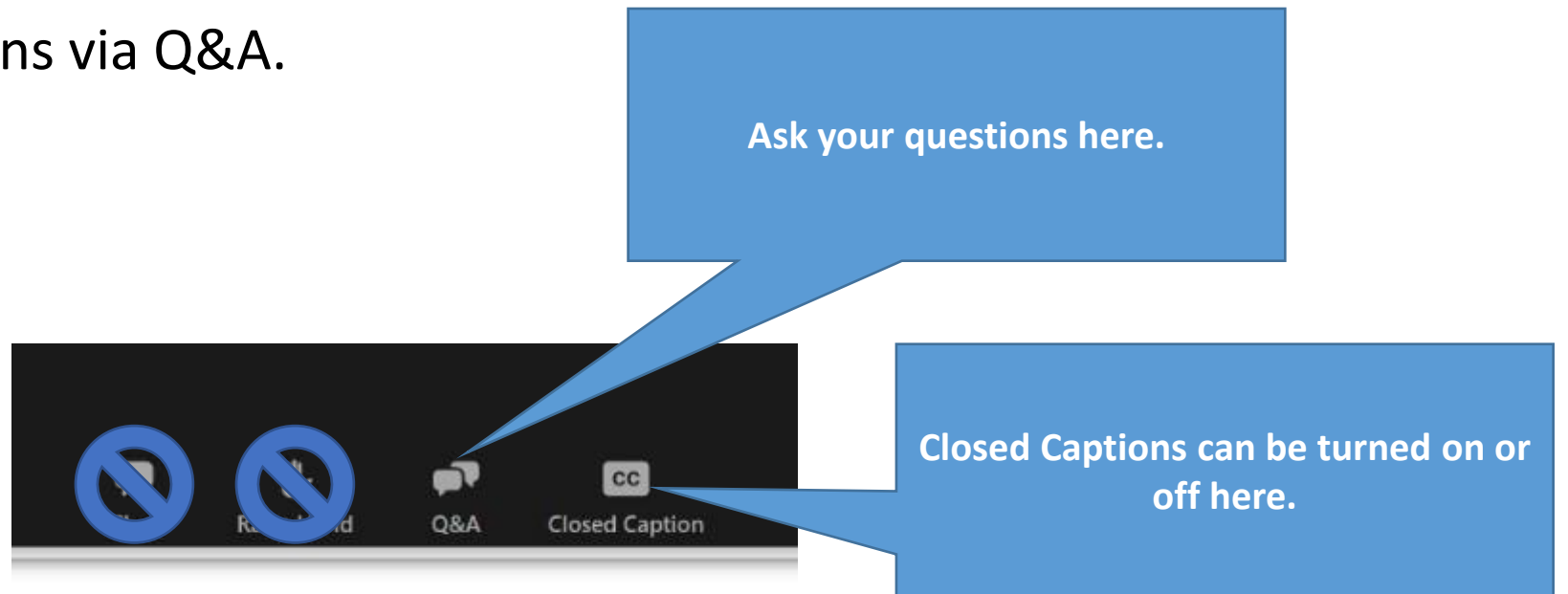


# HOUSEKEEPING ITEMS

- All participants are in listen-only mode.
- Chat has been disabled.
- Certificates of Attendance will not be provided.
- Closed Captioning is optional.
- Submit all questions via Q&A.





**OFFICE OF HEAD START**

An Office of the Administration for Children & Families



## Webinar 3: Mental Health and Staff Wellness, Emotionally Strong Together

7/14/2021

# Today's Presenters

- **Dr. Bernadine Futrell** – *Director, OHS*
- **Ann Linehan** – *Deputy Director, OHS*
- **Shawna Pinckney** – *Director, Grants Division, OHS*
- **Sangeeta Parikshak** – *Senior Program Specialist/FPO, OHS*
- **Neal Horen** – *Co-Project Director and Co-Principal Investigator, NC HBHS*
- **Jessica Dym Bartlett** – *Co-Principal Investigator, NC PFCE*
- **Allyson Dean** – *Senior Director, Training and Quality, NC ECCTL*



