

## **Building Foundations for Economic Mobility Webinar 10**

Anna Lovejoy: Hi, everyone, and welcome. This is Anna Lovejoy, with the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. We're delighted to have you all back for another installment of our Building Foundations for Economic Mobility webinar series.

So, today's conversations, we will be exploring the connections between food security and economic mobility. And, you know, obviously, Head Start and Early Head Start programs have, for a long time, focused on the importance of good nutrition for child development. And of course, Head Start has always played a key role in providing healthy meals to children and educating children and families about healthy food habits and nutrition. Our colleagues at the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness are hard at work supporting your efforts in this area.

And we're going to highlight where to find some of the resources and tools they have developed, later on, in this program. But, you know, there is another dimension to food and nutrition that is directly related to family economic mobility. And that is the extent to which families are able to access and afford sufficient food with consistency over the course of the year. If families are consistently struggling to stretch their monthly budgets to put food on the table, then it follows that they may have less capacity to focus on longer term goals, like savings, or pursuing education and training for a higher paying job. Or paying down credit card debt.

When the cost of basic necessities, like housing, healthcare and utilities go up, families face tough choices about where to cut back, and often look to their food budget. Head Start and Early Head Start programs can play a key role in helping families to access support from the community that can stretch their family dollars or supplement their pantry to free up income for other necessities. It's also not always easy to spot the signs of family food insecurity or hunger, or to know what to do for individual families. So, in today's webinar, we're going to dive in and hopefully offer some strategies and resources that will help you think about what might work in your own program. We're going to start by defining what we mean by food security and considering the difference between food insecurity and hunger. We'll talk about some of the root causes of food insecurity, and the impact that food insecurity and hunger have on families and children.

We'll also share some resources, for, to help you learn more about food security conditions in your own communities. We're going to hear from leaders in Oregon who are working to address food security at the program, community and state level. And, hopefully, we'll offer you some ideas for what you, back in your own programs, you can do to take action in your communities for the families and your programs.

Okay. So, as we get started I wanted to take a minute to introduce our presenters. Here's a picture of me, just so you know who's been talking to you for the last two minutes. For today's presenters, I'd like to start first by introducing Karen Ayers, who has worked for the Oregon Child Development Coalition for the past 11 or so years, in a variety of positions. And, she is currently the program and partnership

manager. And, Karen brings a background of nursing and system development to her work in coordinating projects for OCDC's statewide effort to create communities of learning. She's an advocate and an active member of numerous statewide committees, with a focus of improving family and health services for children and families throughout Oregon. She is actively involved in Oregon's food security efforts to create sustainable systems. So, we're delighted to have Karen here today, along with some of her colleagues, who you're going to meet in just a few minutes.

I'd also like to introduce, right now, my colleague, Melanie Meisenheimer, from the Center for the Study of Social Policy. Melanie is the program and research assistant on the young children and families team at CSSP. And, before she came here, she was a Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow with the Congressional Hunger Center and has worked with the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, to improve, improve food security and affordable housing communities. So, Melanie, welcome and thank you. So, I wanted to start the conversation by asking Karen the first question. And that is, Karen, what do we mean when we say food insecurity?

Karen Ayers: Thank you, Anna. Well, those are when families, who are struggling without reliable access to sufficient quantities of affordable, nutritious food. So, they, they really, don't know where my next meal is coming from. How am I going to feed my family at the end of the month? Or at the end of the week. So, they, they really, don't have that sustainable resource of knowing how they're going to access food and, and, and what that looks like.

Anna: And, how does that differ from hunger?

Karen: Well, hunger is really, around going without food. And, and in a sense of, so, we may be putting less on our plates. We may have to skip a meal. And, in many cases, what we have found is, is that a lot of times parents are going without meals. And they maybe go without meals, say, for instance, on a weekend. Or they may skip two or three meals, because they want to make sure that they're giving their children food. Or that, they'll feed their children a significant amount of food, but then the parents will actually eat less.

Anna: Mm hmm. And, Melanie, can you tell us a little about the impact of food insecurity and hunger on children and, and on families?

Melanie Meisenheimer: Sure. So, we know that when you're food insecure you're not getting all of the energy and nutrients that you need. And that's bad for anyone's physical and mental health, but it's especially bad for young kids. Because they're going through a period of really rapid physical development and brain development. And so, we've seen that food insecurity is associated with a high risk of asthma and obesity, and general poor health status for kids. Which might mean that they have more [Inaudible] or they're more likely to be absent. And it's also shown to be bad for kids' reading and mathematics performance and for school readiness in general. Which makes sense. You can't learn when you're hungry or when you're tired. And we've also seen some limited research that food insecurity can put kids at increased risk of behavioral and emotional problems.

