

## **Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework: National Head Start Family Engagement Conference Call**

Coordinator: Good afternoon, and thank you standing by. All participants will be able to listen only. Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections, please disconnect at this time. I would now like to turn your conference over to Dr. Joan Lombardi. Ma'am, you may begin.

Dr. Joan Lombardi: Thank you. Good afternoon everyone. I'm just delighted to be here on what I think is a historic event – to kick off the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework.

I think we all know that core – that Head – that family engagement in Head Start has been cornerstone of the program for the life of the program. It is really set the pace - it sort of set the pace for what we mean when we talk about family engagement, when we talk about parent involvement, when we talk about the importance of having families as a centerpiece of our service.

It's distinguished the Head Start approach as something that others in the early childhood field can learn from. And I think today takes an important next step in that journey to make sure parents and extended family members are at the heart of what we do.

We all know - all of us with children or grandchildren – that families are the heart of the place where children begin their learning. They really are the cornerstone of what we do with children as they move forward in their education journey.

What I think is so exciting about today is that we've now become so much clearer about what our expectations are for family engagement. It's not just looking at the process of involving families, but it's getting clearer about what we are expecting out of our family engagement work. And the framework really sets the pace.

I was reflecting back this morning to when the Child Outcomes Framework came out in, you know, more than 11 years ago, and what that did for the field of early childhood. After that we got the development of early learning standards that moved across the country.

Well, it's my hope that this Head Start Parent and Family Engagement Outcomes Framework will build upon the other work going on in the field around family strengthening, and move the entire early childhood field together.

For Head Start programs, I think I'd ask you three things. I'm hoping that you take this Outcomes Framework immediately to parents, and really have discussions about what this means to them, and get their response to it and what it means to them in your particular program.

Secondly, that you don't see this is separate component – that this is integrated into everything we do.

Whether it's families in health and families in education, families in dual language – everything we do, we should be integrating these family engagement outcomes into that.

And third, I think, I hope, I hope that it puts a renewed focus on the staff that work directly with families. And, you know, those staff which we all know have been so important to the program but have not always gotten the kind of attention and support they need.

Well now, they have a road map of what they do, and we need to make sure that we support them. So just to recap, you know, make sure you take this to the parents themselves because they're the most important. Make it tailored to your program. Integrate it into every component. And certainly, support the staff that work directly with children. Before I turn it over to Yvette, I want to just thank Kiersten Beigel for incredible leadership. I've - it's really a testimonial to her perseverance, which is what we want among – in our children. And her love of the issue that has brought us here. And to all the staff of the National Center who work so hard to make this happen.

You know, nothing - the secretary recently reminded me - that nothing happens because of one person. It's always a team. And I know that there's family support staff all across the country that have worked for years to bring us to this day. And I just want to thank you from the bottom of my heart as a early childhood person, as a mother, and as a grandmother for all the work that got us here. So with that I'm going to turn it over to Yvette.

Yvette Sanchez Fuentes: Good afternoon everyone. And thank you for joining us today. So first of all, I just want to, I just want to say thank you to Joan for all of her constant leadership in making sure that families were always a key component in everything that we did. Because we all know that families play a huge piece in affecting the lives of all children but especially of poor children. And so with Joan's constant leadership, with Keisten's constant "go, go, go," we're finally able to move this Framework. And we are really excited about how this going to change not only what happens in Head Start programs across the country, but all of our Head Start programs, First of Five, and in the early childhood field at large.

I also want to take a moment to thank all of you for participating in this call today, but also for participating all week in our Family Engagement Week here at the office of Head Start. We've literally got thousands and thousands of you that tuned into the ECLKC each day. Folks were able to tweet, and you were able to send your questions via Facebook, which is taking us quite to the next level in terms of our technology.

So we're very excited - not just that this is moved forward family engagement outcomes, but it's also moved us forward with regards to our technology savviness here.

So I think as you've noticed all week, family engagement for us here in the Office of Head Start – for Joan, for Kiersten, for myself – it's a real passion. It's a piece that we believe is critical in helping children and families to be ready for school. You can't do it alone. And you can't do it without families.