# Today's Session Overview

- **Office of Head Start** Q&A
- The National Centers on Health Behavioral Health and Safety (**HBHS**), Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (**PFCE**), and Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning (**ECDTL**) join together to build on existing knowledge of mental health for programs, staff, children, and families to support Head Start in being emotionally strong together—
  - ✓ *Enhance the understanding of building trauma-informed care into systems and practices;*
  - ✓ *Emphasize the importance of prioritizing staff wellness at the program and provider levels;*
  - ✓ *Offer foundational strategies that support having successful conversations with families about sensitive topics;*
  - ✓ *Elaborate on meeting children's social and emotional needs; recognizing the importance of relationships, consistency, and predictability;*
- Wrap-up and close



**Can programs include in their policies and procedures the use of virtual make-up days throughout the year? For example, if it snows and programs need to cancel classes that day, can they make up the day virtually?**

Per [ACF-PI-HS-21-04](#), programs may establish policies and procedures for make-up days related to unexpected closures. Programs can provide virtual make-up days for weather related closures so long as it is in their policies and procedures. Programs should make reasonable determinations if families have ongoing access to internet and the technology required to make temporary, weather-related virtual services a viable option.

ACF-PI-HS-21-04

**Currently, we are submitting monthly "Center Status Reports" that include the number of children receiving in-classroom and virtual participation. Will this monthly reporting process continue through the ramp up period?**

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Yes, OHS requires programs to continue submitting Center Status Reports throughout the summer and anticipates the same during the ramp-up period.

# Will the federal poverty guidelines be updated to reflect higher minimum wages?

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Any changes in federal poverty guidelines, or in the way the federal poverty guidelines are applied to Head Start eligibility, is determined by Congress. For additional information about the federal poverty guidelines, including how they are calculated, please visit <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>.

# What do grantees do if there is conflicting guidance between local government and the CDC?

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Local health conditions should drive programs' decisions in cases where there is conflicting guidance from the CDC, local health departments, or other partners. Programs should review the available guidance, continue working with their Health Services Advisory Committee (HSACs), and, with their community conditions in mind, make the decision that best supports the safety of staff, children, and families.



## Programs understand how the expectation to return to in-person applies to children attending centers. However, does the same expectation apply to children enrolled in the home-based model?

The expectations for in-person services are the same for the home-based program option as they are for center-based programs. The goal is moving toward in-person comprehensive services for all children beginning in September 2021, as local health conditions allow, or earlier for programs providing summer services. If that is not possible, programs must communicate with their Regional Office about the continued use of virtual or remote services for some enrolled children during the 2021 calendar year. OHS anticipates programs should fully return to their pre-approved in-person program options by January 2022.

While OHS acknowledges some parents and home visitors have expressed hesitation to return for various reasons, a “ramp-up period” is afforded to programs to help recruit and transition families and staffs’ return to address their concerns. During this ramp-up period, programs may deliver virtual or remote services to some enrolled children and families, if local health conditions necessitate or if the program is meeting individualized needs. The ramp-up period should be underway now and extends through December 2021.

§1302.20 (b)  
**Comprehensive Services**

**Are there other alternatives for home visits when staff have concerns about transmission, such as in settings where porches, backyards, and outdoor space is very limited, and/or staff use public transportation for home visits (and cannot transport a pop-up tent)?**

Being fully vaccinated has been shown to be the best way to prevent COVID-19 infection or severe illness. Masks, also shown to be effective in preventing COVID-19 infection, are required when using public transportation. Most importantly, programs must continue working with their local health departments and Health Services Advisory Committees (HSACs), to follow recommendations for in-person home visits based on community risk.

Programs that cannot conduct an in-home visit — or have limited outdoor options — should consider alternatives, such as conducting home visits at a public location with more space and improved ventilation. Such locations include libraries, community centers, churches, etc.

