

Making Strides in Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships

Maureen Green: Good afternoon. My name is Maureen Green. I am with the Partnership Center, and I will be providing instructions and support on the technical aspects of the webinar. Thank you for joining to Making Strides in Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships: Successful, Supportive Relationships with State Early Childhood Systems.

The webinar will begin momentarily. As a reminder, today's webinar is being recorded. The recording and transcripts will be posted on the local Early Childhood Partnerships web page on ECLKC in a few weeks. All participants are in listen only capacity during today's webinar. There is no call in option. We recommend joining online to fully engage with today's webinar. Please use the Q&A box to enter any questions you have at any time during the discussion. Questions that we are unable to answer due to time will be posted on my peers which you will learn more about following the presentation.

Closed captioning will be provided throughout the webinar. Finally, you will find resources available to download on your screen. You may access that information at any point during today's discussion. Now it is my pleasure to introduce you to Rae Anderson, project director of the National Center on Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships and our first speaker.

Rae Anderson: Thank you, Maureen. I am pleased to be here today with all of you. Today's webinar focuses on relationships between local Early Head Start Child Care Partnership Grantees and their state partners. Our presenters today represent two local partnerships, Pam Black is the Head Start director of the Family Conservancy in Kansas City Kansas. Loletta Combs is the Early Head Start director of the Children's Therapy Center in Sedalia, Missouri. We are also excited to have with us representatives from the State of Louisiana Department of Education. Melinda George is the program manager from the Child Care Assistance Program. Nasha Patel is the Accountability senior manager from the Office of Early Childhood and Kahree Wahid is the director of the Louisiana Head Start Collaboration Office so we're going to welcome them in just a minute. First I'm going to introduce Karen Heying from the senior -- and Karen is the senior project Analyst from the Office of Head Start. She's going to get us started with a few opening remarks so Karen, welcome.

Karen Heying: Hi. Hopefully folks can hear me. On behalf of ACF and the Office of Head Start I want to welcome everybody to the webinar this afternoon. The work of the Early Head Start Partnerships is a really important part of our joint work with the Office of Child Care. Through these partnerships we've really done a lot of tremendous work. We have around 32,000 infant toddlers and their families who are either working or in school or training. We are serving them through about 300 partnerships across the country. We have about 1,400 centers and about 1,000 family child care homes funded through the partnerships. In addition we have over 7,800 non-partnership enrolled children, which may be a conservative number but we have them enrolled and benefiting from the access to the high quality of services that are offered in the learning environment. In addition we have 8,000 early childhood professionals who have had access to education, training opportunities through the partnerships [Inaudible].

These numbers are probably a little conservative as we are having our numbers growing. The second round of grantees are still getting themselves up and running and serving families and so we anticipate having a little bit higher numbers but I think those are terrific to draw upon. Partnerships bring together the best of the Early Head Start and Child Care. The Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships support is really a coordinated approach within this program to respond to the needs of all children and families. We increase accessibility to high quality care and family child care and center based care. Both options are a part of our work. And we really want to support the development of our youngest children through the relationship build and experiences and prepare them for any kind of transitions for Head Start or

preschool or whatever the families determine. I'm really looking forward to hearing from our presenters today to see how they have helped their partnerships between state, local and the impact that they've had on the families and children. Thank you to all of the partnerships of the grantees across the country for your hard work to support families and children. [Indiscernible] is really important and exciting work so I will now turn it over to Eva Carter who is our facilitator and take it away from there.

Eva Carter: Thank you so much, Karen and Rae and Maureen for getting us all started here. I will be facilitating today's webinar but I have a lot of support from the partnerships and others along the way here. So this is actually our sixth webinar in our series of making strides in Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships. Our topic today is Successful Supportive Relationships with State Early Childhood Systems. You'll hear that word systems as we go along. We know these partnerships can't work in isolation so today we're going to hear about how they've made these relationships at the state systems level. As Rae mentioned, we're really going to feature some dynamic partnerships at the state and local levels. But before we get started, I wanted to just tell you a little bit about those out in the audience and who we've had to register. It's been wonderful to look at this list. We have the majority of the folks on the line are Early Head Start directors, at least I should say registered and probably on the line, too.

We have Early Head Start and Head Start teachers, which is perfect. Child Care center directors and staff. Even some family child care home providers, which is also always a good asset. We have T/TA providers. We have several state Head Start collaboration project directors and state child care administrators as well as our partners, our federal partners at the regional and central office level. We have some others and I don't know who you are but we're glad to have you with us. So since we know who it is, we'd like to know a little bit more about how long you've been in your current position in the partnership role so we're going to have a poll. Maureen has the poll up. Just if you would answer our poll just by clicking on the circle on the left we'll see who is all out there and how many years we have together. All right so we have mainly folks who have been around for two or more years, which is a good sign. And welcome to our partnership. It's been in operation less than six months. I hope you learn a lot. Same thing with those who have been around for little more than a year.

We will have an opportunity for you to ask questions as Maureen said and we'll try to answer those in the best way we can as the webinar goes along. So now thank you for all this feedback. I'd like to introduce the individuals who are making this all happen. We have Pam Black who is a Head Start director of the Family Conservancy in Kansas City, Kansas. We have Loletta Combs, Early Head Start director of the Children's Therapy Center in Sedalia, Missouri. And then we're also really fortunate to have with us representation from the State of Louisiana Department of Education. We have Melinda George, program manager, Child Care Assistance, Nasha Patel, Accountability senior manager, Office of Early Childhood and Kahree Wahid, director of the Louisiana Head Start Collaboration Office. Now let's get to know these folks and learn a little bit about their programs, all the things they've done, the things they've learned and we'll start it off with you, Pam. Let's get a -- give us a snapshot or a picture of your program so we know who you're representing. Pam? I'm wondering if Pam is on mute. I'll tell you what. While we get Pam on the line, let's skip to our next presenter and then we'll come back to Pam. So Loletta, you've been doing this work for a while. What's a picture of your program today?

Loletta Combs: Good afternoon. We've been an Early Head Start grantee since 1998 with Federal Sun and in 1999 we were awarded a state funded Early Head Start Child Care Partnership grant. Our previous Early Head Start director was a part of those early discussions at the state level on program design back then. Because of our state Early Head Start grant experience, we were involved with creating and sustaining community based child care partnerships for a long time before the federally funded partnership grants were released. Our proposal for the federal slots was written for 16 additional slots to our overall total.