So because we've received so many questions, and I know that folks are so interested in this topic, I'm just going to go ahead and turn it over to Kiersten. But I also just want to take this last moment just to say thanks to Kiersten. She has worked tirelessly on this. And I just, again, I just want to say thanks to Joan for all of her leadership and for sticking with us every step of the way on this one. So, Kiersten.

Kiersten Beigel: Thanks, Yvette. We have received so many different questions from folks in the field about the Framework since it went out Monday, and based on your participation in our Family Engagement Week and events. And so, we wanted to get right to those questions. If you haven't had a chance to email your question, you can do that still at [OHC\\_pfc@headstartinfo.org](mailto:OHC_pfc@headstartinfo.org).

So the first question is the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement framework is – talks about promoting family engagement and school readiness from birth, to prenatal, to age eight. Can you talk a little bit about the five-to-eight part? And are there resources or tools to help with that? Got that question from a few folks.

Joan: Well, I'm going to take that, Kiersten, this Joan. I think it's a great question. And I want to just underscore the importance of that prenatal-to-eight frame. You know, that's what we've been talking about. We know from research that we can't do it alone. And it's going to take good infant-toddler services, good preschool services, and good services as children move into the schools. Parents are the ones who are with the children throughout that whole period. So it makes sense for us to focus on that continuum through this Framework. You know, I gave you three things to do within your program. But even more important than that is sharing this Framework with the schools.

We know that the Head Start Act talks about continuity with the schools. We're making that a priority. You're about to see a brand new document come out. You'll see it next week. We finalized it recently, called the Partnership for Sustained Learning: A Guide to Creating Head Start School Partnerships, where we build onto the Framework to try to continue to do our linkages with the schools using the family component as a key to make that linkage.

Now, I think traditionally, there have been efforts around parent involvement with schools. But it's not just about involving them in the school. It's not just about parent-teacher conferences. It's about focusing on the parent-child relationship, continuing the supports to promote family well-being, having the schools recognize that families are lifelong learners, that maternal education and the conditions and involvement of fathers makes a difference to school readiness, and to ensure that schools also have the ability to keep parents supported – not just so that – so that they do have the family well-being that leads to their involvement in schools.

So we're very excited about the Framework being prenatal-to-eight. And we think again Head Start will be leader in making those connections with the school. So by all means share this with your local school. And use it as a way - and you'll see that in the partnership guide for creating new dialogues which we know you're already working on with the schools.

Kiersten: Next question. And we received this question from a number of folks, also. Is this Framework required, and will it be expected – will we be expected to report to OHS on these outcomes?

So the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement document is a TA document. It's a technical assistance resource for programs. And we see it as complementary to the Child Development and Early Learning Framework. But the Child Development and Early Learning Framework is a direct output of the last two reauthorizations of the law.

The PFCE Framework, for short, is not a mandate. It is not a new set of Performance Standards per se. It is, again, a TA resource. And so – but it's a TA resource that we think holds incredible value in setting forth a common language and a common set of goals, and goals that programs and parents have actually been working toward everyday in communities all around the country for years.

We hope - we really hope – that you find the document useful. For some of you, you may want to use it to redesign or, you know, do some planning around your program in a comprehensive way while, you know, others of you may just see value in strengthening a certain aspect of your programming; building on some things that you're already doing.

But regardless of you see the PFCE Framework and its utility for you now, we just wanted to let you know that we fully intend to provide materials both this fall, and over the next two years to support its use in various ways. And that's going to be through our National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement who has been instrumental in developing the Framework. They're actually on the call with us today. And they'll be answering some of our questions, as well. But your questions and your feedback will really help to drive, I think, how those materials are refined, and designed, and put back out to the field.

We got a question from Sally Olsen of Family and Community Services Manager from Berkshire County Head Start in Massachusetts. And she asked us this, and she represents a few folks who also asked this question. How will this new Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework be reflected in the Performance Standards?

So we actually see the PFCE framework as a performance standard implementation tool. When we first realized that a framework would be helpful to a field in this way, we synthesized the Performance Standards and the research, and we came up with seven outcomes that you have seen reflected in the document.