**§1302.22(a) Setting (d)  
Safety requirements**

# How should we address vaccine hesitancy for staff and families?

OHS understands vaccine hesitancy from both staff and families is a challenge to returning to full in-person services. While many Head Start staff and families have gotten or are eager to get a COVID-19 vaccine and resume full in-person services, others may have questions about vaccine safety and side effects and want to know more before committing. Vaccine hesitancy comes from many sources and takes many different forms. Understanding who is hesitant to be vaccinated, why, and what information they need to make a decision are critical. Please view [Tips for Talking to Head Start Staff and Families About the COVID-19 Vaccines](#) for strategies on how to have these conversations.

Vaccination is the safest way to protect individuals and the people they live and work with from getting COVID-19. It's also an important part of moving [Head Start Forward](#) to return to safe, comprehensive in-person services. OHS recently announced updated guidance and flexibilities to assist with these efforts, including vaccine outreach and support, as local conditions allow. The guidance in [ACF-PI-HS-21-03](#) and [ACF-PI-HS-21-04](#) will help grantees determine which one-time investments best support staff, children, and families, while adhering to federal, state, and local guidance. Additionally, OHS encourages programs to visit resources on the ECLKC, [Vaccinating OHS Staff](#) and [Vaccination for Head Start Families](#), to explore examples of vaccine outreach and support activities Head Start programs can consider.

ACF-PI-HS-21-03 &  
ACF-PI-HS-21-04

# How should we address vaccine hesitancy for staff and families? *(Cont'd)*

Receiving the COVID-19 vaccination is a personal decision. Ensure your staff and families have access to reliable information and resources to make this decision for themselves and/or in consultation with their doctor. Programs should work with their HSACs, local health department or community health partners to make sure you have trusted resources easily available to make it easy for staff to share with families.

ACF-PI-HS-21-03 &  
ACF-PI-HS-21-04

## Programs continue to struggle with recruiting and retaining qualified education staff. Low wages for education staff are one major challenge. What can programs do to address this challenge?

The Head Start workforce experienced staff shortages and high turnover rates before the pandemic, especially among education staff. OHS recognizes staffing challenges continue to persist throughout the current national staffing crisis. We understand some programs are experiencing loss of staff to other industries due to higher pay and incentive packages offered by competitors. We know staffing challenges are hindering the ability of some programs to move towards fully in-person comprehensive services for all enrolled children.

OHS is pursuing a variety of options to provide further support to grantees to address staffing challenges. However, it is critical programs take steps to enhance staff recruitment and retention strategies. We strongly encourage grantees to consider the options below to improve major staffing challenges. These strategies should be pursued in collaboration with the Governing Body and Policy Council. We also strongly encourage programs to discuss strategies with their Regional Office.

§75.431 Compensation—fringe benefits

## Programs continue to struggle with recruiting and retaining qualified education staff. Low wages for education staff are one major challenge. What can programs do to address this challenge? (Cont'd)

**Use of one-time funds as a short-term solution:** We highly encourage grantees to use their one-time American Rescue Plan (ARP) and other sources of COVID-19 relief funding to ensure sufficient staff are recruited and retained for the 2021-22 program year. This could include hiring bonuses, hazard pay, return-to-work incentives, child care stipends (e.g., provide staff with stipends to access child care for their children so they can return to their job at the program), retention bonuses, or temporary raises in pay for positions that are difficult to fill. These need to be reasonable and paid, subject to an established written policy of the grantee for allowability (see 45 CFR § 75.431). We also understand what would be considered reasonable today may be different than what would have been considered reasonable in the past. Grantees should determine what incentive packages are necessary to recruit and retain staff for this coming program year, with consideration given to reasonableness. Grantees' written policies and procedures should be updated to reflect any staff incentives. Grantees should carefully communicate to program staff that any bonuses or incentives funded with ARP or other COVID-19 relief funding are not permanent increases in pay or recurring bonuses or incentives. Grantees may consider ways to link such bonuses or incentives to a commitment from the employee to remain in their position with the program for a certain period of time.