We are a very rural community with few licensed child care providers. Our county has approximately 43,000 residents and then the town of Sedalia which is the largest city where our child care partnership grant is located we have approximately 21,500 residents. Most of our child care providers are in Sedalia and most of the Early Head Start families that we serve live in Sedalia rather than out in the county. Our combined enrollment for all three of our grant options is 168 infant toddlers and pregnant women. We have 47 of those slots in our own child care facility. We have a home based model serving 59 children and families. And we have 62 combined slots in our child care partnerships with state and federal funds. We currently have five child care partners with one being a brand new family home provider that opened last month.

Eva: So basically Loletta you really give us a picture of that rural program in a small area, which I know a lot of our partnerships are located in those rural communities so thank you. Let's switch gears now and take a little road trip and head on over to Louisiana to learn about their partnership programs and how they got involved. So let's start out with Nasha. Nasha, can you give us a little history of how this all happened and talk about your role? Nasha

Patel: Yeah, absolutely. So Louisiana has been an effort to unify our fragmented Early Childhood Systems since 2012 when Act III was passed in Louisiana to unify Early Childhood Systems. So what that means is that everything from child care assistance, licensing the Head Start Collaboration Office, the quality reading and improvement system and every state funded pre-K program now resides under the Louisiana Department of Education. We took over a lot of the Department of Education. We're now a pretty big office.

Eva: That's a lot.

Nasha: Within our State Department of Education. So we're a true birth through 12th grade DOE at this point with a Board of Education that approves policy related to birth to five issues as well as K through 12. So now as part of that work to unify our systems, we've paid a lot of attention to considering how we can continue to expand and support opportunities for our youngest at-risk children. So part of the work that we did when the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grants became available was to partner with our community partners who were interested in offering these seeds to help support them and provide opportunities for them to continue to improve their quality within our unified system of support. So we're all talking to each other, from licensing to CCAP to our accountability, performance improvement system. We all talk to each other and through that work we're able to support those programs better. We have five federally funded Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grantees in Louisiana. Okay and so yeah, and then my role, I work on the system and program quality stuff so I help do the performance ratings for all of our programs whether they're Head Start, whether they're public pre-K or non-public pre-K or whether they're a child care program taking child care assistance. They all participate in the same quality rating system. They're actually required to participate. It's not voluntary. And we work very closely with all of those programs and with all of those families.

Eva: Thank you so much, Nasha. That's such a unique system you have in Louisiana. I think you may have said this; it started back in 2012 and I can only imagine the transition that you all have been through to get to the point where you are now. You're all together and you're now able to support these five partnerships as they start to implement their project. So Melinda, I know that you work more in the programmatic side of the partnerships and that you come from a really rich history of working at the local level. Can you tell us some more about that? Melinda

George: That's right, just as Nasha talked about the unification of the systems, I think my background and my history is unified. I started out about 35 years ago as a parent in the Head Start Program, teacher's assistance teacher, center supervisor, content area specialist and spent roughly 25+ years in Head Start.

By the time I left I was the assistant program manager for one of the largest Head Start Programs in Louisiana. In addition I work as an adjunct Instructor with child care providers in Louisiana as they attempt to get their CDA and their credentials in Louisiana. So I get to see it -- I know the Head Start side, the policy, the procedures, the performance standards. I know the child care side. I know the business model and what they're trying to do and now for the last three years I've worked in the Department of Education over the Child Care Assistance Program so I understand it's from the Department side and the vision in Act III in what we're trying to do together.

Eva: Thank you, Melinda. What a smart move on the State of Louisiana to bring someone like you from the field who's really been out there, knows both sides and knows Head Start and knows child care so I can only imagine the contribution you make to this overall project. So I'd also like to hear a little bit from Kahree who is the Director, like we said, of the Collaboration Office. Kahree, I think it's just so important that you're with us today representing the Head Start Collaboration Projects. We're always glad to hear more about what you guys are doing and I know these positions have changed over the years. And now Early Head Start and Child Care Partnerships are one of your priorities so we're excited to learn from you about what you bring to this work.

Kahree Wahid: Well first I want to say good afternoon and yes this work is constantly changing and so when the partnership came along, that was no different. We eagerly put on our gear to try and support this new initiative. In the State of Louisiana particularly as a Collab Director we're responsible for being that point of contact for Head Start and assisting grantees with aligning themselves with current systems and also helping them to negotiate those current systems while building partnerships with state entities that regulate -- do the regulatory side of child care. And so a lot of times as a grantee, we need to know who are those persons in charge of licensing, sanitation and things of that nature.

So by me being already connected and recently at that time I transferred to the Department of Education from the Department of Children and Family Services. It made that work a lot easier because I could really literally simply walk out the door and go around the corner and meet with the licensing director or someone for the lead agency and all those efforts that we used to coordinate early childhood in the state. So in those challenging times when grantees are new and they really don't know what's needed, this type of a system is very valuable to them. And so we can help them with some of those applications and going through some of the processes. And when necessary we've been fortunate again to be there in the Department of Education because they prioritize the priorities. We have things online and we need to get licensing in or someone in to go and do the review so we can begin services.

They prioritize the work that we've done. Also with our CCDF funds they prioritize the partnerships so we can ensure that once parents get in, they stay in. So a lot of times I'm asked to come in and be a mediator and sometimes just sit in so we work out some of the details in the partnership agreement and things like that. But again in my role as the Collab, it can be from working with the grantees and working with their partners to negotiating state agencies but at the end of the day creating those partnerships within the system so that these grantees can be independent in their effort to provide services in the state.

Eva: Thank you, Kahree. It's just so comforting hearing you talk and think about how far these collaboration projects have come and what an incredible benefit and contribution your office has of being that conduit between these local programs and the state so we appreciate all that you're doing as well. So now I'm going to go back. We're going to hopefully hear from Pam since we had a little technical difficulty on that. Let's see if Pam is with us. If not, we're going to have some help from one of our partnership staff. Let me just check right quick here and see if Pam can hear us. We may still be having a little technical difficulty with Pam.

Pam Black: Hi, Eva. This is Pam.

Eva: Oh, Pam. I've never been so glad to hear your voice.

Pam: Technology. Isn't it a wonderful world we live in sometimes?

Eva: It is. It is but you know we're used to this, aren't we. We're used to being flexible in Head Start. So do tell us now a little bit about your program.

