know, a resilience so that children can trust their world and can go on to really explore and again be ready for learning and for success in life.

Amanda: And Lara was talking, and I know we were talking before the call about how important it is at this particular time as we're thinking about infants and toddlers and their families, how important at the foundation of that brain development that that relationship is as strong as it can be.

Lisa: Yes, I mean strong, secure, stable relationships early in development we know lay the foundation for all future development and learning. And, so, you know, attachment of something have a secure attachment relationship is something that we discuss and touch on repeatedly throughout Legacy.

Amanda: And as I think as we're thinking about so we know about the benefits to the child. But as we're thinking about family empowerment and tips for family empowerment we know that it can support a family in feeling connected to a child. When they have that connection to a child, when they see the child's connect to them, particularly those infants and toddlers, those very young infants in particular who, you know, we're just learning to communicate with and sort of understand and figure out, that can be such a powerful tool for helping families know their role, yes? So Lara seeing its importance the CDC certainly brought this relationship in as an important part of Legacy, what strategies do you all use to support this parent, child relationship?

Lara: Yes, I think you really touched on the importance of a parent being able to be sensitive and to respond appropriately to their child's needs. And we know that responsivity and sensitivity are predictors of early literacy, development of the child's autonomy, pro-social behaviors, social confidence, lots of good strong child development outcomes. So in Legacy we really found, it's really founded in this belief that the quality of this positive parent child relationship is more important than any one single behavior. So there are many ways to be a good parent and that working to promote and support those positive parent child interactions are really critical for helping parents acquire new parenting skills. So we have dedicated time in Legacy for mothers and their children to practice techniques that have been associated with positive outcomes in the literature that provide a safe environment, a supportive environment to practice things that they talk about in the group. And so they're supported by a peer group and they're able to really put these strategies to use in a safe supportive environment.

Amanda: Nice. So Lisa as you listen to those strategies would what you add as ways that we can really think about supporting folks in building that parent child relationship? That's a big question.

Lisa: Well what I love is that what we know is that babies come into the world really to learn and ready to connect with humans. So even for families that may be struggling with resources and

don't feel like they have, you know, a lot of, you know, toys or other kinds of equipment at home to have particular activities, um, what you can really think about is that the most important thing that a child needs is and is born to respond to is a human face. And so even, you know, just naming when you see a baby and a parent together the way that they're connecting through facial expressions, the way that the baby is reading the parent or the caregiver and what that really does in terms of a building a relationship. I was at a conference last weekend and somebody said that they're actually building an app for a phone where they have a human face to interact with babies...

Amanda: Okay.

Lisa: ...which I thought was so odd because I thought well there's actually human faces there. And it can interact with babies, most importantly the people that love them the most. So, you know, starting with the very basics of if you're at a, you know, a home visit or you're seeing a baby come in for the first time or along the, you know, along the way of development that that kind of interaction with the parent is just so important. And then of course there's other things that you can do, you know, just in the home where you can do activities together like, you know, sorting the laundry or talking about different things while you're cooking. And then also, you know, one really important thing to think about I think is embracing families cultural heritage and transitions and language and so encouraging families to share that with their children and also with, within the environment that they're in. So those are some tools that I think about when you're encouraging parent child interactions and activities. It's just really, you know, encouraging them to interact with their children in some really profound but pretty simple ways.

Amanda: Yes. I mean it can be very simple. It can be just a moment and sort of I love what you said too Lisa about paying attention to when a child is responding to a family and when a family is responding to a child and really helping them notice that in one another that they're responding to one another in that time.

Lara: I agree. And I think that it's really important what Lisa said is that these are really simple things. They don't cost money. You don't need expensive toys to interact with your child. You just need a mom and a baby and eyes together. So, I think that there's a lot of, you know, value in realizing that this is not something that's expensive or, you know, involves a lot of extra stuff.

Amanda: It's such, there's such a payoff for nothing right? There's such a payoff at the end in those benefits for children and for families. One of our participants you guys wrote to ask how to help families feel like education is important. She was sort of feeling like this, a family she was working with was struggling with that. And I feel like a lot of that can really happen through nurturing this relationship early on, kind of getting families really keyed in to noticing all that their children are doing and achieving at that very, very young age and helping them see how their relationship together is really nurturing that baby. All right, so what about tip Number 3

here, this idea of parent responsibility? How did this rise to the top for you as you're designing as Legacy was being designed, Lara?

Lara: Yes, we really thought that parent's commitment and sense of responsibility for making thoughtful choices to improve their child's welfare was critical for positive parenting. And we've seen also in the literature that parental commitment and role satisfaction are associated with improved child development outcomes and the quality of the parenting behaviors. And we know that this commitment and responsibility involves in an investment of time and energy and that it's a dynamic process. So it changes over time. So parenting an infant looks different than parenting, you know, a 2-year-old. Yet they all involve a commitment and this sense of responsibility.