**Identify and work towards long-term solutions:** The use of one-time funds is a temporary solution to a problem that will continue beyond the 2021-22 program year. Grantees should carefully examine and assess challenges to finding and retaining qualified education staff and develop measurable goals and plans to address those challenges on a long-term basis. This could mean significant changes in program design and budgets to better attract and retain qualified education staff (e.g., through improved wages and benefits for qualified teachers; professional development and career growth opportunities for all staff; guaranteed breaks; staff wellness supports; etc.). Major changes to the overall program design and budget should be thoughtfully considered, reflect data on staffing challenges (e.g., directing resources to positions experiencing highest turnover), and consider wage comparability and data from the community assessment. Grantees are encouraged to reach out and work with their Regional Offices on potential changes to their program design and budget.

§75.431 Compensation—fringe benefits

## Programs continue to struggle with recruiting and retaining qualified education staff. Low wages for education staff are one major challenge. What can programs do to address this challenge? (Cont'd)

The overall goal of this guidance is to encourage grantees to leverage one-time funds as necessary to recruit and retain education staff for the 2021-22 program year, while also taking steps now to develop and implement an actionable long-term plan for improved recruitment and retention of education staff. Importantly, incentive packages using one-time funds and long-term plans to better recruit and retain staff should advance equity in personnel policies. For example, it is important for programs to consider targeting resources to education staff or other frontline staff who are currently undercompensated for the qualifications they hold and work they do.

We understand this will be a major lift for programs, but it is necessary to ensure programs are able to recruit and retain qualified education staff.

### Helpful Resources:

Staff Recruitment and Retention: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/staff-recruitment-retention.pdf>

Wage Comparability Survey: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/wage-comparability-fringe-benefits-survey.pdf>

Human Resources Systems to Recruit and Retain Responsive Staff: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/human-resources-systems-recruit-retain-responsive-staff>

§75.431 Compensation—fringe benefits

# What is the President's universal preschool plan (UPK) and how do Head Start programs fit in?

President Biden has proposed spending \$200 billion in UPK funding over 10 years, specifically, a national partnership with states to offer free, high-quality, accessible, and inclusive preschool to all 3- and 4-year-olds. This proposal reflects the Administration's commitment to early education as one of the most significant investments we can make as a country to increase access to opportunity for children and their families.