Pam: All right. Thank you, Eva, and good afternoon, everyone. I'm Pam Black with the Family Conservancy in Kansas City, Kansas. We've been in operation in our community since 1880, and have been supporting Head Start Programs for over 20 years providing training and technical assistance and currently we're a delegate agency with serving almost 600 children. In addition to being a delegate agency, we received one of the first Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership federal grants in March of 2015. We've been working with 11 partners serving 116 children in our Early Head Start Child Care Partnership grant. The children are served both through centers and one family child care at home. The centers were all in existence before becoming partners with Early Head Start and were providing services in our community to some of our most neediest families.

One of our local community colleges which then allows us to connect families who are in school, one is an Educare Program and most of our others are small independently owned centers which some of them are even housed in churches and partner with their local churches. The family child care home that we work with serves many of our immigrant children. Our Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership is one of the only federally funded partnership grantees in Kansas, however the State of Kansas does have state funded Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships however we are currently not part of the State Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships.

Eva: Okay, thank you, Pam. Sounds like a program that's been in operation since 1880. That's pretty impressive and to hear the things you're doing now is great. So we're going to move now and ask each of our presenters to talk a little bit about how they got started. These relationships with our state agencies and state systems don't just begin overnight or without some assistance from either the state or the partnership. Let's start with Loletta and you tell us a little bit about how you began and have been implementing this relationship with your state.

Loletta: Sure. We've been a longstanding Early Head Start grantee in the state of Missouri serving children through a child care partnership model for a long time, so across the years we've had many meetings and discussions with our State Department of Social Services staff who provides supervision over the state grants talking about programming challenges working with providers who aren't our employees helping them achieve performance standards and provide quality services just talking about the impact of those services on children and families at the local level. So when the federal grants were awarded to some of the Missouri grantees, the State Department of Social Services representative over the state grants was also assigned to be a support person within the state for the federal child care partnership grantees. She was also sent to that Dallas training orientation that we all had to learn how the federal grants were different, especially with the layered funding concept.

Once we were awarded the federal slots, we began that process for families to apply for child care subsidy, one of the requirements for those slots. This was a new process for us because in the State Child Care Partnership slots, families are not allowed to sign up for subsidies. Once we started this child care subsidy process, we found out that this was a struggle for families. There were challenges with the length of time for getting applications through, complications with applications getting lost in the system, or incomplete applications due to parents not successfully meeting some of the timelines, which many of those were unknown to us such as a 15 day window for a phone interview. So as a result of discussions with our State Department of Social Services staff and the local CCDF Agency, we talked through how to expedite the applications and an Early Head Start check box was added to the application itself. When that box was

checked, the application was fast tracked and Early Head Start staff could support parents in meeting that 15 days window for the phone interview and other gaps that hadn't been met before started being successful with those.

So a lot more applications started getting through that process due to the check box. Another thing that helped at the local level was that we were assigned a person in the local office that could be our contact to call directly for assistance when needed. In that first 18-month period of the federal child care partnership grant, we were able to help families fill out the application and get them sent off or connect with the local agency person if an issue arose for support that we needed to complete that process. This led to increased success of getting applications through and then more and more families were found eligible by just being successful with that process. We completely exceeded that required 25 percent mandate really early in our process and in order to make this whole process work for families, it really took everyone to jointly identify the system issues and create a solution. This worked so well due to the relationships that we had already built with the State Department and the local agency.

Eva: Thank you so much, Loletta. You really eloquently described what a difference those relationships that you made as a Director and Management level the impact that can have on families as they're trying to become eligible and get their applications done, so thanks and congratulations on exceeding your 25 percent mandate. So Pam, we're back to you. Can you tell us a little bit about your relationship with the state of Kansas?

Pam: Sure, thanks, Eva. As I mentioned earlier, we've been providing Head Start T and TA for many years but we've never had to actually leverage the subsidy system in any of the work we'd done. And so, at the very beginning when we were even trying to decide whether or not writing for an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant was something we wanted to do as an agency, we went ahead and began our conversations at that point with our state agency, which is the Division of Children and Families in Kansas. We knew that it was going to take both of our agencies working together and layering those funds both from the federal and state in order for our partnership grant to truly be successful and to be able to provide the funds that are needed to provide the high level quality comprehensive services. So again we just really wanted to start that relationship from the very, very beginning and begin to help each other understand what we were all about and what our grant requirements were going to be because they do look different than prior Head Start grants as well as their state grant contracts.

So we started with some phone calls, some informal letters and really just kind of talking together about subsidy and what the subsidy system was really all about. We were kind of fortunate I felt like because the Child Care and Development Block Grant reauthorization was just happening, and so the timing was just so perfect because it was going to begin to allow for the 12-month eligibility and some of those other new regulations were really going to align with the work that we hoped to do with our partners in the community. So once we actually received the grant, we began to meet regularly with our state agency again making sure that we understood each other's roles and expectations. We spent quite a bit of time really just getting to know each other and then we wanted to let them also know about who our partners were and what work we were doing with our partners. We just continued to have ongoing meetings probably every other month or quarterly to just have additional conversations. One of the things too was that as we continued through the process we were having many conversations with our partners who had been using the subsidy system for several years and they were also able to help us to define kind of what questions that we needed to pose and some of the challenges that they were facing using the subsidy system outside of the Early Head Start grant.

Again, Kansas has some state driven Early Head Start grants so we are able to kind of build off of the work that they had already begun with the other Early Head Start programs throughout our state. The state grants have different requirements than ours so we had to kind of work our way through understanding

what was the difference between the state grants and the federal grants. Probably one of the biggest differences we had to define was in the state grants 100 percent of the children must remain on subsidy at all times in order to stay enrolled. However for our grant we clearly understood that if a family lost subsidy then Early Head Start needed to be able and be willing to continue to support those families. So in many ways again I guess we were blessed with the start of the state funded but then continued to have to define some of the differences that we were going to experience as a federally funded Early Head Start Child Care Partnership versus what had already been established in the state.

Eva: Okay, thanks, Pam. Another unique quality of this webinar is we not only have the uniqueness of the State of Louisiana and how they've unified their systems but both Pam and Loletta in Kansas and Missouri are operating in states that have state funded Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships and so they've maneuvered between their federally funded program and the state funded program like Pam said. All of those partners that had been around before and got to know the subsidy program and all of that has really helped. She does not have one of those state grants. It certainly was part of developing all of these relationships. So Melinda, from a state perspective, tell us how you reached out to these five partnership programs you have in your state?