Amanda: And so how do you highlight that responsibility within Legacy?

Lara: Yes we do that in a number of ways. Again it goes back to some of our core pieces of our philosophy that parents can have a positive influence on their child's behavior regardless of other things like poverty and chaos and stress that's existing in their lives. They still can be this positive impact in their child's life. And really the group meetings provide this opportunity for mothers to develop and explore and set goals for their children and figure out how they're going to take steps to reaching those goals. And these are all in the context of mothers who are going through some very similar things.

Amanda: Well that reminds me again of, I'm sorry, was there more?

Lara: No, no sorry.

Amanda: No, no, that's okay. So it reminds me again of that of the person who wrote in to ask about advocacy because that's certainly a piece here and thinking of about those goals which we know is such a huge, huge part of what Early Head Start and migrant and seasonal Head Start programs do with their families. They really spend some time thinking with families about what their goals are, not just for their family but also for that baby and how to move forward with that. Lara one point that's made in your materials is that optimism, I'm going to quote here, is that optimism and personal responsibility can be increased by changing the way parents view events in their lives. Optimism and personal responsibility can be increased by changing the way parents view events in their lives. What do you, what does that mean? What do you mean by that?

Lisa: Because I think that reframing their view of their own situation and how they're parenting really can have a positive impact on their children. Then parents are able to translate positive intentions into positive parenting behaviors. So we do this in a number of ways with through the Legacy curriculum. One is we have one type of way is through session content that really focuses on maternal self-care and self, and stress reduction, so nurturing the mom and helping her manage her own stress. We also have sessions that focus on reframing and reflecting on both your parenting decisions and also your child's behaviors and how to look at them

differently and then also content that touches on handling other's views of your parenting and other's input and how to make sense of that and to think about it in a way that positively fuels your parenting behaviors.

Amanda: Yes, I think there's so many ways that staff and programs can say to families, oh I hear that that's – I hear that you interpreted that this way. I wonder if, I wonder what it would look like if you interpreted it this way. Or would it make sense to think, gosh I had a bad moment with my child but now I'm – but, you know, I was stressed out and I, you know, I, I'll forgive myself. And the child seems to be doing okay right now. So those kinds of reframing that can make it – make a difference in terms of how a family experiences their situation how they feel about themselves as parents I would imagine.

Lara: Yes, and each day and each child is a new opportunity. So we may not get it right the first time but we have other opportunities. You know, I go to bed some days thinking oh, I wish I had done this differently with my child. But the next day I wake up and I try things differently. So thinking about it as a new opportunity and you can always, you know, try again and do better.

Amanda: Absolutely. Lisa, what strategies would you add here?

Lisa: Well this really makes me think of the concept of resilience and that children and families are very resilient. And so like Lara was saying, I think giving people the opportunity and the space to make "mistakes" and to really think about how to learn from those and also reinforce that, you know, what? As long as the relationships are primarily positive and there's good intentions behind it that it's not likely that, you know, children are going to be damaged because of, you know, particular choices that may not have gone on, you know, the way you had hoped. And, you know, in terms of parental responsibility I think this was – it goes right along with empowerment that most of us come into this profession. Because we care about children and families, and we almost think about ourselves as helpers, and really reframing that idea of being a helper and, you know, helping. Really what we're doing is helping parents identify what they, what's really important to them and giving them that sense of like this is your child and you are responsible for the choices that you make and I will support you in that way. And so, you know, if there's a, you know, a little bump along the way that that's really okay for families and actually sort of an important point again as in, you know, a parallel to child development. It's also an important point of learning and growth for a family.

Amanda: Absolutely. So let's move on I think to this last tip which suggests that we work with families to build a sense of community. And you all talked a little bit about this at the beginning. We certainly know that social isolation can be a challenge for families we serve. It's a challenge for folks that have new babies. It's just hard to get out of the house, going to be a challenge for expectant families as well. Will you talk Lisa about why community connection is so important?

Lisa: Yeah. I think we all know this both in our own lives and what we see in the families that we work with that social support is such an important thing for families. It's a protective factor against stress. And so people who have positive connections to, you know, other family

members, to friends, to a community they're more able to meet basic needs for example, you know, transportation needs, sharing rides, getting each other to different places. Then there's also this really important emotional support. And I know that Lara can talk more about that. But there's this, you know, this sense of not being in it alone. And social networks can really mitigate stress. And the other thing is that they can increase an understanding of the social and cultural norms in a community. For instance if there's immigrant families that are new to the United States and they're trying to figure out their community really being with each other and working on that together can really, you know, increase a sense of community and social support. The other thing is that when children have closer relationships with adults in a social support network that their parents has – have formed that they're also benefiting from other relationships. And so they're learning from different modeling. They're understanding different points of view.