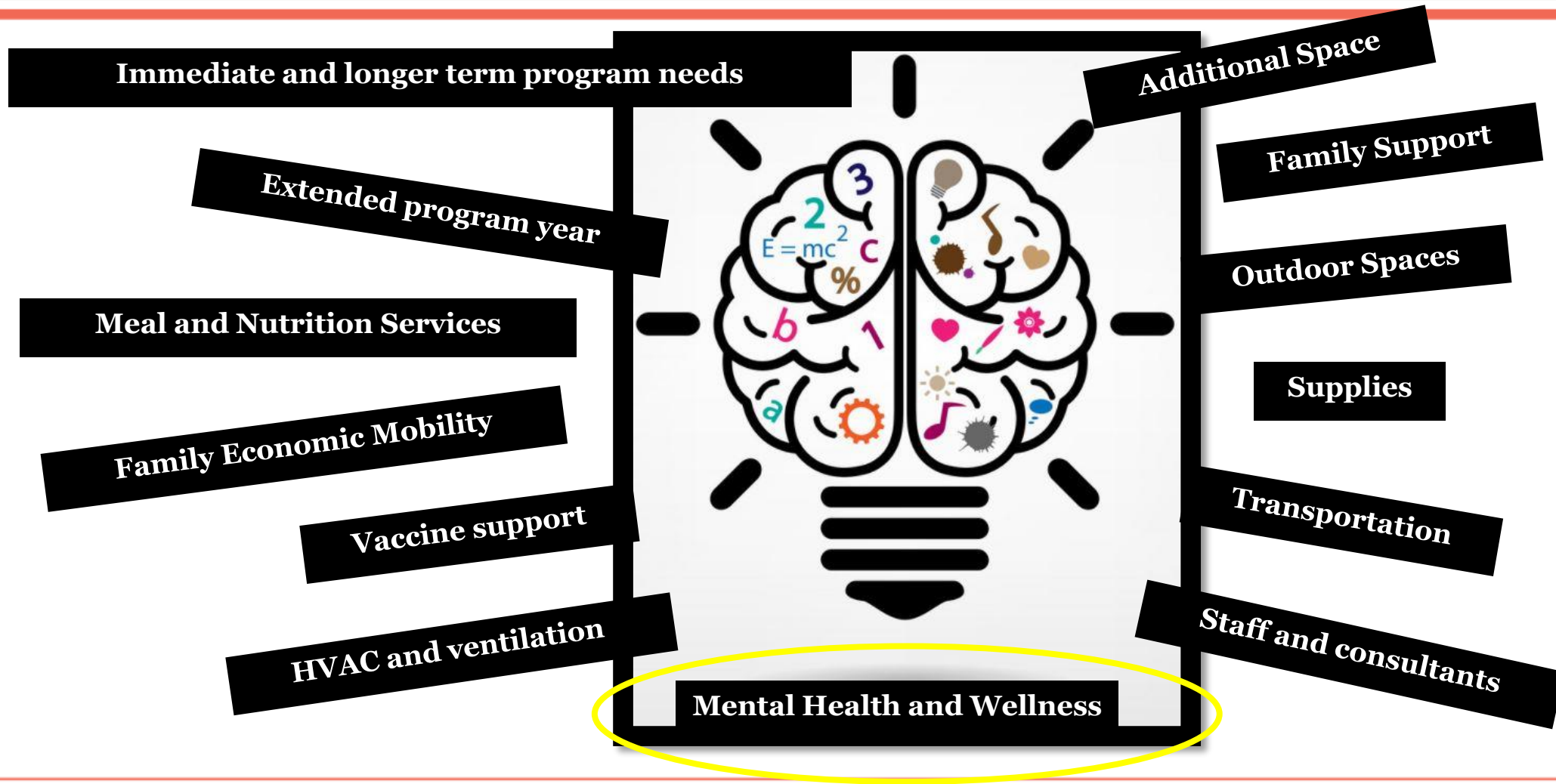
The Administration's preschool proposal includes a mixed-delivery system, leveraging existing capacities and plans to work in tandem with already existing preschool programs, such as Head Start, licensed child care centers, and licensed family child care providers, to enable children to attend preschool in a range of settings that meet quality standards. Head Start programs are and would remain a key part of this mixed-delivery system. In this proposal, all employees in participating preschool and Head Start programs will earn at least a living wage of \$15 per hour, and teachers with comparable qualifications will receive compensation commensurate with kindergarten teachers.

This is only a proposal by the Administration and therefore would need to be passed by Congress to be implemented.

Justification of Estimates for  
Appropriations Committees  
FY2022 (pg. 371-3)



# Using ARP Funds



# Head Start Forward: Mental Health and Staff Wellness: Emotionally Strong Together

The Pandemic has had disparate impacts on vulnerable populations.

Offer space for families and staff to share about their experiences and let this inform plans to return to or continue in-person services.

As we focus on Head Start Forward we want to increase our focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion.



# Head Start Forward: Mental Health and Staff Wellness: Emotionally Strong Together

Questions from the field as we move  
Head Start Forward

- Staff wellness
- Trauma-informed care
- Sensitive conversations with families
- Meeting children's social emotional needs



# Trauma-Informed Care

- Our program wants to recognize the impact of trauma on staff, families, and young children and implement trauma-informed care. What exactly is trauma-informed care and how do we get started?



# Trauma-Informed Care Where Do We Start?

Support Children in forming  
good relationships, regulatory  
skills and cognitive skills



# Trauma-informed care is good social emotional care.

We want programs to:

- Promote healthy development- trauma –informed care is best practice for ALL children but will really support those who have experienced trauma
- Providing safety (ex. safe place in the classroom, plan for a child who has experienced food insecurity, extra snacks or access)
- Predictability- needing to know what comes next and do this consistently- all day everyday
- **RELATIONSHIPS!** Children who have experienced trauma often do not know how to consistently form relationships.



