Operator: Good day and welcome to the First Connections Audioconference. Just a reminder; today's conference is being recorded.

At this time, I'd like to turn the conference over to Miss Amanda Perez. Please go ahead.

Amanda Perez: Thank you so much, Justin and hello everyone. On behalf of the Early Head Start National Resource Center, I want to welcome you to today's Audioconference, First Connections: Attachment and Its Lasting Importance. We are so happy to have such a crowd with us today.

We want you to know that you all are on the line today 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 Justin said, "This call is being recorded," and will eventually be posted on our Web site and on the ECLKC.

Now the Early Head Start National Resource Center is sending each Early Head Start grantee and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start grantee as well, a package of 24 sets of the Early Moments Matter materials. These include a book and a DVD on the importance of secure attachment. And they're designed for parents. They're really nice resources.

You can see from the objectives on Page 3 of the handout -- and when I say, "The handout," I mean the supplemental materials that you received by email or fax -- that today's Audioconference will sort of provide the basics of attachment, we're going to talk a little bit about the long lasting importance of secure attachment.

And we're particularly going to focus on Objective Number 3 here, on providing you with strategies to use in your programs to support secure attachment. We also hope that we can offer you some ways to think about how to use those Early Moments Matter materials in your program once you receive those.

We have a phenomenal faculty with us today to help us reach those objectives. And I'm going to give them each a minute to introduce themselves. We're going to start today with Janell Frazier. Janell?

Janell Frazier: Hello, I'm Janell. And if you haven't already figured it out, I'm from Texas. Bless your hearts, having to stay awake. I'm an Executive Director of a nonprofit organization in Temple, Texas called Central Texas 4C.

We serve about 700 families in four cities surrounding the Fort Hood area, which is the largest military base in the world. We have lots of challenges but lots of opportunities. And welcome.

Amanda Perez: We're so glad to have you with us Janell. Mónica Ortiz.

Mónica Ortiz: Hi, this is Mónica Ortiz. I am the Program Manager for an Early Head Start Program in Gaithersburg, Maryland, which is just North of Washington D.C. We have both home visiting and a center-based option.

Previously I worked with English language learners in different public school settings, and I also worked in a Head Start Program grant for Head Start staff who are returning to college to pursue their degree.

Amanda Perez: And we're really glad to have you with us today Mónica. Thank you for being here.

Mónica Ortiz: Thank you.

Amanda Perez: And Brandi Rouse.

Brandi Jordan Rouse: Hi everyone, my name is Brandi Jordan Rouse. By trade I have a Master's degree in Social Work from USC, and I currently work part time in Community Mental Health providing individual therapy and family therapy to families dealing with issues related to trauma and addiction and migration.

I also have a parenting center where I work with new parents, especially infants and parents in pregnancy and postpartum, dealing with all those issues that come with having a new baby in the home and conditioning couples. And I started doing that as a birth to postpartum doula about 12 years ago.

(Crosstalk)

Brandi Jordan Rouse: And I'm happy to be here talking to everyone.

Amanda Perez: We're so glad to have you Brandi. And I - Brandi is also one of the featured experts in your Early Moments Matter DVD, so you might recognize her from that experience.

As you were talking Brandi you were reminding me that we're really lucky to have a clinician in our midst as we're having this conversation. And I do know from some of the questions that were posed from participants at registration time that there are a few folks out there who are very concerned about some of the specific children and families that you're serving. We are so glad that you all are in their lives. Thank you for being there.

We just want to remind you that on this Audioconference, its' possible for faculty to comment specifically on what's happening in their programs, to offer strategies, to offer specific information about what might work. But we have to be clear that even though Brandi's here, we cannot offer meaningful clinical information or support for specific families through this medium.

So we know those issues are serious, we know they may be overwhelming for individual staff, please work with your supervisor and your mental health specialist to get the important mental health expertise that might be needed in those situations. But certainly stay on the line with us as we have this conversation.

We have to begin of course here, with the Head Start Program Performance Standards -- we always begin there of course. And what was really striking to me as I was putting together these materials for the Audioconference is the sheer number of standards that really support this idea of secure attachment -- it's echoed all over the place.

But on Page 4 we have included just a few examples to ground us a little bit in our conversation. And we hope you have a chance to look at those as a reminder of the importance of standards in our work. But let's begin by defining our terms.

So there are lots of different definitions out there for attachment. And we're going to use the Early Moments Matter definition -- and it's included on Page 5 of your handout.

That definition is, "The emotional connection that children form with their parents and primary caregivers." We know that babies are driven to make those connections, but we know that we don't always see healthy attachments in programs.

Brandi, folks have a handout that details the different types of attachment here on this page, can you provide a little bit of a summary for what they're looking at?

Brandi Jordan Rouse: Sure. I'm going to start first with Secure Attachments. A child with a Secure Attachment is able to look at the world and the people around them with a lens of trust.

For example, an infant whose cries are answered by being picked up, if they're being cuddled, having their diaper changed; they gain an understanding of how their needs are met by their caregivers in a very loving manner. This foundation allows an infant that becomes a toddler and then an adolescent, and then an adult to approach other relationships in the same way -- through this lens of trust and love.

Now for the toddler with a secure attachment who is learning to navigate the world and dealing with all the frustrations, you've heard about the terrible twos, you know and they're - if they are met by adults who come down to their level, who help them learn how to deal with that frustration, who also model to this toddler how they themselves regulate and manage their own frustration, this really plants the seed in this toddler.

When you know, he or she is an adolescent and they're managing conflict with peers, they'll be able to use this foundation to respond to their emotions and those of others in a really sophisticated way. So basically children with a secure attachment learn that they can turn to certain people in their lives for support, for encouragement and for love.

Now on the flip side, for children with insecure attachments, they begin to learn to see the world through a lens of fear, uncertainty, and in some cases abuse. In this case, an infant who has his or her cries met with yelling, with anger, with hitting, or they're simply ignored; they begin to learn that people around you are not to be trusted or they should be avoided all together.

And if there's a toddler that learns that being frustrated or having strong emotions can be met with abuse or that - they learn to avoid the caregiver, and they either begin to hide their strong emotions or they become overly distressed because they have learned that no one can really help them manage these stressful emotions, and that can be really scary for a young child.

So as this child develops, they begin to see other relationships through a lens of distrust and fear, and at times they just generally are uncertain how to behave in relationships with others. So we really see how important it is to really help our parents really help their children gain a secure attachment.

Amanda Perez: Well and the one of the things that's interesting about sort of the families that we're serving is you know, certainly I think folks are seeing abuse, you know certainly I think they see neglect sometimes, for the most part I think they see families that are really doing all they can in a very stressful

situation. We know that Early Head Start Families experience a lot of depression, which can effect these things as well, yes?

Mónica Ortiz: I think that in our program in Montgomery County here we definitely see families across the spectrum, but a majority of them are parents who are very invested in the emotional needs of their children and providing for their young babies.

And there's some, you know, more information and strategies that they're looking for, but across the board in general I think we are looking at families who have a desire to create safe and comfortable home environments for their children.

Amanda Perez: Boy Mónica, I'm really glad you brought that up. And in our planning calls, you said something that I think is really key for staff learning a little bit about attachment.

Mónica Ortiz: Especially with our center-based families, what we work on is letting them know that we want the center to be a safe place for their child and a welcoming place for their family.

And as difficult as it can be, and emotional as it is for both the parents and the children those first few days of dropping them off and leaving them as they go to school and work, that soon the children will learn to see it as a comfortable place and that the children are able to have secure attachments with more than one adult.

So in the home it might be mom and dad or maybe extended family like grandparents and aunts and uncles, maybe even a childcare provider that the baby will be going to after they're done with our center-based program.

And the same with our home-based families, we work with them on the appropriate stages of children having fear of strangers and when they'll feel comfortable following directions from other adults who are

outside of the family, so that they learn that it's not something isolated, the attachment is just related to that parent/child relationship.

Amanda Perez: Yes, so we know those babies can build multiple attachments, which is exciting news as many of us are trying to support development of children. Very exciting to hear, particularly for center-based providers, I think.

In putting together this Audioconference though, we really wrestled with how to share the long-term importance of attachments. So we've talked a little bit about attachment, what it is, what different types of attachment might look like, and we finally came to the conclusion that many of you working in Early Head Start and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Programs really probably have a good idea of what the long lasting impact is -- that's why you're doing this work right?