They're participating in different perspective taking. So it's an opportunity really for both parents and caregivers and also for children to feel like they're part of something that is larger than themselves and they really belong. And I think it really supports all of the other goals of both Legacy and of Early Head Start that, you know. We're promoting that sense of parents feeling competent and confident in their work and, you know, taking a sense of responsibility for what they're doing with their children. So it's just I can't say enough about, you know, those connections to other peers and community members.

Amanda: Those informal supports, absolutely. So Lara what do you do in Legacy to build this sense of community?

Lara: Yes, we really believe that that sense of community is critical to not only adopting new parenting behaviors but sustaining them. When you're supported by a group of your peers you're more likely to keep those behaviors and keep them going. So our curriculum really focuses on time to build that critical sense of community between the mothers by allowing for social connections between the mothers through food, through craft activities, through highlighting their own strengths. We also have opportunities for them to connect to the community and to attend community events so they're a part of their connections with the broader community.

And we really think that, you know, building this peer group through these building sense of community time and just through the group process is a way to establish bonds between the mothers that will again exist far longer than any intervention could possibly go on for. And as you have all mentioned it helps mitigate some of those feelings of being along as a parent. We know from some of our stories of our previous legacy moms that moms have helped other moms find jobs or housing or juggle childcare or we had Legacy moms that threw a mom, a baby shower because she was having her eighth child and had never had a baby shower before. So there's so much power in those peer connections that exist, you know, beyond the group and that doing little things within the group by allowing mothers to exchange phone numbers or

create community or make connections in the group really served them across all elements of their life.

Amanda: And just in having those conversations, you know, as long as it's, as long as things feel safe and confidential and this is a safe group, you know, so having some of those intimate conversations you said was also really helpful in helping folks build community in sort of a sense of, okay these people understand me. And of course there are a lot of boundaries that need to be set around that. And, you know, it may or may not be possible with a particular group. But when those conversations can occur that can be really useful as well.

Lara: Yes, the groups become very safe, intimate places. The groups set up ground rules that they develop. And that's also another piece related to the self-efficacy in the maternal responsibility where they design and create what they think are the appropriate boundaries of their group. And they become these places where it is safe to explore some of these ideas and to connect with other moms. And we know that from looking at our data that the moms don't like it if there's some – for some reason if we had to combine groups because they became small that these groups are very – they're closed and tight and they are kind of a piece of the mom in that they become their own space. And so, you know, they're very protective of their whole group environment and the connections they form with other moms.

Amanda: Well that's interesting to hear you describe that, Lara. And just in thinking about Early Head Start and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program how they, how you all – and really challenged you all, I guess, to think about the parent groups that you all have, how those programs are structured. Are families invited to support to help develop those ground rules for them? How can you create a sense of safety within those environments so that some of these relationships can really spring forward and support families as you say, Lara, over time? Lisa, I wonder what you all have seen or wonder what you all might suggest in terms of supporting community building among families that staff serve even when there's not a formal group setting for them? What have you seen from programs?

Lisa: So I, you know, beyond what already exists in Early Head Start and Head Start programs where there's opportunities at, you know, policy council or parent committee if you have a space where parents are coming to be together. There's also programs have done some pretty innovative things about getting families involved. They might form a buddy system so that there's, you know, somebody who's already in the program is kind of welcoming in and taking somebody under their wing who's brand new.

And, you know, also community projects working on something together where parents really feel like they're creating something together and like Lara saying really build some ownership around their own group and what's important to them. I think also this idea that each parent brings unique gifts. So community building doesn't always look the same way. You know, sometimes we imagine a group, you know, everybody's participating in the same way or somebody's organizing something and, you know, everybody's front and center. But I think we

need to recognize that people have different gifts. They bring unique talents. And so, you know, one family may look less engaged, but really they're contributing in a really powerful way. So they're organizing behind the scenes or, you know, they're processing one on one with something and not feeling more comfortable in a larger group. And then also I think again, you know, going back to families that are coming from multiple backgrounds giving them a chance to really connect with another and find a safe space and then if they're comfortable sharing it with other people in the program is a really important opportunity to both celebrate the community that you're already in and then also share it with a larger community for, you know, building a social network that feels really comfortable and strong and you have a sense of belonging.

Lara: I will say too, Lisa, that we definitely see that strong sense of community that's built within Head Start. Because in our early Head Start field testing we had a much easier time building legacy mom connections because essentially we were layering a community on top of an already existing very strong Early Head Start community. So it's clear that what Head Start and Early Head Start programs are already doing is facilitating this strong community.