Anna: And, I would imagine, Melanie, that food insecurity and, and hunger also adds a level of stress to the family. Which also can have other, you know, impacts on, on child development and on the parents' ability themselves to, sort of, you know, manage everything else that's going on in their lives.

Melanie: Right. So, beyond the immediate impact on the kids, we also know that food insecurity can really, take a toll on parents, who have to worry about how they're going to feed their families. So, as was previously said, previously said, even if the parents are able to cut back on their own food or other expenses in their budget, to make sure the kids are well-fed, that stress can take a toll over time. Including putting parents at increased risk of depression anxiety, which in turn takes a toll on their ability to create a nurturing environment for their kids. And their ability to respond to other stress in their lives. And I also, want to reiterate that food is really, a basic need for families. And competes with a lot of other basic needs within their budget. So, you know, if they have to cut back in other areas, like housing or childcare, medical expenses, school expenses, then that really, damages their economic stability and forces them to make some impossible decisions.

Anna: Yeah. So, it's both the health and the economic mobility and education, and it's all kind of packaged together, as so many of these issues are. So, I think at this point we wanted to switch to our first poll. So, Nina, would you mind pulling that up for us? Thank you. So, this is kind of a pop quiz for all of our participants. Just wanted to see if you all can give us a sense for how many, what percentage of children in the U.S. you think were, have, were living in food insecure families in the last year. In 2015. So, we'll give you a moment to weigh in and we'll see how close we are collectively. So, looks like numbers are rolling in. We are at about, about half you of you thinking, hold on. I'm going to actually start broadcasting the results, so we can see them. Looks like about, half of you think, or a little more than half, think it's around 30 percent. Another third of you or so, it's about 18 percent. And then, we have some coming in around the 12 percent mark. Melanie, can you tell us what the actual, the correct answer is?

Melanie: Sure. For kids under 18, it is 18 percent. We know it's a little bit higher for kids that are younger, though.

Anna: And, can you tell us is, is that, does that hold true, sort of, across all racial groups? Or are there disparities between different racial and ethnic groups?

Melanie: There are definitely disparities. We do know that kids of color are more likely to experience food insecurity than white kids. Which means that they're also more likely to experience those negative effects of food insecurity. Their physical, mental, social, emotional health.

So, that can really, contribute to disparate outcomes in terms of school readiness and health. So, according to the FDA 2015 data, 27 percent of black kids live in food insecure households. 24 percent of Hispanic kids live in food insecure households, compared to 14 percent of white kids. And, just another layer to that is, as you may expect, kids living in families who are experiencing poverty are also much more likely to experience food insecurity, with 44 percent of kids living below the poverty line experiencing food insecurity, in 2015.

Anna: Right. So, let's, let's head back, let's go back to the, our PowerPoint presentation. And I wanted to take a minute to, to think about a conversation actually, Karen, that you and I had for today's webinar, as we were planning and discussing our presentation. And you had mentioned how important it is to understand the scope of this food insecurity issue at the community level. And, we wanted to point out for folks on the line today. There are several online resources. It, listed is the USDA Food Access Research Atlas. Which is an interactive map that allows you to zoom in to different levels to see various measures of supermarket acceptability. That can help you identify food deserts, which is basically communities where there are little to no grocery stores or other places where you can, a family can buy fresh food and, and groceries. The second is the Map the Meal Gap, from the nonprofit organization Feeding America. And that is a searchable tool. Again, for state and community level data on food insecurity and active food banks and other resources at the state and community level. And the third one listed there is from the nonprofit Food Research Action Center. They offer an interactive map with national and state level profiles of hunger, poverty and federal nutrition program data. So, it's designed to provide basic data as one tool to help states and others measure how they're doing in the effort to get key public nutrition programs to meet the needs of hungry people. And improve the health and economic security of low income families. So, those are just three. There are others, as well. If, I would encourage participants, if you know of others or have used others, feel free to share them in the general chat. I'm sure your peers and colleagues would appreciate knowing what they are.

So, Karen. Let's turn now to looking at the root causes of hunger. You know, we've identified some, some resources. But we haven't really, talked about, you know, why are so many families struggling. So, hoping that you could shed some light on this for us.

Karen: Sure. So, so, what we know, as you can see in this diagram here, is to become financially stable, and thus food secure, you know, most families need about 200 percent of the federal poverty level. which is about, we have an average here about 50,000 on this, but in Oregon, they need about 55,000.