So the National Center looked at organizational research and realized that when family engagement activities are integrated and linked to cross program foundations and impact areas that problems would be better positioned to support progress toward key outcomes for families and children.

So these are really the same things that we have been working toward over several such Performance

Standards now going back decades. The only difference is that we are - we're trying to make what we do a little more explicit so we can improve our intentionality. And as a result our ability to know what's making the best difference in partnership with families. So it's really a first step.

Next question from Paul Pittman who is an executive director from Head Start of Washington County nearby in Maryland. How can we get copies or download the new tool kit? Kathy, from the National Center, would you like to take that question?

Kathy: I'd be glad to Kiersten, thank you. First I want to say that it's been an honor to work on this with Kiersten and to thank Joan and Yvette for your incredible leadership. It's really exciting to have this day have arrived.

Let me see if I can address Paul's question. Working in collaboration with Kiersten and her colleagues at the Office for Head Start, we're developing a series of materials both in print, Web-based, and we will extend them out to both face-to-face and e-learning kinds of professional development experiences to support the Framework. One of the first things we're doing – actually on Monday morning at the Leadership Institute, we'll be introducing what is called the Beginning Self-Assessment for programs. And this builds out ways for programs to work with the Framework to really get down and examine the Framework, and proposes questions that relate to each program foundation and area of impact as they relate to the family outcomes.

So that we're really trying in this first set of documents and first set of presentations to really link the kinds of organizational structures and processes that are present in each program that really will support family outcomes, and to really help those family outcomes, in turn, support children's school readiness.

We then are going to build on this beginning self-assessment to develop a more detailed guide that really proposes questions and allows you to really crosswalk and look at a progression so that you can move from meeting the Head Start standards to actually moving with those and beyond them to be integrated, comprehensive, and systemic in your work around parent, family, and community engagement.

We also will be doing additional installments and a series with those materials. We hope to have this be Web-based so that you can use it on ECLKC, as well as have print versions. This will be a dynamic process for us.

And in it, the initial development of this beginning assessment guide we want to thank all of the many programs that provided us with feedback from the field. And we will continue to be asking for your help and gain your expertise as we develop these materials. So the first installment we will have on Monday is the short answer.

Kiersten: Next question, we got a lot of questions from folks who wanted to ask about measurement.

How will Head Start implement an outcomes based data driven approach was one question. Are there parent-family engagement outcome measured tools that we can model our program after so that we can present and measure outcomes data? How are we going to measure these gains? So we got a lot of questions like that. Susan B Staples from Androscoggin Head Start in Maine, Demett Lou from – she's an early Head Start senior program coordinator in California – are two folks have submitted some more questions. Kathy would you want to talk about that one?

Kathy: I'd be glad to, Kiersten. As I described a minute ago, the first step in trying to talk about both how to share this information but also to think about measurement or what we're calling data-driven decision making around parent, family, and community engagement is the self-assessment guide series that we will be rolling out, again, the first component on Monday. And in that guide, as I mentioned, there are really – there are really questions to help programs begin to ask questions about measurements and to link program components and the areas of impact with family outcomes.

You also will find, by the way, in the back of the – of the Framework, examples of strategies for program progress, as well as some examples of progress for parent and family perspectives. So I would urge people first to read the Framework because we really have started through the Framework to think about the how – how do we go about measuring each of these components to move towards the family outcome.

I also want to say, in addition, the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement will be developing a series of research-to-practice briefs. And these will revolve around the Framework, and they will outline the evidence-base for each of the components of the Framework. And then talk about the specific implications for practice.

So that we can really take what we know from the research and the best practices information that we have in the literature and really provide that to programs.

There have been a set of important questions that you all have asked about measuring family outcomes. And this was part of the set of questions that Kiersten just mentioned, as well. There are a huge variety of ways to measure this series of outcomes. A number of us with experience in doing Head Start, Early Head Start, and early childhood and family well-being and parenting research have experience with developing and using these kinds of measures.

We also know that a number of you have developed really important ways of really trying to access this information. So we hope to really bring these two bodies of knowledge together so that we can understand how to measure and make suggestions about a variety of ways that you can measure family outcomes.