Melinda: One of the things that as Nasha explained so well, one of the things that we did is we began the process immediately. The state helped as grantees began to apply for the partnership grants by writing letters, by also being aware of what was needed, how to help them meet the requirements, and ensuring that -- so much was happening in 2012. Not only were partners applying for these grants but as Nasha shared earlier our whole system of the way we saw early childhood was changing. One of the things that we did is we had meetings where people talked and different agencies shared their concerns and their fears. I remember the first meeting, I was on the other side. I was in Head Start so coming to the first meeting and realizing that we were in a different world, things were changing, we wanted to bring child care on board and the state was bringing everybody on board. Everybody was moving and trying to understand so we did a lot of talking. We did a lot of listening. We did a lot of meetings. Since we came in initially and since we listened well, we were able to put some supports in place. For example, we have a regional approach to understanding what's going on in the community. Not only do we help our partners regionally, we have staff that is designated specifically to Early Head Start partnerships. We have a community approach for everything that we do in early childhood. We have in child care systems, the provider help desk. They help regionally. There's a quality specialist that helps with each region. They're familiar with the directors and the owners and the Head Start providers. They provide training. We go around the state and we work with each community to ensure that they understand everything that's going on to ensure that they feel a part of what's going on in the state at all times and to meet their needs because they change constantly.

Eva: Thank you so much, Melinda. We'll hear throughout this presentation some of the core principles of partnerships that we have been a foundation of partnerships for many, many years. The one that you mentioned Melinda about the listening is key. We all know that. We like to be heard. The system that you set up at the state level to listen and respond to the grantees is such a benefit and also having those regional staff. We know the State of Louisiana is real different in the urban areas from New Orleans and Baton Rouge to some of those local areas so having regional people that really know what's happening at that local level makes a great difference. So we're going to put up another poll here. We're curious about those of you on the line if you have developed relationships with your state and what your state agencies or systems and what stages you're in so let's take a minute to see where you are with your relationships. Okay, well it looks like -- okay, sorry about that. It looks like almost 50 percent of you are fully implementing agreements.

We would love to know what those are. At the end of our webinar you'll hear about My Peers, which we'll tell you about is a place that you can talk to other partners and share those kinds of agreements so stay tuned to that as we move along. Hopefully we can learn from each other. So now let's turn to the fun part. This is sharing about the successes, the good news about all of this work that our presenters have done at their partnership level. I'm going to start with Pam. What would you like to share with us and highlight?

Pam: I think our biggest highlight would just be the relationships that we are developing at all levels, both with the families as well as with our partners and our state agency. Our families and partners have really helped us to refine and define our agreement with our state agency so as we continue to ask questions and they shared more and more of their experiences we were again more clearly able to make sure that our agreement would really be in support of families and partners as well as meeting the federal requirement to have at least 40 percent of our children on subsidy. So through that then the MOA was developed and some of the best highlights I feel like the MOAs that have helped us has been that instead of families waiting the traditional 30 to 45 days to determine if they're on subsidy our agreement allows for a seven day turnaround for applications that we can directly link with our Early Head Start Partnership. Additionally often times subsidy in our state is set based upon the number of hours that families are working and so one of the pieces our agreement allows for is for all of our families then to receive 40 hours at minimum of assistance. There is a minimum requirement for the number of hours that they need to either be working in school but again the agreement that we have with our state is if a family falls below that then we're able to utilize them either as volunteers in our program to ensure that they're meeting the minimum requirements or if there are additional services in our community that they could be part of to build their skills, that is also an allowable part and counted as either their work or their school hours. Additional part was that our state agency determined to waive the family fee as well, understanding the importance of making sure that we're successful with this. As far as our families go, we believe that it's just really important that they understand why we're blending the funds both federally and state so we've spent a lot of time educating families. One of the first things that we do is we do a parent agreement form with our families. That's the first place that they begin to really understand why it's important for them to apply for subsidy to help support the federal funds so that we can ensure that the funds that are needed in each of our partners to really offer the comprehensive services of Early Head Start are available. Additionally I think we have a special form. We call it our referral form with our state agency that immediately links the family's application to our Early Head Start grant so therefore we're able to ensure that all of the benefits of the agreement are applied to all of our families, as well. So I think the other piece is just really utilizing our policy counsel and the families on it to help make sure that they understand the why and some of the challenges that we're facing and then using their support out in their own individual partnering agencies to help other families also understand the why and the importance. So again I think the system development that we've done has taken all levels of it and making sure that we have strong relationships and feel confident that we can share not only our successes with each other but our challenges.

Eva: Thank you, Pam. I just was impressed with the number of different things you said about how families can volunteer in your program to make up those extra hours. That is really a family friendly policy. If I were a family in your program I know I would appreciate it. And the seven day turnaround on the applications. You just listed so many things that are so family friendly. I just wanted to add to kind of clarify, Pam has a number of agreements with the state, with her parents that are just really high quality agreements. In this one particular one she has with the state, this MOA, they work together to waive the parent fee which needs to be done at the state level and not at the local level. Pam did a great job of that. I'm sure those families have a lot of gratitude for what all you've done. So let's move on now to Loletta and let Loletta tell us about some of her successes.

Loletta: I think what I would like to spotlight too is about relationships. Building and maintaining relationships with long-term child care providers in the community has been vital to our program. What a success that feels like when you have really good relationships. More trust is built and your relationship becomes collaborative. They become your best advocates and messengers for what Early Head Start has to offer families in need of support. Truly they see themselves and their role as joining us in delivering high quality early education services. They're better messengers than our own Early Head Start staff. But sometimes they get really frustrated with us or with the Early Head Start requirements and have been known to tell us we can't do another thing, sometimes in exasperation. So it's not all rosy and easy. It can be really challenging. We jointly have to find ways to support their change process and integrate it into their daily routines as a new way of being in their center. We do a lot of planning and discussing together about how it can look differently and how they can co-create this change outcome with us. We don't ever tell them that this is how it's going to be or this is how you do it because this needs to be a collaborative effort. We need to tell them the why of a change and support that change rather than just expect that it's going to happen tomorrow or they're going to do it alone.

All of this is their business. We're in there to support. We listen to their concerns. We plan together for the new change and show them how we can plan to keep it sustainable. We have an Early Head Start staff that visits the partner site weekly which can be multiple times if it's needed to encourage them or answer questions. We communicate to them that their success is our success. Without them, we do not have child care slots. We support them being fully enrolled. We make sure there's no loss in their income when partnering with us. Our reputation in supporting long-term child care providers has certainly been a benefit when we've tried to recruit new providers, especially providers that have not been involved in child care subsidy or the food program processes before. When we've had this happen where a large center we wanted to partner with hadn't been involved in those systems and wasn't set up to serve families in need of child care subsidy, we used our existing partners to help support that process.