Anna: Mm hmm.

Karen: In order for them, for, and that's for a family of four. And so, that is working full time at minimum wage, often provides less than 100 percent of the federal poverty level. So, in Oregon, we, we do it a little bit different. Because of the minimum wage is increasing out here. But what we know with our families is that if you, if you have one person working a minimum wage job, you're going to earn, you know, around 24,000, but, yet, you need about 55,000 in order to meet all of your expenses. And, and like we were talking about earlier, you know, there's the, the, the high housing cost. So, we have very, very high rental rates here in the northwest. Which consumes more than half or their salary. We have one of the highest childcare expenses in the nation, here. And in, in the greater Portland area, it's about \$15,000 a year for, for infant care. So, you can imagine trying to afford that. They can have things like medical bills, like you were saying. They can have, you know, debt for credit cards and those different types of things. Even electricity, because, again, here in the northwest, I mean, we've already had our heat going in October. And so, that kind of goes, you know, all the way until May so, those are, those are pretty expensive things. When you think about electricity, and you think about, you know, natural gas, and you think about all of those other things that, that kind of come together. And if you're only making, even a, well, for a family of four and two people working a minimum wage job, you're still under 50,000, and you need over 55,000, in order to just meet your basic needs and your basic expenses. And so, what

we really, see is, kind of food is at the bottom of that list. And we have to pay those other things, and transportation, and you know, gasoline costs have gone down some. But they're still expensive. And so, there's not enough dollars to be able to stretch and, and that food is kind of the last component that's there. And we find that to be one of the, you know, the biggest contributing factors. Also, the other thing that I think plays into it, especially here in Oregon. Because so much of our state is very rural. Like many places around the United States. But we hear a lot about, you know, unemployment. And here, in Oregon, we're running about 5.5 percent unemployment, so, people are still trying to understand, why, why are so many families still struggling? Well, but we're not talking about, our what we call, U-6 numbers. And so, that is the unemployment with the underemployment kind of blended together. We have several counties in Oregon that are in double digit, still, for underemployment. So, I, you know, many are families that are in scenarios where, "I was making \$50,000 a year. Now I'm making \$23,000 a year. And so, now I have to, have to afford all those things when my income was double that." And so, food is where we see the biggest hit.

Anna: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Melanie: And this is Melanie, one thing that I would add to what Karen said, is that low income families are much more likely to have limited access to those supermarkets where you can get the lowest cost food. They may live in a food desert, or they may only have access to smaller retailers, where the costs are higher. So, they have limited resources and their resources don't go as far.

Anna: Mm hmm.

Karen: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Anna: Mm hmm. Karen, you had mentioned in a previous conversation with me, the concept of a food swamp.

Karen: Yeah.

Anna: Could you talk a little bit about what that is, as well?

Karen: Well, food swamps, are when there are areas of nothing but fast food. So, you, you're just saturated. So, you've got McDonald's, you've got Taco Bell, you've got, you know, Burger King and they're all just kind of in a row. And so, they're almost saturated with these, with these fast food places that they can go and get those, you know, Happy Meals and those different types of things for, for, for very little cost.

Anna: Yeah, yeah. So, it's sometimes the easiest option and quote unquote affordable, but, you know, at the cost of, of health, too. So, lots of challenges especially for low income families who don't, maybe don't have reliable transportation, or access to public transportation that would get them, you know, efficiently and, and cheaply to a grocery store that has, you know, what, what their family needs. And a price range that is affordable. So, a lot of challenges there.

Karen: Absolutely. And it, you know, like Melanie was saying, and you know, that's one of the things that you can do when you hit one of those resources. Is that, you know, I think it's really, important that you, kind of figure out your community. And even though we're in the greater Portland area, we still have food deserts in Portland, where, where, you know, they might have to get on two buses and an hour and 15 minutes to get someplace so that they have accessibility for, for grocery stores. So, that they're not kind of trying to having to buy those, you know, those necessities at, maybe a local 7-Eleven. Or, or something like that, that's going to cost you three times the amount.

Anna: Mm hmm. Karen, let's, let's hear a little bit more about Oregon's journey. Can you tell us how you came to identify hunger as a priority issue for your organization?