So you all have a handout on Page 6 that details what researchers tell us is the long-term importance of secure attachment to the development of young children. And we don't want to spend too much time here, but Mónica your work with teens really helped you think about that long-term importance and I think it gives us an important perspective.

Mónica Ortiz: Yes, and Brandi was just mentioning some of this, that when we see that children don't have the strong foundation with a secure relationship with their parents and caregivers, it impacts their social interactions with their peers and other adults as they get older.

So we see children in a school-based setting who are seen as troublemakers or always getting kicked out of class, teenagers who often end up dropping out of school and having significant arguments with their parents and maybe even running away.

And as I was in grad school and had worked with teenagers, I realized you know the younger we get with the children, the easier it is to do prevention. And so helping families establish those strong relationships

in the beginning creating secure and safe home environments and those interpersonal relationships with siblings and parents.

And then for me it was just reinforced recently again when we started doing the CSEFEL training for our staff, which is related to the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. Again it was just a strategy for staff and parents to understand that some children are having difficulty with those social interactions, and might even have an underlying behavioral disorder.

And how do we identify those children early so that we can give them some more skills so that later in life it doesn't interfere with their academic experience and even eligibility for the workforce.

Amanda Perez: And Brandi you - I mean, we were talking a little bit about sort of how that attachment then affects the brain.

Brandi Jordan Rouse: Yes, it's one of those amazing things that we've learned about attachment and it's what a difference it makes in brain development. When I'm working with parents, I really try and get them excited about how their relationship with their children have a direct connection to how big and connected their child's brain becomes.

So when I'm working with them I really try to just give a very simplified description of how it relates to their parenting in the brain, and just letting them know that, you know 90% of their child's brain development happens in those first five years of life, you know the development of the brain occurs when connections are made between the cells, and really getting parents to understand that those connections happen as a direct result of interactions that a child has with their parents -- both negative and positive.

And to really solidify it for them I really kind of break it down that there are three areas of the brain;

You have the lower area that is developed when the baby is born. And that's the part that contains all the primal instincts like our, you know fight/flight or freeze reflex. But this is an area for an infant that tells them to cry to let their parents know when they're wet or they need to be fed;

And then you have that middle area of the brain, which is kind of like the emotional center. And this is where most of the development happens with children. And this area's all about feelings. So when I think about that area, I really think about 2 year olds, so it's all about feelings and frustration;

And then you have that third area of the brain that is considered the higher area, and that's like the decision-making area of the brain. And this part has a great spurt in development not until 6-years old. And that's so important when I'm working with parents that they understand that.

A lot of times when they have expectations of their child that's 2 or 3 or 4, they have expectations that aren't really realistic because they haven't really developed that part of their brain. So letting them know that each area of the brain builds on the other.

So when a parent attends to the needs of their infant, the infant is able to develop that middle brain. And when the parent bonds with their toddler, and helps them deal with their feelings, and then they're more able to develop that higher part of the brain that aides in making the decisions and having empathy for other people -- so really understanding that an attuned, connected relationship is the glue between the cells in the brain.

Now sometimes hearing some of this information can really be a little bit disheartening or scary for a parent who may feel that they've maybe missed a window or they've done things that could hinder the optimal brain growth. So it's really important to empathize to the parent that the brain always has the capacity to heal and grow at any age.

And I've found that a good example to use with parents is the case of a stroke, and really explain to them how the brain becomes impaired and then it can heal and completely become functional again. This is also true of emotional injuries; your child can heal and grow. And when there's a healing in the family, and new pathways of communication are learned, the brain does the same thing.

Amanda Perez: Such an important message I think for us to have here, even when you know it's looking like those attachments are insecure at this point, or you know, those folks need some support around that. But there's a lot of potential for that baby and that parent to then develop a different type of relationship moving forward.

Janell, you had a sort of closing comment for these remarks.

Janell Frazier: When I look at long-term effects, I look at a little girl named (Vanessa) whose mother understood even though she was poor early on that education was important and got (Vanessa) into a Head Start Program.

And the years went by and she did graduate from high school, she was the first in her family to do so -- got married, had children, divorced and found herself a single mom, knew to put her children into Head Start and she went to school.

She started work on a degree, she came to work for our agency, we sometimes say through the kitchen door," we paid for her AA and her BA degree and this fall she is completing her Master's degree and is now my Coordinator for Mental Health and Disability Services.

And I would like for Head Start to be able to take all the credit, but credit went to that mother, who understood early on. And in some way, perhaps through a lot of what we call the Maternal Instinct was alive and well in Vanessa's mother. And I think it was the combination of the home and then the Head Start that prompted that growth to such a beautiful young woman.

Amanda Perez: Wow, and that would have been a preschool Head Start Program at that time, but what a lovely story and what a reminder for all of us about sort of the potential of this program to nurture those relationships -- fantastic.

Now both Janell and Mónica have programs that offer both home-based and center-based program options -- they talked a little bit about that before. And in some ways as we're thinking about attachment, it seems like those two program options focus on different attachments.

So you could think of the home-based program right, really focusing on that family/child attachment, and there's certainly a lot of language in the regulation that leads us down that path. And center-based programming could be thought of as sort of focusing on the caregiver/child attachment. Do you think that's true Janell?

Janell Frazer: Not exactly. I believe that the primary teacher, which we've always given homage to in Head Start is the parent.

So I think it's all first connection with the parent to observe the parent to child attachment, because we can learn so much from the parent about what calms that child, what soothes that child, what excites that child, how does that child engage. Because the research proves that if the child is engaged, learning accelerates.

So I think in some ways even for our center-based program, our first priority is to develop the relationship with the parent so that we can get to know the parent - the child through the parent's eyes and then be more effective.

Amanda Perez: So it works both ways and you can really work within that center-based model to really support again, that parent/child attachment. And our focus really is here then, this parent/child attachment

and how programs can support families, maybe especially families who have not had that model of secure attachment when they were younger, to build secure attachment with their own children.

Now as we think about that, I've heard both Janell and Mónica talk about the Center for Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning or CSEFEL, and I know Mónica, you just referred to it. And you've talked about that as sort of an element of your success here. Mónica, can you talk for a moment about CSEFEL and what it is?

Mónica Ortiz: Sure, it's a pyramid model which helps to create a framework around children's emotional needs and how their social interactions can be with peers and adults in home-based settings as well as, you know center and other group settings. We've recently done a series of trainings for staff and then started doing the parent workshops.

The reason why CSEFEL is a pyramid model is because that - the first foundational levels are reflective of most children's needs and emotional states and developmental stages, whereas there's a much smaller percentage of children and individuals who do have delayed social and emotional skills development or even you know, may end up with a diagnosis related to a mental health issue in the area of emotional development.

And so the strategies that staff and parents learn through CSEFEL helps them to understand about those terrible twos and temper tantrums and how children communicate in non-verbal ways that are normal and expected stages of development, and then how are we able to identify, "This child might need a referral," or "My child needs some additional strategies and interventions."

Especially for families who have an older child identifying a younger child who is acting so differently than what they were expecting or had seen with their first child. The strategies and information that families learn in CSEFEL help them understand everyone is different and there are strategies to work with those children regardless of what their emotional needs might be.

And so for the - in a center-based setting, the training that staff gets helps them understand which might be the one child I need to interact with differently or observe differently for a temporary period to decide, "Is this truly someone who needs a referral for a diagnosis or is it just that their parent and I weren't picking up appropriately on their nonverbal cues and their other ways of communicating emotionally.

Amanda Perez: And...

Mónica Ortiz: You know and I was - sorry, I was just going to add that, what's beneficial is they've setup a really great Web site that also has video clips that are used in the training and that parents can also watch on their own with a staff member also, and see what some of the strategies are, learn to observe some situations so that they can see what they're looking for with their own children, and also have that feeling that they're not alone -- that there are other children with difficult needs sometimes.

Amanda Perez: Yes, they have an excellent, excellent Web site. And if you look on your Resource List on Page 11 -- I know we're skipping ahead a little bit -- but the first piece on this Resource List is from the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations of Learning.