Amanda: Well and I love – this is Amanda. I love the idea of really being thoughtful about it. You know, how are we helping supporting families in doing this? Are we doing it in the really intentional way? What is it that we can add in that will make a difference for the children and families we serve? Lots of strategies that you all suggested, the buddy system with new families, having meet and greets if families have kids of similar ages can be really helpful I think as you said Lisa. Really thinking about the space in the program, the environment in the program are there places where families can meet one another and talk together? Are there opportunities in the community, group volunteer activities or other things that groups can do together? I love all of those ideas and they would really need to be specific to a particular community. You'd really want to find what made sense to the culture that you're, and the community that you're serving. But I love the idea of really being intentional. How do we support these informal networks?

Lisa: And Amanda I think it's, you know, really important what you said about, you know, programs really know their families. And it doesn't need to look the same in every program. So, you know, certainly there are kind of general over-arching expectations for Early Head Start and Head Start programs and already some built-in structures. But you may have a program where families initiate something totally new that's just exciting and different. And so we can provide things like a family friend space or opportunities for engagement and participation. But we also really want to invite your families right from the beginning to say what's important to you, what would you love to see? You know, people share recipes. People, you know, build networks through social media.

There's all sorts of different ways I think that you can create that. And rather than staff feeling the burden of needing to figure that out for their families and their program, really getting people involved in creating that themselves. And I think that goes back again to the other goals of both Legacy and Early Head Start and Head Start program that we want to create that sense

of ownership and responsibility and efficacy. And that all really contributes, goes right back to the parent child relationship and building into advocacy and programs in schools. So for me they're all so connected. And it really starts with listening to the families and what they need and want to support each other.

Amanda: Well that's a perfect segue for us Lisa as we're thinking about, sort of, the four tips. We've kind of shared those now. And I think what it opens for folks is an opportunity to really look at their programs and say and look at their practice and say, you know, what is it that makes sense for me? What is it that makes sense for this particular family, and what is it that makes sense for our community, and how do I learn from families about how to sort of implement these ideas in ways that make sense here. I love that. Now before we end here will you say a brief word about the Are You Read – Are You Legacy Ready hand out that folks have in their packets? And that's on pages 8 and 9 for folks. Can you tell us a little bit about that, Lara?

Lara: Sure. We really see this document as a discussion guide that you can use within your Early Head Start agency and to talk with CDC to start identify some of the resources and support you may need for successful legacy implementation if it's right for you and your community. So it's a kind of a discussion guide to get the conversation going and start thinking about whether this might be a right fit for you and your community.

Amanda: And I understand, Lara, that there's some support that's available to programs that might choose to take this on.

Lara: Yes. So right now Legacy we're – CDC is providing Legacy training. The next training probably will not be till the spring. For interested programs there will be some very small seed grants through early, or through – available through Head Start that can really just help start, help supplement startup funds to get the program off the ground in your community. And then CDC would be providing the training, technical assistance. One thing we really heard from people in the field is that it's really hard to implement and evidence-based program without supports and coaching and TA. So we're really committed to being those supports for coaching and TA. And the best programs in the world can't do something with fidelity if they don't have the right support. And we are trying to provide those to interested programs.

Amanda: Very good. And I think there are questions here that really help programs think about it. I mean this is a this is, sort of, a heavy lift there. You know, this is a program that does require a lot of sort of intention and thoughtfulness and thinking about how resources can be best used. And it is, you know, this is not necessarily easy to implement. But it might be something that's really perfected for your program. And so folks have questions about that or they want to learn more about that Lara you're the contact person for that. And how would they get in touch with you?

Lara: They can email me at lpr0@cdc.gov.

Amanda: lpr0@cdc.gov. Okay.

Lara: And my phone number is also 404-498-3822.

Amanda: Great. I want to thank both of you so much. You've given us some strategies I think to consider as folks are supporting families, so that feeling of competence and confidence that we know is so helpful, not just to them but also to their children. And I want to thank all of you on the phone for being here. I think that we're going to end a few minutes early. And after all of that information we wanted to give you some time to consider some of the things you heard today to think about how they might apply to your work before we opened up the lines for questions.

So there are some questions for reflection on page 10 of your packet. So I'm going to put it into practice sheet there. You can see that there. Take a look at those and join us tomorrow at the same phone number and code at 2:00 from 2:00 to 2:30 Eastern Time. So again, we'll be at the same phone number and code tomorrow from 2 o'clock to 2:30 Eastern Time. Bring your questions. We'll have an opportunity to hear those tomorrow. But for now I'm going to turn it over to Elizabeth to end our call.

Operator: Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen that does conclude today's conference and we thank you for your participation.

[End audio]