Karen: Sure. So, you know, like many Head Start programs, you know, when, when our families are enrolling. We thought that they were doing, we thought we were doing a really, good job in, in regards to kind of, asking families questions as we're getting to know them. Kind of where they're at and what are some of their needs. You know, in regards to housing and transportation and asking questions about, you know, if you're engaged in WIC. And, and if you have a SNAP benefit. And some of those different types of things. And then, we had a family that, the mom was engaged in our policy council and, and was a fairly active member in, in our centers. And, and what we didn't know for a long period of time, was that there was a pretty big financial change within her family. And that she had, you know, she had numerous babies, and that she was actually, her and her family were actually suffering from food insecurity for numerous months, before we even knew about that. And, you know, she was engaged and involved with our policy council coordinator. You know, I was engaged and involved with her. And so, at that point, I said, "We have to stop and we have to pause and we have to back up, and we have to do a better job at asking these questions." And I think a lot of times as Head Start programs, we like to dance around it. We don't exactly want to identify the elephant in the room. And to really, talk about, hunger and what that looks like. What is food security? How many of our families are exhibiting food insecurity? And ask those questions directly. And create an environment that we somewhat, normalized it. But not normalized it in a sense that it's okay. But normalize it in a sense that we're creating a safe environment in building relationships that we can talk about those things. And, and, and, and so, right now what, what we have done is, is that, you know, we're, we're asking those questions directly on a screening tool. And so, within Oregon, I'm a member of the Childhood Hunger Coalition. And they have developed these tools around for, for providers. Especially for pediatricians. To ask these two national questions. One's around food insecurity and one's around, around hunger. And so, working with them and getting permission from them, we were able to adjust that screening tool, especially there's an algorithm that goes across the bottom that connects families to WIC and to some of those different types of things. But for our organization, we really, wanted to change that algorithm and so, that it really, addresses things. Then the, with, with, within that local community in regards to sustainable food practices. And the other thing with the screening questions is that, we actually ask them multiple times. And so, we ask them early on as we get to know families. And then they can answer. And it's really, about, you know, did you, did you run out of food in the last 12 months? Or did you actually have to skip meals in the last 12 months? And then, we ask it three more times. And, and they can answer, you know, often true, sometimes true, no or I don't know. And, and we're actually tracking that data to really kind of, see what that data looks like. As we build relationships with those families. Do we, are we seeing those answers kind of change? I mean, we are still even having some

challenges. Even though we've done a lot of work around motivational interviewing techniques, with our family advocates who are asking these questions to our families. And, and, and, you know, really, kind of creating this space to have conversations around hunger and food insecurity. Not only with our families, but also with our staff. But we are, we are still seeing that in, in, in some of the cases is that, even though we've asked these questions, then after a few months, then mom or dad will then say to us, "Well, but I really, have been exhibiting food insecurity. And, but I was really, too embarrassed to go and, and go to a food bank. And access food." And, and some of those different type of things. So, that is a little bit about our journey and where we started. And, and then, from asking those questions we've done a lot of work within the communities to understand, what's, what's available in there? What are those community gardens? What are those pantries that we can actually access? And within our organizations we've actually planted gardens. And, in almost every single one of our centers. And in one center, we have about 80 raised beds that has become a community garden, as well as we're accessing food from the garden as we're preparing it.

[Multiple speakers]

Our journey.

Anna: Yeah. Thank you. You had also mentioned something about working with your WIC partners. The Women, Infants and Children Food Assistance? And how some of their data shifted when they were asked, started asking the right questions. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Karen: Absolutely. Absolutely. So, so, I worked pretty closely with WIC at our state level, as our executive director is the former director of WIC. And so, we have great partnerships. And our, and our families actually access WIC. We have probably 90-95 percent of our families who are accessing. So, one of the things that we do know from research is that a lot of families who are exhibiting food insecurity are accessing one or all three of those benefits. So, that's WIC, or SNAP, which is the Food Stamps, or the free and reduced lunches.

So, the national food lunch program is that. And it's fairly significant. I think it was up about 67 percent and I, Melanie, you can correct me if I'm wrong here. I think there are about 59 percent right now. So, these are families that are actually engaged in those, in those resources to improve their food security. It's that, that's a lot. That's about 60 percent of that are still having issues. And so, I, I kept having conversations at the state level, around, you know, are you guys asking these questions? And around food insecurity. How do you know where your families are at? And if your families are not accessing things like WIC, it's a little hard for a mama to come and to, and even at the Head Start program, to think about budgets and to think about parent education. And how can I stretch my dollars? And, and, and how can I, you know, eat well for less? And what are some new, you know, some, some new types of foods that I might be able to use? If my number one issue is, is that, I'm experiencing food insecurity, and where's my next meal coming from. Where's tomorrow's meal coming from? Where are next week's meals coming from? How do I keep my babies from going to bed hungry? And so, it took me about, oh, about two years.