And the Web site there is www.csefel -- C-S-E-F-E-L -- .vanderbilt.edu. And I would really encourage folks to take a look at what's available to folks there. Thank you, Mónica.

Mónica Ortiz: ((inaudible)).

Amanda Perez: So as we prepared for this Audioconference, one thing that was absolutely clear is that we teach relationship skills through relationships. And we talk a lot about that of course. And all of our faculty talked about the importance of that staff/family relationship. It's such an important element here. Janell, what would you say about that relationship piece?

Janell Frazier: Well, sometimes we think we're really smart because we've learned a lot. I know I have learned a lot since I've been working in the Early Childhood field, but over 200 years ago an educator named Pestalozzi said, "If you win a child's heart, they'll walk on their mind forever."

And that is the philosophy that we use in directing everything that we do. We know we've got to win the child's heart if we want to teach the child. But beyond that, if we want to make a really long lasting impact, because the child is ((inaudible)) family for much longer than when they're with us; then we have kind of paraphrased that to say, "If you win the parent's heart, you'll walk on their mind forever too."

And we think to make a lasting impact, both of those things have to happen. And we think they're critical.

Amanda Perez: And a major part of that is really getting the right staff for this work, right? Mónica, can you talk a little bit about that?

Mónica Ortiz: I think that this past year our program, having gone through expansion, really highlighted for me the need to have well-trained staff, as well as staff who are flexible and open to know training experiences and learning experiences.

One thing that we really made more use of during our interviews this time around was having scenarios as part of the interview process. And asking the candidate several real-life experiences about, "What would you do if a family said this or you walked into a home and this was the situation," or "What would you do with a child who reacts in a certain way?"

And then you know, listening to how they respond, their familiarity with certain types of experiences, and looking at those resumes and hearing how they talked about furthering their own education. Right now for the Early Head Start teachers, there is that CDA requirement, but do people stop there? And is that the last thing that they've done and they really haven't pursued other training opportunities.

When we mention the benefits of working with our organization and we talk about the opportunity to go to conferences and local trainings in the county, is that something that interests them and that they would be excited by having that opportunity in the workplace.

We want to make sure that they're open to new training and experiences, that they're not settled in the knowledge that they have, that they understand that there is new research coming out about brain development and early childhood development, and that they understand that a curriculum is really something that can be used as a guideline for what goes on in the classroom, but then how do they individualize each learning experience for the children that are in their direct care, you know in the classroom setting.

And then our home-visiting curriculum is also something that uses a lesson planning approach so that staff based it on a child's chronological emotional age and the results from their Ages and Stages questionnaire to decide what goes on in that main activity of child development in the home and then how can the parent and the Home Visitor elaborate and enhance it for each child individually.

Amanda Perez: Well there's a lot to be thinking about there. And certainly you know, we know that there are a further degree of requirements now for teachers and for Home Visitors as we're moving forward, and we want to pay a lot of attention to that. But as you're saying, "It's not just - it's sort of both, you know what's happening in their degree, and also their desire for learning, and their ability then to form attachments with children and with families, yes?

Mónica Ortiz: Absolutely. I think in the home-based setting sometimes it can get a little more complicated being in someone's home and hearing such personal stories and watching the children grow on that weekly basis. Sometimes we have to remind staff about setting those appropriate professional boundaries and what the relationship needs to be, in terms of helping the parent learn to develop skills and be prepared for what life after Early Head Start will be like.

So we want to make sure that there is that adult secure attachment, in terms of the professional relationship, the trust and the sharing of information that goes on. And then also when the child is preparing to transition, whether it's because they're hitting that third birthday or the family is moving.

We try to get at least a two-week notice from a family so that we can do some transitioning with the child so that you know, they understand that they won't see their Home Visitor anymore, they won't be coming to the center anymore, so that there is some amount of closure.

And also you know, when a staff member has made a decision to move or resign from their position, that they have those conversations with the family that it's, you know, related to personal family decisions on their own behalf and not something related to something a family member might have said or done. Because again that closure and those transitions are important both for the staff and the families we've been working with.

Amanda Perez: Well and again you know, as I was saying earlier that the Head Start Program Performance Standards; do you really support that secure attachment? And part of that is that six-month transition plan, when that's possible. You know, really trying to make that process where people are understanding what's happening with the staff and with the families and you know, that it's painful.

Mónica Ortiz: Absolutely, it's important.

Amanda Perez: And that the messages are clear. And Janell you've talked about how important supervision is as a part of this.

Janell Frazier: Yes, one of the things that happened to us, we had some really wonderful child outcomes. We have an assessment program and we assess daily how children are doing on objectives. And we just thought we were so good. And then the next year the data didn't support that we were that good anymore. And we thought, "Well what happened?"

So of course we trained staff, we thought it must have been the staff's fault. And that didn't fix it. And then all of a sudden we realized, "Well it was those of us who were supervising that were not doing a good job of that." So we got that fixed and the outcomes tended to improve.

But then we started a home-based program because one of our facilities, large facilities, wasn't ready for (aura) and we discovered, "Oh, the piece we've been missing all along is that we need to do more in depth observation and learning from our parents."

So it was kind of - it's been about an 8-year progression to figure out, "How do we get" - well, "How do we sustain extremely high outcomes in accelerated learning for our babies?" And a lot of it is supervision, but a lot of it comes back to really getting those relationships going with those parents as well.

Amanda Perez: Well and as we said earlier, it's so important to recognize that families may not always have those histories of secure attachment, and actually neither do staff, right? So we have to really be sensitive to all of that as we're doing this work with families. Mónica you had more to say about that.

Mónica Ortiz: I think what we try to remind staff as they prepare to work with the families who enter our program is that each of the adults, not just the children, needs to be treated as an individual. And it was important for us to learn through the application process and then as the family identifies their own goals and needs, is what the family's history might have been like.

We have had several teens in particular who have been through the foster care system in our state, families who were separated by some member staying in their home country and certain family members moving here. So there might not be the textbook situations of secure and health attachments that we're starting from as these adults are now becoming parents of their own children.

So again, we use the curricula that we have in place in both the home-based and the center-based settings as a guideline for where we're going to start with families, but it's important for staff to learn and adjust along the way how to present information to families, speaking to them as individuals and not making assumptions about what skills they might already have in place or what interactions they might have had with their own parents at an earlier stage in life.

We want to make sure that the families see themselves in the work that we're doing and in the guidance and support that we give them. So we're careful, how do we use the term parent versus family member, how do we use you know, who does mama mean in this person's own life if they were growing up, so that they can see themselves and then how they're going to work on their relationship with their own baby.

Amanda Perez: Right. Brandi what would you add here?

Brandi Jordan Rouse: You touched on it a little bit, is just really you know, if you're working with families where the parents may not have had strong attachments in their family origin or they're struggling with attachment relationship with their children, it's really important for the staff to know that the relationship that they form with this parent and the child are really helpful in healing the parent in secure attachment. And it really provides a model for the family of what a positive attachment relationship looks like.

You know in the work that I do with families I have the luxury and the time to be able to do a little bit more assessment with the parents, and I know that's sometimes available in the home-based or center-based Early Head Start.

But you know one of the things that we hear from Dan Siegel -- who I know is on the Resource List that you provided for the participants -- and he talks about and tells us that, "The single best predictor of a secure attachment between an adult and a child is that adult's own understanding, whether it's positive or negative or challenging, of their own childhood experience."

And sometimes I find that families can really benefit from that kind of therapeutic support to explore their own childhood. And it may be something that has to go to the consultant, but you may find that some of the families you're working with have some things they really need to process that can't necessarily happen in the time that you have in the home-based setting.

Amanda Perez: So really important to engage mental health consultants and perhaps for mental health consultants to spend some - or specialists to spend some time with staff thinking about you know, when it would be important for them to refer. What are sort of some of the benchmarks that might mean, "You know what; it's time to refer this family for some therapeutic services." Do you think? All right.

So the Early Moments Matter materials offer Five Steps to Attachment, we're getting back to those materials now, and these are in your handouts on Page 7, and they form a really nice structure for us as we talk about supporting families in building secure attachments with their children.

And we're going to spend some time here so our faculty have some practical, really specific ideas about how to support each of these steps within Early Head Start and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Programs.