They helped her. They mentored her through those processes to get approved and then she was able to serve income eligible children and families. What we try hard to do is build the whole sense of community between our partner providers. We regularly host partner director meetings so they can come together and build their own sense of community and spend time together just discussing how we continue to create quality early care education settings for all children in our community. We celebrate our successes. We talk about our challenges and we share new ideas when we come together at those meetings.

Eva: Thank you so much, Loletta. Just a few key things I heard you talk about and how many of us have heard our providers say we can't do another thing, please don't ask us to do another thing. But the way it sounds, you went in together with that attitude of together you can support that change process which is such a key attitude when we're working with other parts of our system to get that sense of community that you're all in this together so thank you for that highlight. Let's turn now to the State of Louisiana that we know has been working hard. You've heard them talk for a minute but let's hear from Nasha and tell us a little bit more about some of the things that you're really proud of.

Nasha: Yeah, absolutely. So I can talk a little bit more about the work that we're doing with our partnerships to support them really to be successful in this important work of serving our at risk children zero to three in child care settings. Our approach for working with partnerships is based on the fundamental knowledge that our relationships and their relationships are what's going to make success. We're all working towards the same goals, which is kindergarten readiness and the improved opportunities for Louisiana's children and families. We work hard to find things that we have in common and we talk very often, very regularly and very openly with our partners both about the things that are working and the successes we can build on but as well on the opportunities for things to change in the areas that are particularly difficult for them. We know how important building trust is and we don't talk

at our partners. We spend a lot of time listening to them, working with them and incorporating their voice in our work. Some of our successes include the supports that we've put in place for these Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships. This includes biannual collaborative meetings for the directors and the Head Start folks who are involved in these partnerships to come talk and learn from each other.

We work with these folks to choose topics and we have presenters from our whole unified Early Childhood System in the department including licensing, our quality rating system, the work we do around improvement for teachers, anything related to background checks or other requirements for child care directors and the state agency resources. If there other topics that are of interest to them, we make sure to try and bring folks in to discuss that. That might include for example folks from the Louisiana Department of Health or the Department of Children and Family Services or other folks that we can bring in to try to answer their questions. So we always have a number of DOE staff present at this meeting to answer questions and offer their support. In addition to this, we have several initiatives that are part of the work we do to unify early childhood and create improved experiences for children. We prioritize our Early Head Start Child Care Partnership sites for these resources so that includes our curriculum initiative to increase the quality of interactions between teachers and children.

The Department reimburses child care centers that operate through DCDF and prioritizes Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership sites for this initiative to reimburse for up to 80 percent of the purchase of high quality curriculum books. We also have a program called Believe and Prepare for Early Childhood teachers to attain their CDA which is our requirement for the ancillary certificate that will be in place as a requirement that will be in place in 2019 that all lead teachers in child care centers and Head Starts have an ancillary certificate. To get that, they have to get their CDA and we have a number of programs that are supported both through scholarships for teachers to attend as well as through funding for these programs to get set up. We prioritize our Early Head Start Child Care Partnership sites and teachers to gain access to those programs. We've also been piloting the infant tool so right now in our statewide rating system we use the Pre-K class tool and the toddler class tool in all of our Pre-K and toddler classrooms but we are now thinking about how to best add infant class into our system. To start thinking about that we started offering infant training so we prioritize Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships to get those infant class observer trainings and start getting observations both through their local observers and through third party observers to get feedback to those infant teachers. They can continue to improve their practices. So these partnership sites are prioritized to receive those observations. They're prioritized to receive technical assistance from their resource and referral agencies. And so there's a number of supports helping them improve the quality of their programs.

On the other side of this to improve the operations aspect of this because we know offering seats that take funding from two different programs to work together to serve our most at risk kids can be tricky. We have a provider help desk that's available to all providers that includes the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships. And there are folks who work on the provider help desk as well as some other specialists that work directly with those programs that are trained in Head Start standards and they work specifically with Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grantees so they can help answer those questions so we're not sort of sending folks in three or four different places to get answers. They're able to call one place or consult with one person and get answers that they're looking for.

We have aligned the child care assistance redetermination date for parents with the school year so that those redetermination dates for children aren't coming up in the middle of the school year and if they don't do their redetermination in time then there's [Inaudible] closes and there's a gap in care. So instead now they're aligned with the school year so parents are able to do those redeterminations for child care assistance at the same time that they're applying for seats again for the next school year. We've developed an MOU between the department and between the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grantees and

that MOU was developed before the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grantees applied for the grant so they could include that MOU with us in their application for the grant and know exactly what supports we would be able to offer them to make sure their programs ran smoothly. Additionally we've obtained permission from parents to speak on their behalf with the Child Care Assistance Program to ensure that applications are completed and prioritized and that their information is saved. So providers and us can work together on those applications. We don't have to wait for the family to come back in touch with us. This helps the partnerships meet their 25 percent of enrollment of families who receive child care assistance. We rarely have families in these seats that are not on child care assistance. Finally, we also have for that operation side we also have a box now that's available on the assistance application that indicates that a family is Head Start eligible and so that can keep them off the Child Care Assistance waitlist that we right now have in place. So that helps programs maintain that continuity of care and ensures that those seats are filled so they're meeting their grant requirements.

Eva: Thank you so much, Nasha. My head is kind of swimming with the whole litany of supports that you have. That's pretty incredible to listen what kind of things you've put in place to support these partnerships, I know other programs as well not only these Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership. It sounds like you really have listened and really have built that trust, another one of our core principles so thank you for telling us about this. I bet, Kahree, you could add a few things to this list, couldn't you from your perspective as a collaborator?

Kahree: Well sure. Again, I think the biggest thing is things like trust, building those partnerships, that trust, that teamwork is the biggest thing. What actually helped a great deal was the orientation we had in Dallas back in 2015 that the grantees and partners had some time to get together. Them coming to Dallas allowed them the opportunity to sit at the table and sit with other programs and compare what had been done, looking at their partnerships, their agreements and how resources were being shared and it created a lot of transparency if there wasn't enough but also gave them a mechanism in which they could discuss the things that they were really interested in. And for most of these partners and some of the grantees, I mean the partners in particular were interested in not only another source of income that these partnerships provided but also maybe an opportunity to fulfill their bigger dream and become a Head Start or an Early Head Start grantee in the future, so coming in, we had some high expectations and folks wanted to be a part of this. Some programs were reluctant to do it because the performance standards had just been done and they were a little concerned about meeting those standards and then bringing on another initiative with the partnership. For some they thought it was too much but there were some who had the courage to step out and what we're seeing now is a result of that. Things are working out pretty well. Everyone is settled in. Our networks are doing well.