But every time I saw, I saw Mary, I was, I was saying, you know, has WIC thought any more about asking these questions? Here's what we're finding. And in some areas, the data was pretty significant around parents saying often true or sometimes true. So, after having many conversations with them, they actually agreed to, to start asking a couple of the questions. Once I met with all of the state WIC coordinators and the executive director and really talked about what we were doing in Oregon. How important it is for us to kind of partner together. And so, we went out and we trained their staff around, you know, what it looks like. How to ask these questions. Kind of in a motivational interviewing way. And how to kind of set the stage and kind of write a script for them to be able to start asking these questions. And in one of our largest counties, here in Oregon, Washington county, on the first go-round of asking these questions, they had more than 38 percent of the families that said often or sometimes true. And that was profound for them.

When they started looking at the data. And what they actually found, was that it was changing the trajectory of families. Of that, now I'm accessing WIC. Now WIC, they're really, asking me questions about hunger and food insecurity. And I'm actually saying to them, "Yes, I ran out of food before the end of the month." Or, "Yes, I've had to skip some meals." And so, it really, kind of changes the way they're looking at it. They're actually now, in this county, they actually have a food bank inside of the WIC office. And they're actually doing some Cooking Matters classes. So, families can come in. they can participate in the Cooking Matters classes.

And then, then they get to, to understand how they can stretch those dollars. And maybe actually use some fresh fruits and vegetables they might have not used before. And then, they actually get to leave with a whole box of food each time. And it counts as their secondary certification. So, as Head Start programs, we can have an impact on our community partners and some places like WIC. They're actually asking these questions now, in three counties that I just saw at my Health Service Advisory Committee meeting last week. And we're putting the plans in place, a plan in place so that we can go and train. There are three other counties that want to start asking these questions, as well.

Anna: Great. Thank you, Karen. You know, it's, it's really, amazing to see, as, as you're talking, some of the conversations that are sparking in the general chat line. We have some questions about SNAP, formerly the food stamp program. We have an offer from Lacy Stephens with the National Farm to School Network. Hi, Lacy. Thanks for joining us today. Who would like to share more information on how Farm to Early Care and education can support food security. And actually we have on, on the resources box on the, on the left-hand side there, a link to the Farm to Preschool website. So, folks can find out more there, if you're curious.

Then, we'll talk a little bit more about that later in the program, as well. But, anyway, but, now, and, you know, certainly, I hope folks will keep the conversation going in the general chat wall, there. Also, listening to the, the presenters, it's a lot going on sometimes. It's wonderful. But, I think I, I'd like to, at this point introduce two other colleagues from Oregon. The first is Misha Peel. She's from the Oregon Child Development Coalition of Pope County. And Lori Clark, from OCDC of Malheur County.

And we had hoped to have a parent, actually a parent advocate and leader in Oregon who's been very active, Gabriella Diaz. But unfortunately, she's not able to be with us today. So, we're disappointed at that. But we will continue on, nonetheless. And know that she is here with us in spirit, I'm sure. But I



wanted to, I guess, turn things over to these two experts from, from the program level, to talk about some of the things that they're doing in their programs. And I wanted to start by asking Misha, "What, what are some of the biggest challenges that families in your programs are facing, when it comes to food security?"

Misha Peel: Yeah. So, I work with the family advocates, here. I supervise them. And so, they're the ones who are actually asking these questions regarding food insecurity. And what we're finding, is kind of the irony of parents who work in agriculture picking this beautiful produce, can't afford to buy it themselves. So, they're around a bunch of food all the time. Healthy, nutritious, they know it's good for their families. They put in their long days, and you know, for minimum wage, or less in some cases. And then, they're going home hungry. And there's a lot of shame there, too. With their [Inaudible].

Anna: And so, what are you doing to help address some of those challenges and that issue with your families?

Misha: So, we have partnered with our local food share. Marion-Polk Food Share. And they have a program called Neighborhood Fresh Connect. And so, what it is, is we live in the Willamette Valley, here in Oregon. If anybody knows where that is. We have wonderful growing land here. And so, a lot of the farmers donate their crops to the local food share. And, and the grocery stores, as well. So, we get really, great produce. And the food share with just a little bit of red tape, allows us to go pick up this produce and bring it back to our centers. So, within, from November through April, we are able to deliver out 25,000 pounds of produce to our families and to our staff.

Anna: Wow. That's, that's remarkable. That's really, remarkable. Lori, how about you? What, what are some of the challenges that you're hearing in, from the families in your program?