And let's begin here with Step Number 1, so - and that's Understanding your Child's Queues and Style of Communication, which is huge. So how do you all work with the families that you work with to understand their children's cues? And we'll begin here with Janell.

Janell Frazier: Well I think after our staff is trained on the approach that we expect them to use with families, we start in the home. Even if they're going to be in center-based programming, we go to the home to visit with those families before their child comes in.

And during the orientation home visit, we do a lot of observing and talking to the parent about, "What does your child like, what does he not like," generally just visiting with them while they're changing diapers, while they're feeding the baby and observing how they do things.

We just want to make sure that we're not coming across as though we're all experts, because for one thing, research has proven that expert models don't always work, just because you know something doesn't mean that you're going to be able to impart that to someone else.

So being very careful and making some things available for them, I just - I loved the booklet that came with the Early Moments Matters. I think that sentence in there that says, "Well I knew I was expecting but I wasn't expecting this."

((inaudible)) speak to a lot of families who, "What do I do now that I've got this little crying bundle?" And so I think they're real family friendly, but the key for us is that our staff observe and let the parent lead, what they're interested in.

We would probably put those materials on the table, the coffee table when we went in, because we're going to be on the floor with the baby and the parent. And just see what the parent's eye goes to if that's one of the pieces of information that they kind of reach for and pick up.

We'd probably leave that one with them and tell them there's a DVD if they get to where they don't have time to read but they might could listen to the DVD or watch the DVD while they do some other chores around the house. We'll follow their lead, just like we follow the child's lead.

We've got to meet them, like Mónica said, "Where they are." And just sharing; we've just got to get away from this old Head Start idea of parent training -- we don't need to train parents, we need to form partnerships.

Amanda Perez: Well that's such a nice example of how those materials could be used, sort of in the context of that, following the parent's lead. Mónica?

Mónica Ortiz: We've also selected two curricula for each of our program options that really enhance that parent involvement component. And we start with having selected the Ages and Stages Questionnaire as a screening tool that we use for child development determinations.

So the parent receives some background information on how to do the observations of their child and conduct the activities with their child so that they can take the notes for the ASQ results. And staff is always there with them to help when they get nervous or to clarify anything.

We bring the materials into the home to do each of the ASQ assessments. But the families see themselves, from the very beginning, as a partner in that process.

And what we ended up doing when we received the Early Moments Matters material was the Home Visitors took it out on a few home visits with different families and presented it to them said, "This is what I saw, these are some things I thought might interest you. Would you like to take a look at it and let me know if you'd like me to bring it again or if you'd like me to, you know leave it with you for a week and I'll pick it up at the next home visit."

Some are saying again that they also really liked that DVD option. And we have the Spanish edition of the information right now and several of our parents were really looking forward to, you know, keeping the materials for a few days and then returning it afterwards.

Amanda Perez: Nice. And in those materials there's actually a really nice page on Page 28 of those Early Moments Matter materials, those booklets once you receive them, has a really nice page on cues and communication in there that has some photographs of babies and sort of offers some opportunity for conversation around what families might be seeing in those pictures, which I think is nice anticipatory

guidance for a pregnant women or expectant fathers or even for fathers and mothers who are already working with those babies.

Now somebody had written in to ask about early interventions with families when it seems like the parent/child attachment is in jeopardy. So this is sort of looking very early to see that there might be a concern.

And Brandi, you talk about the importance of really getting on the floor with families and children and reporting what you see, asking them how they might respond to those families, can you talk - to those babies. Can you talk a little bit more about that strategy?

Brandi Jordan Rouse: Sure. You know I really believe that for - when you're working with parents that may be struggling with attachment, it's really important to focus on their daily routines, you know which are often the areas that they may take for granted.

For example, if I'm working with a parent that has an infant, and I'll often ask them like, "How many times a day are you changing the diaper," and most will answer, "I'm doing it like 1000 times a day."

You know, I'll recommend to them, okay why don't we try and focus for this next week, until I see you again, on every time you change your baby's diaper I want you to talk to him or her about what you're doing, take time to make eye contact, take the time to tickle their little nose or cuddle them.

And you can really see if they do that for a week how much just doing that thing, having a routine of doing that throughout the day, how that increases that ability for them to bond in the times they have to bond.

And when I'm working with a new family or when you're working with a new family like in the field, you can get on the ground with them and with their little one and kind of narrate for them what you see happening with their child or with their baby. You know, and this also guides them in ways they can respond.

So for example, you're on the floor, you're playing with the parent and their baby and the baby will start to cry. You know, I may say aloud to them, "Oh yes, I wonder if she's bored, let's try another game."

And if the baby's still crying, "You know what, now it seems like she's rubbing her eyes. Do you think she could be sleepy?" Like, "How do you tell when your baby is sleepy?"

You can just really facilitate this type of exploration in a way to help parents see that even though their child does not talk to them, they are communicating with them in so many other different ways.

Amanda Perez: And Janell, you do that a lot too I think, or you work with your staff to do that a lot in a way that really highlights the expertise of the parents in those situations.

Janell Frazier: Yes we have the ability to videotape and then show our parents what either they are doing on the floor in their home with their child or what the caregiver in the center is doing with their child, either way we ask them to tell us as they watch it what they're seeing.

And then when they pick up on something, we can support that. It gives the family a feeling like, "Yes I can. I can do this. I'm already doing this, I just didn't realize." Like Brandi was saying, some of those routines are so important.

So when families allow us to videotape them in the home it really is sometimes an eye-opener for families, that they're already doing some of this and doing it well. So that's something that we can build on.

Amanda Perez: Video can be such a nice tool there. Let's move on to Step Number 2, which is Creating a Foundation of Trust and Security. And you all do this largely through providing a trustworthy and secure relationship with families.

Janell, you started talking a little bit about that earlier. So what points do you want to bring in here? And I know Mónica, I think we'll start with you.

Mónica Ortiz: Yes I think we often use the relationship with the adults that we're working with as a model for how we're going to look at the child as an individual and meet their needs for safety and security.

Like Janell mentioned, we want to come in and talk with the families about, "This is going to be a partnership and an experience we have together, watching the growth and development of your child."

I think in particular having some conversations with staff who are concerned about children with language delays, we often start by asking the parent, "Do you understand what your child is saying," even if I don't or even if those don't seem to be words in any particular language.

And I think by asking questions like that we're able to get the parent's trust that we aren't there to boss them around and act as though we know more than they do; they're the ones who spend several hours a day with their child and have learned to communicate with them, hopefully learned to pick up on some of their cues, and that we're here to reinforce what they're doing well and give them some opportunities to learn about new skills and strategies to work with their children.

Amanda Perez: Janell.

Janell Frazier: Yes?

Amanda Perez: Is there more you want to say about this trustworthy and secure relationship?

Janell Frazier: Well I'm reminded of a word that we hear very often, and sometimes to the point of its being trite, but when we talk about empowering parents to be the best parents they can be, I'm reminded of one of the socializations that we have for our parents.

And we were talking to them about what we had learned from our mentor, Dr. (Turner), about (Dialogic) reading and how that can really be a powerful tool. And one of the young mothers came up to me after it was over with, very privately and said, "But I can't read."

And I told her, "That's okay, neither can your baby. Just read the pictures." We want them to love books. And it was such a freeing moment for her when she realized that she didn't have to read to read to her baby. So of course then eventually, that led to other things like getting some literacy skills for that parent.

But the important thing was that she be given the feeling that she was already able to do for her child what she needed to do for her child. And I think it's that, "Yes I can," feeling that we want to get going in our parents.

Amanda Perez: Well and this process that you have for really finding out where families are finding their barriers, where they are seeing their barriers, and then you know, sort of stepping in there with them to help them break those down or recognize that they're not a barrier, always to the relationship with their baby -- so lovely.

Mónica, you said that it - your - at your place there are just a lot of staff running around and so creating this foundation of trust and security can be kind of complicated. But you've got a nice strategy there.

Mónica Ortiz: Well especially because of expansion. We have grown...

Amanda Perez: Yes.

Mónica Ortiz: ...doubled in size. And I think also you know, when families hear about enrolling in the program, the center is often the most important thing that they hear and not every family ends up getting a slot in our center-based program.

We want families to understand really how comprehensive participating in Early Head Start is, the support that they'll get while they're still pregnant, and all of the prenatal experiences that they'll have in our program, the opportunities for male involvement as a focus area, the opportunities for empowerment and advocacy through our Policy Council.