# Staff are supported within trauma-informed care programs

## By Promoting:

- collaboration
- self-reflection
- taking care of one's self and each other
- celebrating successes
- creating a culture of wellness



# Trauma-Informed Care: Strategies and Resources

## Fostering Healing Through Trauma-Informed Practices

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/mental-health/article/fostering-healing-through-trauma-informed-practices>

## SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/SAMHSA-s-Concept-of-Trauma-and-Guidance-for-a-Trauma-Informed-Approach/SMA14-4884>

## Creating Trauma-Informed Systems

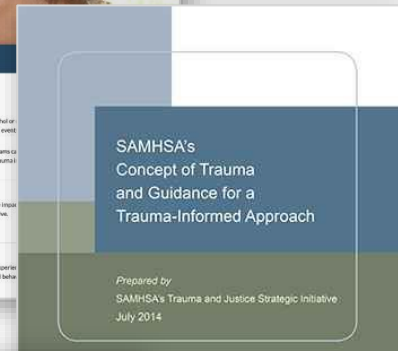
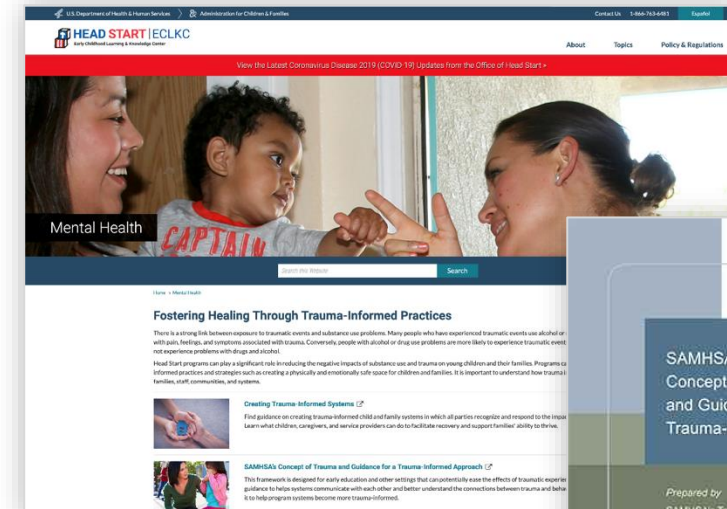
<https://www.nctsn.org/trauma-informed-care/creating-trauma-informed-systems>

## Understanding Trauma-Informed Care to Build Parent Resilience

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/understanding-trauma-informed-care-build-parent-resilience>

## Strengthening Trauma-Informed Program Practices

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/strengthening-trauma-informed-program-practices>





# Staff Wellness: An Essential Ingredient

- How can staff wellness be prioritized so providers can reflect on their own mental health needs and be able to support children and families in safe, responsive, and nurturing ways?



# Staff Wellness needs to be integrated into programs at all levels (classroom, staff meetings, supervision, etc.)

- Consistency and continued time for these conversations, reflections, and skill building is necessary
- Adult well-being is inextricably linked to child well-being. The better adults are doing and feeling, the better children are going to do
- Research suggests that supporting staff well-being and social and emotional competence may improve their performance and improve classroom quality



# Staff Wellness: An Essential Ingredient

- How are families and children feeling?
  - Consider feelings of anxiety, grief/loss, uncertainty, exhaustion, trauma, eagerness to have a routine
  - Staff need to be well, grounded, and confident to engage and be present for children and families who are also experiencing similar feelings



# Staff Wellness: Strategies and Resources

## Taking Care of Ourselves: Stress Reduction Workshop

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/slide-deck/taking-care-ourselves-stress-reduction-workshop>

## Supporting Professionals Who Support Families: The Parallel Process

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/supporting-professionals-who-support-families-parallel-process>

## Understanding the Relationships Between Staff Wellness and Effective Teaching Practices

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/understanding-relationship-between-staff-wellness-effective-teaching-practices>

## Program Approaches for Staff Wellness

[Program Approaches for Staff Wellness](#)

The collage features three overlapping documents. The top document is a slide deck titled "Taking Care of Ourselves: Stress Reduction Workshop" from the Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) at Georgetown University. The middle document is a publication titled "Supporting Professionals Who Support Families: The Parallel Process" from the National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement (NCPF). The bottom document is a video transcript titled "Understanding the Relationship Between Staff Wellness and Effective Teaching Practices" from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning (NCECDTL), dated October 23, 2018, presented by Randi Hopper and Stephanie Hickman.