Lori Clark: In our county, our county is the second largest county in Oregon. And it's the 12th largest county in the United States. So, we have a huge population. Many of which are at or below poverty level. And so, just getting people [Inaudible] sources, to food supplies, to nutrition education, it's a huge challenge. When we do our screening process with our families in our migrant seasonal program, many of them, in fact probably most of them, report that they do have insecurity, food insecurity. Although, they do also state that they are fairly aware of the resources locally, and access them when they need to. So, that's a good thing. But, the resources are limited and there's just so many people here in a widespread rural community, that it's hard for them to access that.

Anna: And, so, what are some of the things that you're doing in your own program?

Lori: So, in conjunction with doing our food security screening that Karen mentioned, it, it brings to light a lot of different needs that our families have. It also brings to light the fact that many of them, due to relationship building, have not brought those forward, yet. So, continual working with the families and talking with them brings this to light more and more. As our family advocates hear about this, then they, they refer them to the proper places. Give them lists of banks or WIC data or the SNAP program information. And they help families to connect with that. But, also, they help families to understand how they can advocate for themselves.

So, that, when we're no longer in the picture, families can continue to do this on their own and take care of their families [Inaudible] day to day basis. Once they're enrolled in the program, we have a number of things that, in conjunction with our parent leadership committee. After having looked at the statistics from our screening results, have come up with some, a number of ways to enhance the nutrition program that we have done in the past. So, one of the big things that we were able to do, was to start a school pantry. Here, in Oregon, the state of Oregon has donors that provide money directly to pantries, so that schools can provide food boxes for the families of the children that are enrolled in their program. And this is at no cost to the school. Which is really, a great thing for our parents. Because oftentimes they don't have time to go to other places. Or even to know where they're at. So, having right here onsite where their kids are, is really, a benefit. Through the school pantry, the, Oregon state has provided us with refrigerators, freezers, stainless steel racks, etc. so, that we have a full, a full-service food pantry to, for our families to access.

So, we order food from the local food bank and it's delivered right to our door twice, twice a month. Families are able to select the food that they want. And that food is meant to last three to five days. And it supplements, is a supplement to the food stamps or WIC services or anything else that they may receive. We have distributions every two weeks for families. And we serve anywhere from ten to 30 families at each of our food distributions. Also, parents volunteer and help us put on, to put on the food pantries. Which is excellent for them. They're, and our families are able to choose the food that they would like, as opposed to other food banks where they're just handed a box of food. And they take it whether they really, need, it or know what to do with it, oftentimes as well. We also have a produce truck that comes monthly in the summer.

So, they, they get a wide array of summer produce. Anything from apples to carrots to squash, for parents to choose from. Our parents, our parent committee also feels that it's important to increase our nutrition training for the parents that we're serving. So, we implemented, implemented several other projects. A big one is Cooking Matters classes. And I see a number of you typing in that, that you do Cooking Matters classes. So, you know how important and how well-liked they are by the parents. Cooking Matters teachers, teaches families to shop for and cook healthy meals on a budget. So, they're, they're learning a number of things in these classes. Our parents also get to take home a bag of groceries after each, after each class, for whatever meal they prepared. So, that's very helpful to them, as well. We implemented a parent activity called, "Grab and Go". Which is a really, fun little activity that our parents love.

Typically, on our menu there's something on it that maybe is not real familiar to the families. As far as, as a, as a food. And so, our food services supervisor prepares a dish of some sort that includes that, that new food. And when parents come in to pick up their kids, they get to sample the recipe. And then they get to take home the recipe so that they can cook, maybe try it at home. And with the idea that if you work with your kids at home on a new food when it's presented in the classroom, as a new menu item, the kids are more likely to eat that. And they really, do enjoy that a lot. Of course, we send out newsletters. We hype those up a lot to include lots of food activities to do at home with children. Lots of recipes.

We also provide food handlers cards to parents if they're interested in that. We, also have, our families also have access to a registered dietician, who can work with them individually on concerns about their family's nutrition. The parents also thought it was important to make sure that the kids are aware of nutrition. Good nutrition habits. And how important food is. So, one of the things that has been very beneficial and fun here, is that we have a garden project, as Karen was mentioning. Each classroom has a plot. A raised bed that they're responsible for to plant and water and weed and harvest. We have an experienced gardener who donates some time to assist with the plan. Such as, what will be planted in what plot at what time by who. When do you harvest? How do you harvest? Things that, that not everyone necessarily knows.