So we've started having new family orientations on a quarterly basis where we invite families to the program, within you know, the first few weeks of their enrollment in the program. And they get to meet in particular those staff who are not the ones they come in contact on a daily basis.

So it would not be the Home Visitors and it wouldn't be the teachers; it would be all of the other specialists and staff who work, oftentimes in that office based setting providing the additional support to the families directly and the comprehensive services that make up the unique aspect of Head Start Program.

Amanda Perez: I think that's very lovely. And Janell you guys do, I mean sort of on a converse side, you all do an orientation home visit with your center-based, that I think is pretty significant to family experience with the center-based program.

Janell Frazier: Well we feel like it helps prepare them since we're going to be in their home before they come to us they're going to already have met the teacher, probably when they came to turn in the pre-app, so it's going to be a familiar face coming back to the door, and always the teacher and the family worker, we call them FCAs, the Family and Community Advocate, go together to the home orientation meeting.

And we go through a lot of the stuff that people probably do at enrollment, but we sort of do it in a more relaxed setting. And have time for them to really ask questions and begin to get to know the child's teacher and begin to setup the relationship so when they do come to the center-based especially program, they don't feel like a stranger walking in and here's all these new people. There's ((inaudible)) recognize. So it works well for us.

Amanda Perez: Oh yes. Now on the center-based piece Brandi, you and I talked too about sort of something that we might say is guilt, that sometimes families can experience, or jealousy that they might experience as staff build relationships with children, particularly in center-based programs. And I'm just wondering how you work with families around that particular point.

Brandi Jordan Rouse: Well I mean first I want to validate their feelings, you know let them know that's a normal feeling for them to have, that that is an issue for many families putting their child into care. You know, "Will my child love that caregiver more or will they forget about me? You know is the caregiver trying to you know, win my child's love for me?"

It's very normal and it's a really typical reaction for a lot of moms and dads to have. But I - you know I really try to emphasize with the families when we talk about attachment, the importance of how this type of high quality care for their child really is going to help with their child's development, not only you know, whether it's in school or socially with friends, but it also will help, you know with the parents' relationship as well.

But you know, we talked about earlier how it's important for them to have different attachment figures. And I really, you know, reassure them by talking about the importance of the time that they have with their child, whether the - you know, the quality of it rather than the quantity.

So really talking about that day-to-day routine, "When you are spending that time with your child after work," for example, "you know what do you guys do? Like maybe have like a No TV rule where you guys

can just sit and eat dinner as a family or have time where you just read a book alone or you go for a walk," really encouraging them to work and find those practical ways they could really have one-on-one time with their child each day.

And that's what's more important, not how much they're having with the caregiver, and with you know, their parent and they can have quality relationships with different people.

Amanda Perez: Well and that certainly comes - I mean we had a question from that come in from folks who are listening, you know who are saying, "Our families work two, sometimes three jobs. How do we really support them in building that attachment?" And what you're saying is, "It really comes down to the quality of the time that's available."

Brandi Jordan Rouse: Exactly.

Amanda Perez: All right. Now the third step here is to Provide Consistent and Responsive Parenting. So if we're looking at this third step towards attachment, what they list here is Providing Consistent and Responsive Parenting. And we certainly want to see that in interactions between families and children.

Janell, on this point of consistency, you really work hard to establish a teamwork between home and care in your center-based program. And I wonder if you can talk a little bit about data logging; you referenced it earlier.

Janell Frazier: Well one of the things that we have found that is a very good vehicle for communicating with parents is what we call the Data Log which we - of course, before we ever start with their child, we're involving them in setting - helping set the objectives, "What do they want that child to be learning right now? What's the child interested in learning right now?"

And you know, they're kind of like Swiss cheese; some weeks they're interested in gross motor and some weeks they're interested in something else. But we ask for their help in developing three objectives. And at any given time those are embedded into our lesson plans, and we capture daily data on how the child is doing on those objectives.

But when we can take a data log and show the parent, especially if they are working on the same thing at home, "Look how fast he's mastered that. Now we've got to get a new objective and stretch him a little further." Or if they're absent for a long period of time and then they come back into the center, and we can show them how the progress slowed down or stopped altogether on reaching mastery on his objective, it becomes a very visual tool for parents.

It's not a big thing; it's just a sheet of paper with three columns on it. But when you can show them how quickly when we're working together, their child is mastering things and what predictors those are for future school success, it kind of gets their interest going -- and in a way that just talking about it hasn't always been able to do. So it's something that we find very valuable.

Amanda Perez: Really...

Janell Frazier: It also tells us where teachers need help if the child's not providing - or not progressing as fast as they ought to go we want to know why so.

Amanda Perez: Well it's a really nice way to use that data I think, to support consistency, to sort of look at - I mean there are many lovely things about it; you're talking with the families about, you know, you're engaging the families and sort of thinking about how their children are moving forward and you're watching the data with them and you're talking about why there might be changes or shifts in the data, I think it's a very lovely communication tool.

And it also really emphasizes this point about consistency. And you use every opportunity for communication with families ((inaudible)) know.

Janell Frazier: Yes we do. In the center-based program we do not do whole scale transportation. And we've made that choice because we've got to see the parents. We've got to have a couple of minutes, five minutes when they bring the child and pick the child up to touch base with the parent and keep those communication lines going. We think it's a smart thing for us.

Now if a parent cannot get their child there any other way, we do have a small transportation program and will refer to transportation so they can get there. But usually those are situational. Down here in Texas most people have cars. And it may be that the car broke down so we put them on transportation for a week.

But still, the monitor who rides that school bus with those babies has a chance whenever they get to the home to do that 60 second visit to check in and see if the family's okay. So that and the socializations that we have for our parents and children together and staff, have been really good.

Of course we've got newsletters and home activities and all that good stuff. But that five minutes is important.

Amanda Perez: And just being very intentional and planful (sic) about that time. One issue it does bring up, again Brandi, I think is this sense that we sometimes hear from the families we serve that they may feel inadequate to this task. You know I think sometimes we hear, "I can't do that," as Janell is saying. What would you say about that?

Brandi Jordan Rouse: I think it's really important to again, emphasize resilience. And we talked about it just a little bit before with the brain that there's always the possibility for repair.

You know I often tell parents they have to really focus more on the repair than the rupture. And the way they do this is by being consistent and recreating communication with their child, where their child begins to learn to trust and to love. And that even if they didn't have a secure attachment as a youngster that they can build one with their own child.

And it's really important, you have to understand no matter what the start was or even how old their child is, that they can still make these repairs.

Amanda Perez: And Mónica I think you know, as we talk about consistent responsive parenting, we've got to go back to routines again. And Brandi talked a little bit about this. Can you say from your piece, you know what you - sort of how you speak with families about routines and talk with them about that.

Mónica Ortiz: It tends to be easier in the home - I'm sorry, in the center-based setting because there is that schedule of what is going on during the day. It's posted for the kids and the adults to see. It's a framework that the teachers work in to make sure everything gets taken care of in order each day.

But even in the home-based setting we talk with parents about, even if the mom isn't working outside of the home or if there aren't siblings who need to catch a school bus, what those morning routines look like -- getting up at a certain time, maybe bathing the baby, what the dressing routine is, what the mealtime routines are like.

Maybe there's just a plan to go out on a walk, even if you're not going to the store or the laundry mat, the dinner time routines, if there are other family members what's it like when they get home at later points in the day? And that helps to develop some of that trust and security that the babies will develop with their parents that, "I know what to expect, I know what comes next."

Routines also around things like diapering and feeding, babies knowing that, "When I cry and ask for a snack I'm going to get something; that my parents and caregivers pay attention to me." And we often have, you know, staff sharing personal stories.

I myself am a mom and I talk about, you know, the mealtime routines with my own children, that if I don't establish certain behavioral expectations and social interactions at this point it's not going to happen later when they're teenagers, it's not going to happen when they're two feet taller than me and they don't see me as someone to trust and go to for - you know as a rule setter and as a decision maker in the family.

Amanda Perez: Yes, you said your husband is 6-foot 4"?

Mónica Ortiz: Yes, and I'm only 5-foot 1, so those boys are going to get big, and they need to see that I am someone who can be relied on for, you know good decision making and routines and expectations.