We have the support from the state and also locally through our local networks which consist of pre-K child care and Head Start. We do a great job of assessing the needs of children and families but also the needs of these programs who provide the services and so there are supports that's given in terms of training and class observations training, reliability, those types of things for these programs. So again, in Louisiana this is a great time for the partnerships and so again now things appear to be up and running with the supports. Like was mentioned earlier, we had a lot of them in place prior to them getting their awards and so for us it's been a win/win.

Eva: Thank you so much, Kahree. Like you said, the bar is set high on these partnerships and it is pretty daunting for a child care provider to come into this not knowing what's going on. So these supports just must mean so much to those folks that are putting this together at the local level. Before we move on, I'm conscious of our time. We want to hear about what folks have had to consider as they've done this but I just couldn't move forward without asking Melinda to tell us a story about how these partnerships

come together during a time of crisis, collaboration through crisis. Melinda, could you just tell us the story you've told us that's so heartwarming?

Melinda: Right. One of the things we have to remember no matter what we do and whatever level we do it at is that we're dealing with people and we're dealing with people who have a lot of things going on in their lives. Everybody knows that Louisiana suffered a tragic crisis flood a couple years ago. I think if you didn't live in Louisiana you don't know just how bad it was. People who had never flooded before lost everything. Water rushed in within a couple of minutes and we took our River Center and many of the huge arenas that we have and we made shelters, homeless shelters. Immediately anyone that is homeless qualifies for subsidy services. We went in after we assessed what was going on with the families of Louisiana we went in and together child care, Early Head Start, Head Start and the State Department opened a Child Care Center right in the River Center where families could get help while they go into gut their houses and to clean their homes and demold their homes.

They could have their child in a secure location in the shelter where they were. Prior to the shelter opening, we were there one day and we were trying to move families through and everyone had their laptops and every agency was there. A young mother walked out of the shelter holding her baby and she looked at me. I smiled at everybody so I kind of draw attention to myself. She was holding her baby. She walked up to me and she looked at my badge really closely. In fact she reached out and touched it and she said you work for the state so I guess you're good. She said I haven't taken a shower in three days. Can you please hold my baby while I go outside and take a shower? They had showers set up. FEMA had set up shower trailers but if you have a little baby and you're in a shower and you're in a River Center Homeless Shelter where you have over 3,000 people, just leaving your baby to take a shower is difficult. So all of these agencies working together we were able to see the human factor. That's what we do and that's why we do it.

Eva: Thank you so much, Melinda. Such a touching story to me about thinking about if you hadn't had a shower and who could you trust to just hand over your baby to them at a time when you're in such an emotional and crisis state so you really have given a face to collaboration and what it means in a time of crisis. Thanks for sharing that story. So do we have any more questions? I just want to make sure that folks know again about the question and answer box over here on your screen. If anybody else has had any questions come up, please just write them in that chat box and we will get back to them. So our intention is not to only share with you all the successes and the good news but we know our presenters have had some things to consider along the way and some opportunities to pause and think about well wow, that's something we need to really fix or think about together with our partners. So Pam, what kind of things do you feel like you've addressed in the partnerships as they were implemented?

Pam: Yeah so unfortunately our agreement with our state agency wasn't fully in effect when we first started and so that agreement has evolved and developed over the last three years as we've been working with our partners and families. I guess in some ways I feel like that's a positive for us because then we've been able to really include the partner and family's voices as we did do the development of the agreement. But one of the biggest challenges that I think our partners struggled with is that in our state subsidy funds are allocated directly to the family and so it's their responsibility to apply those funds appropriately. And to the point the in their contract with our state agency they really are not to talk to families about subsidy but just about what they're in outside of the partnership, what the remaining balance is after subsidy is applied. So that was probably one of the biggest hurdles that we had to begin to work through. As we continued to work on this, we went back to the state agency and said that since they are connected to our agreement and our referral process, could they have the ability to talk to their Early Head Start families about their subsidy and how to apply the subsidy and to also even just request the child care plans from the families which they in their own systems were not able to do.

So again as we built that relationship we really were able to carry that voice to our state agency to be able to make some of the changes and differences. I think another piece is just being able to be available to help those families fill out those applications and complete those referral forms. Many families felt challenged when they went into the offices because sometimes it would take them many hours of waiting and of course many of our families weren't able to do that because they were working during the hours that the state agency was open. We do have an application online in our state however many of our families didn't have access to the ability, the computers and things to be able to do that. So one of the things that we determined was that we needed to have those computers available to our families and our partner agencies so that's one of the things we worked on with our partners.

A couple of the other probably challenges that we're still facing and talking with families about is in our state in order to receive child care subsidy if you're receiving any kind of child support it must go through the child support state agency in order to receive the subsidy. Some families are still resistant to do that and again in Early Head Start we believe that it's about parent choice. And then I think the other big challenge that we're still working on and working through would be many of our immigrant families are uncertain of whether they should or want to apply with the state agency. One of the things we've been able to do is work with our Policy Counsel and get additional information from families that have actually applied for subsidy and the impact that it has had on them and then they're able to be the spokesperson in their program, their partnering agency to help those other families think their way through whether it is the right choice for their family or not to apply. So again the agreement not being in place from the beginning has caused some of its own challenges but again as I said I think it's also been a blessing because the agreement then has been developed not just with the grantee voice but with the partner agency and the family's voices as well.

Eva: Thank you so much, Pam, and thank you for reminding us about the Policy Counsel and how much they can be to these families and for all of the things you've done to make this work better. So Loletta, tell us about some of your things that you had to stop and think about as you've moved on?

Loletta: One of our greatest challenges being in a rural area is developing a large enough group of partner providers to not only meet our enrollment but to not dominate the enrollment within our current partner classrooms. The goal is to raise the quality of facilities for all community children and families and to give families a choice of facilities but we're really limited when we have fewer providers and we really dominate their enrollment sometimes in classrooms without additional providers. So we currently have five providers but we're always looking to recruit new providers either to create a partnership with an existing licensed provider or support the development of a new family home or center based business. What we find is that we really need to tailor that message to a perspective child care partner. We have to be very thoughtful in our approach because it's intimidating to providers to discuss meeting the federal regulations. They first perceive it to be too challenging or sometimes too challenging for their staff to meet. We discuss how each requirement can be supported by Early Head Start and use our partnership agreement to demonstrate throughout that conversation what pieces Early Head Start supports and pays for and what expectations we have of them on the other side of this agreement.