# Staff Wellness Strategies and Resources

## [Staff Wellness: Managing Stress](#)

### **Wellness: Tools for Promoting Healthy Living**

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/no-search/wellness-tools-promoting-healthy-living.pdf>

### **Managing Stress Mindful Moments**

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/mental-health/article/managing-stress-mindful-moments>

### **Mindfulness: A Resilience Practice**

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/mindfulness-resilience-practice>

### **Tips for Talking to Head Start Families and Staff About COVID 19 Vaccines**

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/tips-talking-head-start-families-staff-about-covid-19-vaccines>



#### Managing Stress with Mindful Moments

Explore how breathing and movement strategies can help children calm big emotions. Discover ways to use mindfulness with young children to name big feelings and describe how they are affected by them.

#### Explore Resources



# Having Sensitive Conversations with Families

- We often need to have sensitive conversations with families, and they may be needed more as we move forward from the pandemic. How can we have successful conversations with families about sensitive topics?



# Strategies for Having Successful Conversations with Families about Sensitive Topics

## Preparation

- Take time to develop or reinforce positive relationships with families
- Identify potential questions families may have and make a plan for how you will respond
- Make a plan for how to have the conversation in a respectful, non-judgmental, and supportive way
- Practice sensitive conversations with colleagues and supervisors and ask for feedback
- Reflect on your own values and opinions and how they may differ from a family's values and opinions
- Use mindfulness practice just prior to the conversation to ensure you are calm and focused
- Prepare a physical space to talk that is warm, inviting, and available for private conversations



# The What and How of Having Successful Conversations with Families about Sensitive Topics

## Strengths-based attitudes and approaches

- All families have strengths
- Families are our partners with a critical role in their child's development
- Families have expertise about their child and their family
- Families' contributions are important and valuable

## Relationship-based practices

- Focus on the family-child relationship
- Reflect on personal and family cultural perspectives related to the topic
- Emphasize and support parental competence
- Value a family's passion





# Sensitive Conversations with Families: Strategies and Resources

## Preparing for Challenging Conversations with Families

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/preparing-challenging-conversations-families>

## Engaging with Families in Conversations about Sensitive Topics

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/engaging-families-conversations-about-sensitive-topics>

## Sensitive Conversations with Families

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/podcast/sensitive-conversations-families>

## Starting with Strengths During Challenging Times

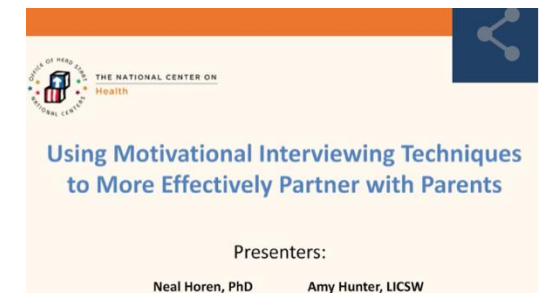
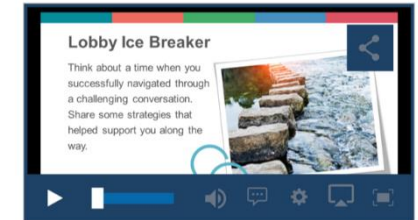
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/learning-module/starting-strengths-challenging-times>

## Using Motivational Interviewing Techniques to More Effectively Partner with Families

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/using-motivational-interviewing-techniques-more-effectively-partner-parents>

## Preparing for Challenging Conversations with Families

## Engaging with Families in Conversations About Sensitive Topics



# Meeting Children's Social and Emotional Needs

- Many children may be experiencing group care for the first time or have had a lapse in group care. How do we meet their needs?