And I think again, when we're hiring staff, a benefit in our Head Start Programs is hiring former parents who can speak about those personal experiences, and again connect with the new families that we're working with. They love to hear you know that, "I'm a mom too and this is what I've been through."

Amanda Perez: Well and then the diversity of the - and the ethnic diversity of the community that you serve Mónica, that piece about hiring from the community, culturally I think is important, in terms of consistency for the children.

Mónica Ortiz: It is. Montgomery County is an extremely diverse area -- I think there's over 140 languages spoken in our public school system here. And so we know that these families live in our area and we're trying to meet, you know home visiting needs in particular, in the home language or in a familiar culture as often as possible.

We recently translated our brochures so that we have our outreaching materials in English, Spanish, French and Mandarin. We also make sure that as often as possible when we're putting job announcements out we list some desired language groups.

When we see that our referrals and our applications are coming from families in a variety of different cultures we want to respond and say, "Do we have someone on staff who would be a good match for that person?"

Even if they're not necessarily able to speak the same home language as the family does, our staff members, people who are understanding of the important role culture plays and traditions play in a parent's view on upbringing and childrearing. So we want to make sure that our staff is flexible and has an understanding of how culturally diverse our area is.

Amanda Perez: Wow and that language connection is helpful whenever possible. Janell you had such a nice story about this.

Janell Frazier: Well, I don't know how nice it is, it kind of shows you how dumb I can be sometimes. But I was working for another program in a very rural area, and was visiting one of our Head Start centers and there was a child when I walked in that was just crying and crying, and I asked you know I thought, "Well maybe it's temporary."

But after a while I started asking questions. And this was an area where they did not have access to staff who spoke Spanish. And I thought, "Oh, well I can fix this, I know a little Spanish."

So I went over to the child and I was going to ask him, "Why the tears?" And I said, ((Spanish Spoken)). Now for those of you who know Spanish, ((Spanish Spoken)) means tears, I asked him, "Why the miracles -- ((Spanish Spoken))?" It didn't matter. It was the rhythm of the language; he stopped crying immediately.

And even though it was much later than I realized I had used the wrong word, I did know the word for - Spanish word for bear and I picked up a bear and we started playing. And we talked about his - the bear's eyes and his nose and played a little bit in the child's language and he immediately was soothed just by hearing the language.

So before I left that day, I wrote down the way some things sound in Spanish when you're asking children to do things. And things improved from there.

But it's extremely critical for children to be able to hear something in their own language, even if it's just a folk song that mom sings at home, have the parent teach you the song, or the good night story, or whatever in the language of the child. I think it's critical.

Amanda Perez: Well and somebody had actually written in about that, just saying that they're getting more kids who are speaking Spanish only and that she speaks no Spanish, and she wondered how to ease that transition. And what you're saying is, "Learn what you can."

Janell Frazier: Yes.

Amanda Perez: "Do what you can during that time. Make the music a part of what you're doing and the language a part of what you're doing to the extent possible," yes?

Janell Frazier: And with our very young babies we use sign language. We teach them you know, milk, more and just a few things in sign language so they can at least communicate. Because they can do that a lot of times before they're verbal.

Amanda Perez: Yes. Mónica did you have anything else you wanted to add about that?

Mónica Ortiz: Yes, like you said, "It's not always possible to hire staff members who speak all of these various home languages," especially as neighborhoods change and different groups move into the area. But you want to make sure that the families are able to connect with staff who understand and respect their culture.

And also in our center-based setting, in particular when we set up the dramatic play areas and the music areas, we try to incorporate different cooking items, clothing items and music that - or even musical instruments that reflect those home cultures.

We often let families borrow children's songs and DVDs - I'm sorry, CDs to play music. So we've bought a variety of things that have songs from other cultures.

And when we've put items in the classroom or with our home visiting materials, we often try to ask family members who have been willing to make donations and contributions or staff members who have items from their home countries, to really make use of authentic items.

We try not to buy you know, commercially made fake baskets or fake clothing that seems to be Latin American style or African style. We try to get something that's authentic as possible. So that again, families see the respect for their culture.

Amanda Perez: All right. So we've talked about responsive and consistent parenting, and so the next of piece of this is, the Fourth Step that's described in the materials is connecting with your child through touch, through physical comfort, laughter, play -- this is not always easy for families. So Brandi, from your perspective - but from your perspective you said that, "This piece was particularly important."

Brandi Jordan Rouse: Yes, especially touch, you know. The human infant is the only infant that cannot survive without touch and connection. You know all of us have heard that term, "Failure to thrive," and it's,

you know, it's true of humans. That's why it's so important, because this is the way that we learn, the way we feel safe, and this is how become comfortable it's through our connections with others.

So for our families it's really important to teach them that this can happen in so many different ways. You know, for example, skin-to-skin interaction; we can teach our moms and dads they could just take one hour a day to lay their babies unclothed skin against their bare chest, how much that aids in the attachment relationship -- how much it aids with development.

I kind of give - also give parents the example of when babies are born premature that they have parents go in and just take that premature baby and put them skin-to-skin on their chest. And they've found that these babies end up gaining weight faster, they get released from the hospital quicker, and their outcomes are much greater than those who didn't get any of that skin-to-skin contact.

So it's just really important for them to understand how important this piece of touch is you know, for our infants.

Amanda Perez: And Janell one of the things you said is that sometimes this is just a conversation that you have with families, it's just talking with them about this.

Janell Frazier: Yes, and one of the things that we're finding in our program is that we now have more grandparents rearing grandchildren than we have foster children in our programs. And sometimes some of the things that grandparents knew about raising children were not the kinds of things that Brandi's talking about.

You know, if the baby's crying, well, "You'll spoil them if you pick them up," or you know, "Slap that hand if it's doing something." And it's a really kind of touchy thing to be able to talk about what we've learned without damaging the relationship, because we're going to be asking them to change a little bit about what they know about parenting but it's important, you know.

And I can remember in my own case when I had my child, and had him home for the first day -- and my mother-in-law was staying with us to help us, whom I adored -- and all of the sudden (Brady) started just screaming his head off. And I looked at (Ruby) and I said, "Should I pick him up?" And she said, "He's your baby, do what feels right for you."

And that was the most empowering thing she could have told me, because all of the sudden I realized, "He is mine. I can go pick him up; I don't want to hear him cry." And so it was the beginning of the journey to learn what soothes my child and that I'm capable because it's my baby.

So those kinds of things -- empowering people and sharing information in as gentle a ways as we can, but with as much knowledge base as we can -- is important.

Amanda Perez: Well then Brandi, this is not about toys. And sometimes that's a piece of confusion.

Brandi Jordan Rouse: Yes, because I think there's just so many images. I mean TV and out, you know, everywhere they turn that it's all about having these material things and having this certain type of toy and that's you know, what you need to be able to play with your child.

And I really have to remind parents that connecting, you know, and connection and being with your baby is not about the toys. You have to spend some time with your parents sometimes just teaching them how to play and interact with their child.

I think often sometimes we take for granted, or we expect that our parents do know how to play, you know with their children. I have a really good example that I was working with a mom who, you know, was a very brilliant woman, who was valedictorian of her class and graduated top of her law school.

And I had had some session with them and she would kind of just sit there, wouldn't really interact. You know and then one day she started crying and she was like, "You can just sit down and you play with the baby, and I don't know how to do that because I never ever played when I was a kid. All I did was do work and I was doing advanced stuff and all I did was do homework and study. I never ever played."

So this woman had literally never literally played with anyone, whether it was here peers or her parents. So sometimes we have to remember that, you know, if they don't know, they don't know. So I think we have to teach them you know, what they need to do.

So sometimes we have to show them, and that means again, getting on the ground with them and really showing them how to play with their children. We can't just expect that they'd know how to do it.

Amanda Perez: Well and I'm nodding vigorously from this side over here, because I've certainly - I've had in my work with families in Early Head Start and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, I've had that conversation with them before; they had never known how to play. They had never anybody play with them in some instances before an Early Start or a Migrate and Seasonal Head Start staff member got on the floor with them -- such an important role to play.

Mónica another piece of this is reading.