Our teachers really, love to participate in this activity because the kids love it so much. It helps the kids to better understand the importance of food. Oftentimes kids go home with radishes or kale stuck in their pockets because they want to show their parents what they're growing, and they're very proud of that. Parents also assist with the gardens as well. And then, from the garden, the things that they grow there, is moved right into the classroom as food experiences. So, during harvest teacher incorporate that produce into food activities with the kids in the classroom. Kids are able to see the entire food cycle from planting to the table. For example, one of the things that we grow here is popcorn. Most of the kids did not know where the popcorn they ate even comes from. Now they can see the entire process. And that's, that's an activity of course, we only do with the older kids due to choking. But it's, it's, it's really, a fun activity for them. Another, another example; pumpkins. Where does the pumpkin pie that you eat at Thanksgiving come from? Now they know. So, we're continually looking at ways to increase the quality of our nutritional services. And each year we look at adding something and always running it through our parent committees. Because they have great ideas.

[Multiple speakers]

Karen: Lori, this is Karen. Said, you know, about the Grab and Go, which I think was, was really, fun is, is that they have gotten ground chicken. And a lot of the families were like, "What do I do with ground chicken?" So, you know, they weren't really, willing to take that. So, at the Grab and Go, what they did was they, they made chili out of ground chicken. And they gave little samples to parent and them as they were coming in and out and dropping their kids off, and those different types of things. And they did the same thing with quinoa. They were like, "What is quinoa?" And once they were able to sample it they're like, "This is pretty good." And then, so, they do that kind of in an ongoing basis. Which I think is a good, a great way to introduce different food options and so, that people can really, understand that you can cook different things, and, and have them really, taste well. Which I think is a great experience.

Anna: Yeah. That's great. And while the conversation continues to just fly back and forth in the general chat, one of things that I just wanted to mention to everybody. I know you are all interested in seeing the food screening questions. And we have everybody's email addresses through the registration system. So, we will be more than happy to send that resource out to everybody after the webinar. And, also, want to put in a plug for everyone to stick around after the top of the hour, for an additional 15 minutes or so, to just continue sharing resources virtually through the chat. So, I know several other resources and organizations have, have typed in and piped up. So, let, we can certainly continue this information exchange afterwards, as well.

At this point, I wanted to just kind of do a quick sort of recap of all the really, exciting and, and innovative things that we're, we've been hearing from our, our presenters from Oregon. And just, think a little bit about, you know, what, what are some, some of the things that you, all of you participants can do back home in your program. So, you know, I think the first thing that we heard that is the really, most important first step, is to ask the families. You know, the important questions. And you can do that by adding some questions into your nutrition assessments, if you're doing that with children and families. During your family goal-setting processes. And then, in, in other types of conversations. Either formally or informally. And really, using those opportunities to, you know, approach parents in a way that helps them to feel safe and trusting in your relationships with them. And really, you know, using relationships as an opportunity to open up the door for some of these more sensitive conversations. You know, it also brings to mind, for those of you who have been with us in previous webinars. The Building Financial Capabilities Guide for community programs that was developed by the Assets for Independence program.

And the framework that they called the Refer a Partner or Do It Yourself Framework, and you know, it really, can apply to not only financial capabilities planning, but also food security assistance. And, and other, other types of economic mobility efforts that you may be doing in, in your programs to help your families. So, for example, we heard about, you know, referring families to a local food bank, or helping them to apply for SNAP or WIC benefits. You know, there are opportunities for learning about and then informing families about savings programs at your local farmer's markets or grocery stores. It could look like engaging with your local farmer's markets or grocery stores or a local food bank or community garden to partner in some way. And we also heard examples of doing it yourself. For example, operating a food bank onsite. Or growing produce in a garden and using that, not only to help provide food, but also nutrition education and, and other, you know, useful resources and supports for families. So, at this point I'd like to switch to our second poll.

And in the last few minutes that we have, we're curious to know what other programs, what, what other programs are doing around food security. So, if you could all just take a moment to look at the questions and I'll read through them. But, you know, we'd love to hear from you. What your program may currently be doing. If any of the following. And so, you know, you could be asking questions about hunger and food security in your nutrition screening and assessments. Or during your family goal-setting. You could be referring families to a local food bank. Or helping them apply for SNAP and WIC. You can maybe be informing families about different savings programs, or other opportunities to stretch their dollars farther at farmer's markets or local grocery stores. Engaging in partnerships in, in other ways with farmer's markets or grocery stores. Or engaging with a local food bank. Or community garden. Or operating a food bank onsite. Or growing produce onsite. And of course, if you're doing other things that you think are related, please let us know.