We will be looking at systematic ways to organize information or data to capture constructs around parents, parenting, parent-child relationships, teacher-child relationships, risks and challenges of parents, how parents can act and function as leaders, how they can be learners themselves. And such –

these activities are going to be part of an ongoing, data-driven, decision-making work that we are going to be engaged in in collaboration with the other Office for Head Start National Centers. And in this way we really hope to build out the section around continuous improvement as they relate to parent, family, and community engagement.

Kiersten: Next question, from Marianne Perez. She writes, "My concern is with many parents that are not or cannot be as involved. Often programs have a star group of parents that are involved but are not able to build partnerships and communicate to the hard-to-reach. How do we involve all parents? It's as though those that can't come to meetings or serve on the Policy Council that we must target if we're going to have a lasting impact; an outcome must be that we engage all parents in their child's education."

So this is a great question. And, you know, parent leadership and program governance and parent involvement in program settings are really important activities and really meaningful activities for so many parents over the years. So many parents have told us these kinds of things have made such a difference in their lives and for their children. But, you know, Marianne does raise a good point. I think some times that we feel such urgency to ensure that parents are represented in our programs – that they're volunteering, that they're on Policy Council – that we see that as, sort of, the means to the end. But it is truly one pathway, really, in the program that supports some really important goals for families.

Consistently we see though that about a quarter of our families nationally that sit on Policy Councils. So I mean, obviously, many families are so busy with work and multiple jobs, training and education programs are struggling with some really basic needs. So every contact that we have with a parent is really an opportunity to work together toward the outcomes that are outlined in the PFCE Framework. Whether it's family well-being or parent child relationships, adult learning, or parent leadership. And whether it's during pick-up and drop-off times, or home visits, or parent meetings, or phone conversations about how children are doing, on learning activities or newsletters, or socializations, or special events orientations – there's so many different kinds of opportunities to engage.

So maybe really, at this point, a different set of questions might be what do you do with the opportunities that you have and how do parents perceive the program environment. Do they feel supported, welcomed, helped? Do they feel a sense of equality with staff? How comfortable are staff in building relationships with families across cultures, across genders? One thing that I've really observed over the last few years in talking with program staff is that programs who put relationship building with families front and center in all phases of their programming really don't seem to struggle with this notion of how to reach more families. It's like they're really focused on making the interactions they do count in the right ways and that seems to make all of the difference.

Another question from Laura Traum, program manager at – I think it's OW Cap in Utah – she asks, "How many goals are we going to be expected to achieve outside of family partnership goals with these new seven areas? And how is OHS going to help us with this? We need more clarification."

So I'm hearing two things in this question. First sort of it sounds like, we're already doing our goal-setting in a certain way. So what does this mean? Does this mean we have to change, you know, how we meet these outcomes? And I think the PFCE Framework makes explicit what our goals are in our work with families. But it says, you know, these are the most important things that we do every day. This is an organizational approach though. And you all have different staffing patterns and different ways that you do your work with children and families. So my suggestion would be to use this document to assess how your teams are collectively working towards these goals.

The Center will share tools, of course, to help life events as we've been talking about. But I think the message here is not that the family partnership agreement is the vehicle for getting all this done. The message is how can we enhance everything we do so that services, management teams, and families are working collectively towards these goals.

So for one program that could mean broadening your family partnership process. To consider areas you may have not previously been discussing with families. Or for another program, it could mean broadening your self-assessment, to consider the kinds of opportunities that parents might have to connect with other parents in your programs.

For another program, it might mean doing agency-wide training on relationship building so that families experience all staff as being invested in their relationships with their children.

Next question, and this is one for you, Kathy. "How are you going to measure parent-child relationships? Would that be through disclosure of parents?" And there was another similar question about the kinds of tools and resources that you would recommend to Head Start programs to assess individual parenting strengths and needs, and working with parents to build nurturing parenting skills that promote their children's learning and development.

Kathy: There are a number of ways to capture information about parent-child relationships. You can ask parents. You can ask teachers. You can watch parents. You can ask parents watch teachers and confer. You can spend time with parents and children together. These are the things and the kinds of experiences and exchanges that, in practice, teachers and family service workers, mental health consultants, and directors have been watching, and looking at, and examining for years.