Mónica Ortiz: Yes. We work with families as they enter the program on the importance of language development, especially through reading; children's familiarity with books and text as they go on to school.

But even with our pregnant moms we start with, you know how you can read to the baby prenatally and then once their born. For some people who didn't have books growing up that it was a luxury or that, "Why in the world would you read to baby? They can't read themselves and they don't understand the words I'm saying."

We remind them of the importance of the lap time, of holding the baby close and just repeating words and vocabulary so that they start to develop that grammar structure and the vocabulary themselves.

Janell mentioned earlier, "A family who might not have literacy themselves, some the mothers that we work with didn't finish grammar school, or didn't have an opportunity to learn to read." And there aren't children's books available in everybody's home language.

So we talk with the families about options, getting board books that are primarily photographs and pictures that they can use their own vocabulary to fill in what the story might be, or just to talk about colors and shapes and animals. And again it's mostly the importance of the language and that closeness, that opportunity to hold the baby in a safe and secure way.

Amanda Perez: Well and Mónica just to stay with you for second, I mean one of the things you said is that, "Sometimes this is hard for staff too."

Mónica Ortiz: Yes, you know, we had changed our model of how we're planning and facilitating the group socialization. So about a year ago we went back to asking each of our Home Visitors, the Family Support Workers, to facilitate each of the group socializations we're having at the program.

And for some of them they were not very comfortable with leading circle time or presenting the songs to the families. And we know that that's something we want to work on with staff so that they can model for the parents, "It's okay to make silly faces," as we work on what are feelings and emotions and we work on some of the CSEFEL activities.

"It's okay to sing a song just because you're to sing a lullaby to baby to calm them down," or singing a funny song about animal sounds and teaching your child about vocabulary. And so we want to make sure

the staff have some opportunities to play and feel comfortable with it themselves so that when they're working with the families directly it's more natural for them.

Amanda Perez: And Janell you said that, "Socializations are a wonderful place for families to learn some of these skills."

Janell Frazier: Well I think, especially when we make available the classrooms with activities set up for parents to do with their children in a whole group kind of setting. In other words there might be three over in this area doing something with their babies, and two parents over here doing something with their babies -- but everybody gets to watch.

I mean it's not like they're out there performing. It's just that when we get the activities going with them, everybody can see how everybody else it interacting with their children. And that's been pretty valuable. Usually information that means the most to parents is that which they pick up from other parents. So that's worked well for us.

Amanda Perez: I wanted to ask a question that had come in from the field very briefly, and I'm just ask Brandi to respond to this. I'm looking at the time and knowing we're running to the time where we almost want to get to that Q&A.

But we had question about folks that - about children that are really sensitive to touch. And they really don't like touch perhaps. And I wondered what you would say about that as we're looking at this particular fourth step.

Brandi Jordan Rouse: When we're talking about this stuff you really have to work with the child and the parents, especially if you have a child that has some, maybe issue with sensory integration.

And although you're not in the home to be doing diagnosis, you know is my understanding, I think it's important wanting to talk with that parent and find out what things trigger their child. They may tell you, "You know what when we're, you know, somewhere and like my child touches a really scratchy surface it really gets them very, you know, upset or frustrated."

So if you have a child that doesn't want to touched, it's really finding ways to interact with that child and show them that you are someone that can be trusted, that you're not going to you know, make them more aggravated, or to - really for example, if they don't want to be touched you can - maybe you can hold a ball together. Or we can roll the ball back and forth.

If you have a child who doesn't even want to interact at all, maybe you're doing some side playing where you're sitting alongside them. They're playing with a truck, and you play with a truck. So they can find that even if you're not having that direct, you know, face-to-face interaction where you're touching them and cuddling them and doing this fourth step, you can do it in different ways.

The goal is that you're doing things with them, that they see, that you can be trusted, you're doing things that help them to regulate themselves and you're not doing things that are going to disregulate (sic) them.

Amanda Perez: Well and that's part of the cue reading that we talked about earlier; really being sensitive to those cues as well.

Brandi Jordan Rouse: Exactly.

Amanda Perez: So - but we don't want to leave off this fifth step which is so important. And we want to - we know it is so important to work with families around self-care. How do you do this in your programs? Mónica?

Mónica Ortiz: One place that we have fit this in in a very intentional and obvious way is through the Family Partnership Agreement process. As families enroll in the program it's very easy to help them see how Early Head Start is about school readiness and about child development. But we also want the adults in the family to know that their goals and their interests are going to be incorporated.

So we do have a survey that families complete at intake related to some areas of interest -- maybe it's getting a driver's license, maybe a GED or some families want to open up their own family day care home and they want to find out the process about licensing and training for that.

But we have also run into situations where maybe a mom has been in an abusive situation and doesn't see herself as someone who's allowed to set goals and have her own interests. Or moms who became pregnant unexpectedly and have lost sight of their goals and on what plans they had for themselves.

So we really want to work with them on what is it that they find important for their own satisfaction and their own happiness as they go forward potentially, with a career or their own educational process. What is the Early Head Start process going to be for them as they work with their child? What are the expectations that they hope to get out of the program and working with our staff.

And with something like a Family Partnership Agreement you can put it on paper and set a timeline. Other ways to incorporate this would be through the selection of a curriculum that has materials like workbooks, where families are going to put down journal ideas or goal-setting activities that they've set for themselves.

But staff can help connect them to resources and make referrals to other programs that provide additional support that Early Head Start can't provide because of our focus on the child. But we want them to understand they're - that the parent's mental health and happiness is key to being able to provide appropriately for their child.

And then those daily interactions; how their own happiness and belief in themselves and their own needs helps to make sure that they're less stressed. And have, you know, more positive interactions with their own children.

Amanda Perez: So important. And Brandi you do so much work with new parents, how do you talk with them about this?

Brandi Jordan Rouse: Yes, I emphasize this. Probably one of the major steps with new parents, because so much of that time with - in post-partum can feel really, you know, you feel like you're out of control because you don't know what each new day is going to look like. So I talk to the parents about taking some time to claim part of their day.

You know, it may mean that, you know every day at 9:00 am, commit to taking a shower at that time. So you that you can at least know that, "Okay, at this time every day I have this 10 or this 5 minutes to myself." And that can be their time.

And I just talk to them about taking charge of their day. Like some of the tips that I give them, for example, is to log their babies eating and sleeping for just a couple of days because they can start to see a pattern that, "You know what, everyday around 10:15, my baby tends to nap for an hour. Maybe this is a time where I can take my nap or maybe this is a time where I can sit out on the patio and get a little bit of sun."

So start talking to them about how they can kind of log these little times for themselves throughout the day so it doesn’t always feel so erratic and inconsistent.

You know, I tell sometime when I talk with the dads, to be - you know, I want you to be in charge of making sure that mom is having something to drink or she's having lunch if she's breastfeeding, so they kind of feel like they have to some ownership in that as well.

You know, and as a family you know, "Can you every - you know it sounds like this is the time where baby's really fussy, around 4:30. Do you think as a of the family you guys could have a walk from 4:30 to 5:00, you know, at least twice a week?"

So they can start to claim this time for their day and it doesn't always seem like it's just, you know so open ended, not knowing when they're going to get that time to themselves. And it really helps for them if they can look forward to these little snippets during the day that they have just for themselves.

Amanda Perez: Wow, and it's funny you say that right now. I was just thinking that we had offered folks a Q&A time, and I want to make sure that we get to that -- a questions and answer time. So I'm going to invite Justin to come on and let folks know how to buzz in with questions. We'll take a few.

Operator: Thank you. The question and answer session will be conducted electronically. To ask a question, please press star 1 on your telephone keypad at this time. We'll take as many questions as time permits and proceed in the order that you signal us. A voice prompt on your phone line will indicate your line is open to ask a question. Please state your name before posing your question. Once again, press star 1 to ask a question.

Amanda Perez: Well, and while we're waiting for those questions, Justin, I'm just going to ask this one last question of our faculty. We know that one of our objective was to help you all look at the Early Moments Matter materials and think about how you might be able to use them in your programs.

There's lots of information on their use on Pages 9 and 10 in your handouts. But - and Janell, you talked a little bit already about how you would use those materials, bring them on a home visit and see if they engage a family.

Mónica, I wondered if you had another sort of practical idea about how to use these in your program?