What we're trying to do within the community is maintain not only a good reputation as an Early Head Start grantee but as a good partner with existing child care providers so that others hear of our support services to children and families and about the quality that's raised in their environment so that they too want to be involved. This is a community effort to support children and families who are trying to improve their family situation and experience greater success with work or school or both. And similar to what Pam was saying, we try to work through or get important messages like this out through our Policy Counsel and agency board members. They are great advocates for us in getting the message out broadly throughout the community when we're looking for child care partners and their support is invaluable

when we can get it out that we want to raise quality across the whole community and that our focus is community just not on ourselves as a grantee.

Eva: Thank you so much, Loletta. We know these things aren't easy and I appreciate you reflecting on those and sharing with us. As we move along, Kahree, I know you've talked a lot about the reluctance of some of the child care providers to come onboard and meet these expectations but I've also heard you talk about challenges in turnover and wages. I wonder if you could just give us a little picture of that.

Kahree: Sure, again with the mandates we have in Head Start, the challenges of the new performance standards also some of the challenges is again wages and turnover. Those are some of the issues that we have to deal with but the good thing about these partnerships coming into the partnerships, the partnerships coming into our state and local networks they provided a great deal of support for them even with their enrollment. Some were having difficulties getting enrolled and these networks provided them with assistance in getting the numbers that they need. And so in working with these families, some of the challenges are not only subsidy and getting resources. These families a lot of them are transit so they come and go so with the partnerships we're kind of fortunate that once a family may leave or just say lose their subsidy there's an understanding that the Early Head Start will then pick up that cost and so parents and families and children are not kicked out of the program as a result of losing subsidies.

So programs, some of the challenges for them is to find out at that rate how do we compensate for that and the impacts that they can have on a budget of a program and continuing the services to those families. And so these are some of the things that we really have to work on. And so a lot of it is coming into the program people learning as they go. Again sometimes we have to sit down and not only rethink our partnerships but sometimes reshape them so that things work and be transparent about the coming and going of resources and how it all works together. Again child care that's the greatest challenge in that not only families are transit but their staff. The turnover is great and the resources are minimal so it's very difficult for child care to afford the type of salaries or income that it would take to maintain quality teachers and so this too for them is a challenge and so in our state we've made some effort to assist with that and assist with training to offset some of their budgets. And through our networks, like Nasha said earlier, they can even acquire curriculum which some of them didn't have to begin with. So again, it's a good time in our state for these partnerships and I think because of that and because of everything that was in place they were fortunate. But again, turnover and wages and things like that still pose a challenge.

Eva: Okay, thank you, and I bet both of us and out in the audience could say yes, we agree with you. And I'm going to move on now. We'd like for each of our presenters to just give us one big lesson that they've learned. If they want to pass on this wisdom to their colleagues out in the field that are starting these partnerships or are in the process of implementing them, what kind of wisdom would you leave us with? We'll start with you Loletta.

Loletta: Well, it's hard to just come up with one but I think the message I would like to give is that we believe that forming these child care partnerships in the community is worth the effort it takes. Just like we heard, it is so important to join our resources to make something better than it was. Because we're in a rural location with limited resources compared to other bigger areas, it's highly important for us to have these funding opportunities for the whole community to support families and raise quality. If we were to lose dollars, the whole community would feel the loss because of what we're trying to accomplish together and impact the broader community. So supporting partners and making their business successful and supporting high quality early learning environments across the community is important. It's valued by community members and we work hard together to make something that we can be proud of and emphasize our joint efforts and celebrate our successes together.

Eva: Thank you so much. It's a nice reminder to hear you talk about the whole community feels the impact of when something good happens and when something not so good like your big center that had to close down so thanks for leaving us with that. Pam, do you have a recommendation for our friends in the audience?

Pam: I do. Thank you, Eva. First I would say ditto to Loletta. It's going to be of utmost importance that we continue to look for those ways to layer our funding together to be successful across all areas in our communities in regards to all families having access to really strong quality programming. I think the biggest piece I'd leave people with is it's not necessarily easy to bring two government agency systems together, link them together and make them work like clockwork so patience and perseverance are the two things that we have found. Continuing those conversations and listening to each other and really respecting the limitations that each of the different partners whether it's the state agencies or your partnering agencies have to go to so really just being there, making sure that you are listening to each other and working to solve problems together instead of in silos.

So I think that's probably one of the most important pieces I leave. I think one of the best things that probably happened to bring our agencies together, the state agency with our partnership grant was really bringing someone from the state agency onto our Policy Counsel. They really then get a flavor for what our goals and objectives are but also the deeper understanding of the needs of our families and our communities and some of the challenges they're facing. So bringing someone onboard allows them not only to hear that but then they have reciprocated by they stay after our meetings and talk to individual Policy Counsel members. We have a direct link to a local person when we do get stumped on something so again I just recommend that patience and perseverance and continuing to work with your state agency to make sure that the layered funding can be successful in your communities.

Eva: Thank you so much, Pam, and those words patience, perseverance, respect, listening and then that going a little step further and recruiting a state representative to be on your Policy Counsel is really critical I think because sometimes those of us who have worked at the state don't get that face to face real opportunity to talk to folks so I think that was really a good move. So we'll close out this session with Melinda. What do you think or what would you like to leave us with?

Melinda: One of the things I think is most important is trust, respect and diversity of thought. As we meet, as agencies come together, we have to respect each other and respect each other's vision, understand what we have in common. The biggest factor is that we serve children and families all across this country. If we listen to each other and each other's way of doing things and we're open to that with respect, with honesty, with understanding that we want to build a paradigm way. When we talk about unity it doesn't just come, as you said and everybody else said, Pam and Loletta, it doesn't just happen. We have to build it and we build it by respecting each other, by listening, by being open to a new and different way that may or may not fit our community. We have to go at this understanding that each one of us brings something to the table that we're rebranding, we're rebuilding and together we can accomplish anything.