There are now a number of helpful ways to measure parent-child relationships. There are also ways to look at family strengths and challenges and other family related activities that relate to relationships. And I think that there are a number of projects there that are ongoing now to really hone some of those. I think that part of what we hope to do here at the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement is to bring some of those forward, and make them more accessible for programs. And also provide strategies for incorporating some of the kinds of measures that, that have been used in other places because they really need to be practical and usable. And they need to fit for the diverse different populations of families and communities that people are serving in Head Start and Early Head Start programs across the country.

But before considering what to use to measure a given dimension of a parent-child relationship, it's important to first identify what you're looking to learn. What are your questions about the relationship?

And this is where the Framework can put this kind of assessment into perspective by identifying the key elements that work together in programs to achieve positive family outcomes. As I said, there are some exemplary measures of family strengths and challenges that relate to family well-being and parent-child relationships that have been developed, and I'm pleased to say a number of them have been developed and have come out of both Head Start and Early Head Start research.

I think of a wonderful measure called the Family Map that my colleague Leann Whiteside Mantel has developed. Another observational measure called Parenting Interactions with Children Checklist or PICCOLO that my colleague Lori Roggman has developed. And that's only the beginning of a list.

There also is a working group that is based in child trends that's really looking at reviewing the field of family measurement and looking at developing measures. And I hope that we can pull some of this information from the research field as well as what a number of people and programs are using now, and pull that together so that we can make it more accessible.

Kiersten: Next question, this is our last question actually since we seem to be running out of time. How do family service workers fit into this model?

Family services staff and I think, you know, parent involvement specialists, transitions specialists, health staff who are doing family services work and health work, home visitors are often as we know it at the forefront of building relationships with families. So they play such a huge role in ensuring that families have opportunities to engage with the program, to identify and work towards the goals they have for themselves – their dreams for their children. Connecting families through resources and supporting family well-being, safety, health, increased financial security – these staff have and remain such an integral part of the team in engaging families.

I think that one of the essential messages of the PFCE Framework, though, is that it isn't just the responsibility of family services staff to do this work. It really takes the entire team. And everyone really has a role to play. Whether it's creating a family engagement friendly environment or supporting conversations between parents and children at pick-up times. Or making sure that the right community partnerships are in place to support program goals, family goals, child goals.

I want to remind folks that if – if you didn't get your question answered here to stay tuned to the ECLKC because we'll be posting an FAQ sheet which will have a lot more questions on it. We also kind of assume that this call may have served to raise more questions for you. So we want to – we want to hear from you on those. Again, that's [OHS\\_PFCE@headstartinfo.org](mailto:OHS_PFCE@headstartinfo.org).

I would really like to take a moment to thank Joan Lombardi for her incredible leadership for ACF and

the Office of Head Start, the Office of Child Care, and this is her last day. So we feel incredibly honored that she was able to spend some of her last minutes with the Administration for Children and Families with us. We take comfort in knowing she will not be going far and will continue to work to strengthen early childhood systems, both domestically and internationally. I also want to thank Yvette Sanchez Fuentes for her incredible leadership and devotion to this topic, as well.

I want to let you know that this audio call will be available in one to two weeks. We're going to be a couple of other announcements. I hope that many of you will be joining us at the Birth to Five Head Start Leadership Institute. We're going to have some really incredible workshops there. A lot on family engagement and the National Center will be very busy. They will be spending some time talking about and training on some of the resources that they mentioned here on the call. And later this fall we will be re-releasing the Building Blocks for Father Engagement. And we're really excited about bringing those resources more up-to-date and in the forefront. We think that those are really an important part – an overall part of parent, family, and community engagement. And it's a really individualized resource that I think can really help programs and their partnerships with dads.

I want to thank everybody so much for tuning in this week if you were able to, remind you that the family engagement events and resources are still posted on – will be on the ELCKC.

I hope you have a super weekend. And come up and say hi to us if you are going to be here in DC at the Institute next week. So take care, and have a super great weekend.

Coordinator: Thank you for your participation. You may disconnect at this time.

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