Mónica Ortiz: When I first received them and looked through the packet I really liked the items that were in that front pocket; there's a bookmark that has some little bullet points, and then there's a magnet that can go on the fridge or, you know in a bedroom or somewhere that the family can look at again and it just has those little reminders of tips and guidelines related to the materials.

We have laptops that the staff take on home visits. So if staff have seen the video they can select certain parts and take in on a home visit and play it and discuss it with the family members.

One of the moms who did preview the materials for us last week really just liked skipping ahead to the sections of the packet where she could write the information about herself and her baby. And she said that she would go back and read some of the other things later, but that she really liked that aspect of it in particular.

Amanda Perez: How nice that we can individualize it.

Mónica Ortiz: Yes, it's very flexible because there's a few different - you know it's multimedia and there's a few different ways to use each piece of it.

Amanda Perez: Nice. Justin, do we have any questions?

Operator: At this time, there are no questions. But as a reminder, please press star 1 if you'd like to ask a question; again, that's star 1.

Amanda Perez: One of the questions that did come in from folks as we were preparing is on serving families in foster care, and sort of how that might be different than serving families who are, you know not in - a part of that system already. And I wondered if any you had any thoughts about that. And maybe we can take one comment before we check in and see if anybody else has called in.

Brandi Jordan Rouse: I will say something Amanda. Because...

Amanda Perez: Sure.

Brandi Jordan Rouse: I would say 50% of the kids that I see in our nonprofit are in foster care.

Amanda Perez: Okay.

Brandi Jordan Rouse: So we're often dealing with caregivers who don't know a whole lot about, you know, our clients. So you know, I find that even in the same way of working with a parent you often are doing the same type of modeling to help this care giver try to start building attachment with this child.

You know, they may not see this as their main attachment figure, they may have had several disrupts in their own attachment, they are in foster care. So it's really providing again, you as a staff person being in the home or being at your center, kind of modeling this attachment relationship -- whether it is you know, engaging the care giver, the foster parent and this child in play, talking with the child about their, you know previous experiences with play, and kind of trying to gain more information. And I've found that to be really helpful.

And if you have a foster parent that's really engaged and really wants to be a part of the process, you know you can give them things they can do on their own, like some game that you may have found that you know, can help them build you know, some trust with each other.

Amanda Perez: Well and of course talking with the social workers on the foster side about that can be really helpful as well.

Brandi Jordan Rouse: Exactly.

Amanda Perez: Justin, has anybody called in for us?

Operator: Yes they have. We'll take the first question.

Amanda Perez: Hello.

Female: Hi. I - you mentioned that the Early Moments curriculum was going to be coming to the Head Start Program - the Early Head Start Programs. Do you know when that's going to happen?

Amanda Perez: It's not - let me just say, it's not a curriculum it's a set of materials - there's actually several sets of materials. They went out last week and there are also a few going out today. So they should be there I would say, "By the end of this week."

Female: Great, thank you.

Amanda Perez: You bet. Other questions, Justin?

Operator: Yes, we'll take the next question.

Amanda Perez: Hello.

(Evelyn): Hi, my name is (Evelyn) and I am with the (TA Network) for Head Start. And is there any possibility that those materials would be available for us to use as resources?

Amanda Perez: They are available online. So you can find them at www.earlymomentsmatter.org. Is that right Mónica; it's .org right?

Mónica Ortiz: Yes that's the Web site and I think, yes the information can be - I think the packets will be mailed to people from there, the ones who put in a request.

Amanda Perez: Yes, it's not - I will say that they're not free from them - from there (Evelyn). So there is a cost for those. And they're really for families. I mean that's a clear piece of it, but they're very nice materials.

(Evelyn): All right. Yes. I understand that they're for families. I'm just like if we're doing a training on home visiting or we're talking with the Early Head Start Programs, I just thought that it would be good information or good stuff to have with us.

Amanda Perez: Absolutely. I think they're $10 a piece for a kit.

(Evelyn): All right, thank you.

Amanda Perez: Mm-hmm.

Operator: And we'll take the next question.

Amanda Perez: Hello.

(Evelyn): Hello this is (Evelyn) also.

Amanda Perez: Wonderful. That's easy to remember.

(Evelyn): Right. Well we had a question, and our questions just had to do with somebody was mentioning that they changed their socialization model to using Home Visitors. And we wondering what the model

was prior to that, and if this change - how it affected, you know some of the things we've been talking about today with regards to attachment?

And if, you know, they found that the - having Home Visitors involved with the families really facilitated that process more than whatever the other model was before?

Mónica Ortiz: That was me; Mónica.

(Evelyn): Okay.

Mónica Ortiz: Yes, previously we had our Disabilities Coordinator, our Infant and Toddler Specialist taking the lead.

So she would plan each of those group socialization events. She had a very strong foundation and curriculum in child development so I think the belief had been that she would create a very strong and solid and focused group socialization each time. And then as we reviewed the performance standards we realized that the Home Visitors needed to be more directly involved.

And I had heard from another Early Head Start Program here in Maryland that operates with one of the Catholic Charities Programs, that they alternated so that each month a Home Visitor was tasked with developing the activities and the menu planning and everything and that they would facilitate while the other Home Visitors helped to you know, run each of the activities during the group socialization.

What we found with the involvement in that direct way of our Home Visitors was that;

They talked about it more with their families in advance. So more families were coming to the group socializations;

Families also began to realize that there would be a familiar face and someone that they and their child knew at the event;

Also by involving that many different staff members, it has really enhanced the variety of the activities that are going on.

So we have a dedicated group socialization space which is set up like a classroom. So children have that center-based experienced, and that group activity experience. They can use the playground that's for our Child Development Center.

But we've also started doing more activities in the community, like going to the public libraries. Our county has Parent Resource Centers. And so we've been introducing families to the nature centers or the Rec Department and other places where they can take their child and start with familiar activities that they've learned us, but then also you know, go off and explore in their own direction, following their child's lead.

So it's really opened up and changed what goes on. And it's not that you're coming to the same old thing every single month.

(Evelyn): Okay, thank you.

Mónica Ortiz: You're welcome.

Amanda Perez: And I think that's probably all the questions that we have time for. I thank you so much for calling in. And as we close I've asked all of the faculty to identify for us the one message that they want to make sure people leave with. So let's start with Janell.

Janell Frazier: Well I'm going to back to my old favorite Pestalozzi; I think if they're one thing in working with families and children that we must learn, it's how to win their hearts in order to walk on their mind's

forever. And whatever we can do to be sensitive as we do that, and understanding, and forgiving, and all of those - and professional with the boundaries, which sometimes is hard like Mónica said, but I think it's extremely important.

Amanda Perez: Wonderful, and Mónica.

Mónica Ortiz: I'm going back to my foundations in resilience. I think we do need to understand how resilient the human brain is, and these young children can be in their relationships.

We want to focus on providing new opportunities and experiences to families and helping staff understand how these new experiences can really positively change the relationships with the adults and the children that we're working with.

Amanda Perez: Great, absolutely; and Brandi.

Brandi Jordan Rouse: I just think it's really important for us just to remember that every parent has a dream for their child and some of our parents may have had some detours along the way, and some are doing exactly what they need to be doing and some aren't really even sure how to get there.

But I think that the work that we do with our families, when we come from a place of non-judgment and we're curious about what they know about their children, and what they want to teach us. I think can really heal attachment relationships with parents and their children. And we can help create some good pathways to attachment.

Amanda Perez: Absolutely. I think that's the promise of Early Head Start and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Programs that are working with infants, toddlers and their families.

I really want to thank our faculty for offering all that you offered today. I hope that folks have some new ideas for renewed commitment and some new ideas and resources for supporting that critical family/child attachment in you daily experiences and your programs.

For further information and resources on this topic please refer to the other materials in your packet. And we hope that you will take some time to look more in depth at those Early Moments Matter materials when they come to you.

We also hope that you will take some time, as individuals or a group, to reflect on what you heard today using the Applying the Information handout that you have in your packet. And of course send those evaluations in to us either online or in paper, we definitely use those. And they help guide our way.

Thanks again for being here today and for all the work that all of you do with the most vulnerable children and families. I'm going to turn it over now to Justin to end the call.

Operator: Thank you. And that does conclude today's conference. Thank you for your participation today.

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