Eva: Thank you so much. I can't even imagine a better way to say that of building these relationships and openness. There are differences and there are different rules and regulations that we all have to be respectful of. So I want to thank each of you for this information and knowledge, the insight you've provided for us. This was just a small snapshot I know that if we could sit at your feet and listen to you we could even learn a lot more. But if we weren't all on mute, we'd give you a big round of applause. I just really, really appreciate the time you've taken to prepare and be here with us today. So now we want to turn to addressing some of the questions that were added to the chat box and leave you with some resources that will help as you implement your partnerships. Alejandra, can you help us with that?
Alejandra Alvarez-

Ibanez: Yes, Eva. Thank you. We do have a couple of minutes left so we'd like to read some of the questions. We have one question for Melinda. You mentioned that your general staff was hired to work directly in regions close to the partnership grantees. Can you expand on the work the regional staff does with the grantee?

Melinda: Sure. What we designed is a provider help desk. When applications come in through eligibility they are funneled through a regional team that deals just with that region so they know exactly what's going on. They know the difficulties. They know the challenges. Then we have a provider help desk. In the provider help desk we have quality specialists that are designed to help providers, directors, child care partners in that specific region. Again they build relationships. They talk often. For example, a provider may call a child care partner may call and they want something that isn't through our office but it's through another early childhood office like licensing or accountability. That regional specialist knows the provider and can direct them to the right place, let them know who can assist them with that difficulty. In addition, we have a person that is just over Early Head Start. She does all of the Early Head Start partners and so she can also direct them to their region. So this approach helps us to know what's going on in the community, where we need additional help, if there's a tornado in a community or the centers in a community have been impacted by weather related issue etc. we can provide them the assistance.

Alejandra: Thank you, Melinda. We have another question for Pam. Ms. Black, you mentioned about all the great work you do in support of families. Can you share some of the insights the families have that you serve have shared in terms of what has been a success for them since joining the partnership?

Pam: Sure, I'd love to talk about the successes of our families. I was actually just talking with a mom the other night who actually her son is going to be graduating from Early Head Start soon. And so she first and foremost said I could never have finished my education in the timeframe that I've done it without the support of Early Head Start. Because her child had been basically been bumped and shuffled around to friends and families to help her take care of him and so therefore she wasn't always able to find a friend or family. She would be missing classes and things so the stability that it offered to her and her child to get into the community college child care center. It's right there on site where she goes to school. She has the ability between classes to still have some connections with her son, even being able to still share a snack or a lunch with him as well. And then she said and I really want to make sure that I continue to give back to what Early Head Start has done for me and my family so that other families can have the same successes. She's actually going to become a dental hygienist. And so we again in Policy Counsel talk a lot about the nonfederal share and some of the challenges that we may be having with it. So she really was already brainstorming on ways that she could help us with her nonfederal share in her new role when she graduates.

Alejandra: Wow, that is great. Thank you, Ms. Black for sharing that. We have another question from a participant who wants to know if there are other child care subsidies eligibility requirements that have been obstacles to enrolling families? So they want to know in terms of child care subsidy eligibility requirements and any challenges or obstacles to enrolling families. I know that some of you have already addressed that. Loletta, would you like to share any that comes to mind or Melinda or Pam?

Loletta: This is Loletta. I can't think of any other than the process was very difficult for families to get through. Pam also spoke of it in terms of making it available, the timing, the amount of time it takes and those kinds of barriers where families who are working or in school had difficulty working that in. In Missouri we had the 15 day window to get a phone interview in, which was very difficult to navigate initially. Working to improve those processes and having Early Head Start staff support them with some of those steps is really what we had to do to get it going. But once we got the application process streamlined many families who were eligible for Early Head Start are also eligible for child care subsidies

so we do not have too many who are not eligible. Most are. When we are accepting the neediest of the needy with high points they're eligible for both systems.

Alejandra: Thank you so much, Loletta. That was really helpful. We want to remind everyone that if you did not get your question today, we will be posting it to My Peers. For those of you that are not familiar with My Peers, it's an online social and learning network for Head Start and Early Head Start program staff and partners to dialogue and share thoughts. It's a positive and supportive environment to ask and answer questions of your peers, brainstorm solutions and learn from the experiences of others. We hope that you will visit My Peers and join this community and engage with others in solution oriented conversation. We also want to remind the audience if you look on your screen you're going to be able to see the download pod. In there you're going to find several resources from the Partnership center that we think contain very valuable information. I especially want to highlight the video that was just posted on eclick, the Office of Head Start website about the benefits of the Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships. All of the resources we think are really valuable and we encourage you to download them on the screen so you can use them. So now I'm going to turn it over to Rae Anderson. Rae.

Rae: Thank you, Alejandra. I want to say again thank you to all of our special guests on the webinar today. Before I close us out, I wanted to check in with Karen, hi, from the Office of Head Start and invite her to share any reflections or comments from today.

Karen: Sure. I want to say how wonderful this whole webinar has been. To really hear what's been happening on the ground and all the successes even though we know the work is hard, to hear folks that it is well worth it to go through the relationship building, the trust building, the whole piece of really making it work and hearing about just the richness of seeing a community effort I think is phenomenal. I think that is really what partnerships were meant to be was bringing the community together to support each other. I think you all have demonstrated that. The relationship building takes time and building that trust takes a lot of time. When I hear people think about that diversity of thought and being open to new ideas and really stretching yourselves, I think that's what has programs and grantees and partners successful in this work. I just think that we can all learn so much from each other. I find it so exciting and so refreshing to hear all these wonderful things that are happening that you don't hear about enough. I just want to thank all of you for the time and the effort that you've put into pulling this webinar together. Thanks to the Partnership Center as well for the great work that you've done to support everybody. Nice job, everybody!

Rae: Okay. Thank you, Karen. I always love listening to partners and grantees talk about their work because I learn every time I hear them share their stories. There's always some little nugget that I take away from the conversation. From today's conversation the word that I kept -- of course we know that relationships are key and communication is really critical to successful relationships but one of the words that I kept hearing over and over again was listening. Listening. Thinking about how many times I've heard my own children who are all now adults say to me mom, you are not listening. You are not listening to me.

So it's true. It's true in all of our relationships whether they are preschoolers or adults. It's really -- that is a very important skill that all of us need to practice in order to be a really effective communicator and partner. So thank you very much to all of you for listening to today's webinar. We hope you've learned something. We want to remind you that at the end of today's webinar there will be an evaluation available on the screen for you to respond to. Then if you can't do that today, there will be further communication sent within the next few days for you to complete the evaluation. We really want to encourage you to do that. It's important to us. We need your feedback in order to determine how best to support the ongoing successful implementation of the partnerships. So thank you again for joining us today. Have a great day. Enjoy the rest of your day.

Thank you.