# Meeting Children's Social and Emotional Needs

## Consider:

- Re-teaching - Remind Children routines and Expectations
- Reconnecting - Allow time for children to reconnect with peers and adults



# Addressing Lapses in IFSPs and IEPs

- Let child development be your guide
- Be aware of and prepared to support any new or modified needs of children with disabilities that have arisen during remote/virtual learning
- Keep channels of communication open to know what systems, services, and strategies are being implemented for children with disabilities
- Revisit partnerships with agencies that support children with disabilities or suspected delays (e.g., LEAs, IDEA partners, specialists).



# Addressing Challenging Behaviors

- Be proactive in supporting staff to learn/re-establish effective practices
- Focus on intentional teaching, supporting learners in their home
- Focus on reflective supervision as a strategy to support new staff or classroom teams who are experiencing challenges



# Meeting Children's Social and Emotional Needs: Strategies and Resources

- Consistency and predictability will be critical
- Children will have big emotions and will need support expressing them
- It's all about relationships - relationships with children, colleagues and families




# Meeting Children's Social and Emotional Needs: Strategies and Resources



<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/behavior-has-meaning>

# Meeting Children's Social and Emotional Needs: Strategies and Resources




## Rebuilding the Pyramid: Reconnecting After a Break

After a long break, it's likely children and adults may forget some of the routines that make the school day go smoothly. To help with the transition of your classroom community back to school after an extended break, it may be important to re-teach or remind children of schedules


### Schedules

- ▶ Re-teach the schedule at the beginning of each day
- ▶ Note any changes in the schedule as a result of the break
- ▶ Refer to the schedule before and after activities throughout the day



### Routines

- ▶ Re-teach steps of common routines
- ▶ Model and practice the steps
- ▶ Provide individual supports as needed
- ▶ Provide positive descriptive feedback to children when they follow the routines



<https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Rebuilding-the-Pyramid.pdf>

## SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS: Using Child Development as a Guide



<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/supporting-transitions-brief-one.pdf>



# Meeting Children's Social and Emotional Needs: Strategies and Resources



## Re-Connecting and Building Relationships with Infants

When transitioning back to childcare settings, it's likely infants—and adults—may need help adapting to new routines and re-establishing relationships. Practitioners should ensure that routines are responsive to individual children's needs and implemented consistently to help infants and their families transition back after an extended break. Infants may also need extra support to connect with their caregivers, even if they are caregivers who were there before the break. Here are some tips and strategies to reconnect and build relationships with infants as they return to your program.

### Warmth and Responsivity

- ▶ Use a positive, calm, and supportive tone.
- ▶ Interact at the child's level and make eye contact.
- ▶ When wearing a mask, it will be important to exaggerate your eyes and eyebrows and use other nonverbal communication strategies.
- ▶ Show physical affection (e.g., gentle pats, holding them, rocking gently).



### Building Relationships & Communication

- ▶ Imitate and elaborate on infants' vocalizations and actions.
- ▶ Provide positive attention by engaging and commenting on infants' movements, vocalizations and behaviors.
- ▶ Use words and gestures to comment on other children in the classroom and help children notice their peers.

You are making music banging those blocks.

Look, Jason is crawling over to say hi to you.

I see you looking at the bird. Should I make it fly?

## TRANSITIONS IN EARLY HEAD START: TIPS ON SUPPORTING FAMILIES OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS

Parenting young children is an emotional time, filled with hopes and worries. Transitions into Early Head Start (EHS)—and throughout EHS into preschool—can heighten these emotions. Programs and staff can use continuity of care practices to support parents and children as they start EHS (or other) services. Continuity of care practices support consistent relationships between teachers, young children, and families for as long as possible—optimally for the length of the child's enrollment in the program.

Secure parent-child attachment is key to children's learning. EHS's mission is to support parent-child relationships through continuity of care.

### PROVIDING CONTINUITY OF CARE

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/transitions-ehs-tips-supporting-families-i-t.pdf>

[https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Reconnecting\\_Infants.pdf](https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Reconnecting_Infants.pdf)



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# Save the Dates

## Upcoming Head Start Forward Webinars *Register Today!*



### Health and Safety Considerations

Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2021, 1–2:30 p.m. ET

### Showcase of Grantee Best Practices on In-person Services

Wednesday, Aug. 25, 2021, 1–2:30 p.m. ET