Type in the chat box and tell us what you're doing. Because we're always looking for good ideas that we can share. Oh, and I apologize. It looks like the poll is set up for only one answer. So, just pick your favorite of what you're doing in your program. And we'll see how that shakes out. Sorry about that. Anyway. So, it's looking like I'm going to start broadcasting the results. It's looking like we have about a quarter of you saying we help families apply for SNAP and WIC. That's great. And a quarter of you are

saying you refer families to a local food bank. And some of you are including questions about hunger and food security in your nutrition screening and assessments.

And let's see. I'm not sure. Are we seeing any other? Oh, yeah. Sorry about the multiple options. I'm looking down at the general chat for any other, other categories of other that are coming through. Let's see. Someone says partnered with [Inaudible] Kids to provide nutrition classes for parents. Great. Kim Grant, she says her program is doing at least four of the nine. That's fantastic. Which ones are you doing Kim? If you have time to type it in, that would be awesome. Let's see. Partnering with local food bank. And coordinating with childcare centers to become food bank partners. Okay. Great. Grocery store tours. Wow. This is all great. Well. Keep, keep those ideas and those examples coming. Because we, again, would love to hear more about what you're doing. And at this point I'd like to switch things back over and just actually allow time for questions for our presenters. And I know that a lot of questions have already come through. So, I'm going to just scroll back to see if I can find some that were raised before. Let's see. I see one. Let's see. Someone asked, "For those providing donated food to their clients, are you counting the donated food as non-federal share?" And I wonder if that's something, Misha, is that something that's come up in your program that you were able to do?

Misha: We are not doing that. As, like an in-kind donation type of?

Anna: Yes. Yeah.

Misha: There? We haven't done that. If we're allowed to, yeah, that'd be great. We're always looking for more in-kinds.

Lori: And this is Lori. I'm not sure that, that's an allowable Head Start cost. Because it's not something that Head Start, Head Start would not buy food for, for families outside of the agency. So, I'm not sure it's allowable. It's something; it's something we could certainly look at. Yeah.

Anna: Mm hmm.

Karen: The, the, the other thing I see on here a lot. And it is, is that people are asking about the interview questions is, is that, we have, and I think I sent those to you. So, in order to, kind of set the stage, one of the things that I think is really, important, is to provide training for your social services or your family advocates. And so, we've put together a whole training that utilizes adult learning principles and. As well as, you know, the opportunity to kind of ask those questions in small group work and kind of set the stage pretty, nicely.

And we'd be more than happy to share our training on. There are some modules that, that they can actually, do online, so that they can really, understand, "what is food insecurity" and "what is hunger" and some of those things that we talked about. Like food deserts and, and those different types of things. So, we're more than willing to share our training and some of our resources. And, and our questions so that they can access those. And we spent about three hours, three to four hours, and I think it's about a half a day really, working with our family advocates. And kind of setting the stage. And,

also, showing that, showing that video, "A Place at the Table", where American winter, that really, talks about what it looks like in America.

Anna: Thank, thanks, Karen. Someone else asked the question about that refer a partner, do it yourself question, and resource. And we put the link, it, it's the Financial Capabilities framework from the, so, Raquan just posted it in the general chat. Let's see. What other questions do we have, before we jump to resources. We have a, just a few more minutes. Let's see. Another question somebody raised was: "Can Head Start family workers contact local regional farms to try and arrange food shares? Is there a process we have to go through? What was the small amount of red tape you mentioned?" Can one of you talk about that?

Karen: Well, you know. In, here in Oregon, we have a couple of things that are going on within our, our WIC program. There's actually a website that can, that we try to keep up to date on. Because when families can go use their vouchers, then they can actually get double the amount. So, instead of getting \$7.50, they can get either \$12.50 or \$15. And so, there's a website for that. The other thing is that there is a website in Oregon that's kind of like match.com, except for what it does is it matches growers. And it comes through the Farm to Table program here in Oregon. And, and I saw some, I saw some of the, some of the questions here around the Farm to Preschool or, or, or Farm to Table program. I would connect with them.

Because through our Farm to Preschool program, if, for instance, in Hood River, we had a, we had a farmer that had a bunch of little apples. And he couldn't sell those little apples to market. But the Head Start program really, was interested in buying those apples. So, what they do is they post up on a website about all their extra inventory. And then you can see what that is. And then you can go access that, those different types of things, as well. The other thing is to think about what's happening, kind of locally. And how you can increase your dollars. Like, for instance, we buy an entire cow, in central Oregon. And we buy directly from the farmer. And it's all USDA and meets all those guidelines and those different types of things to really, kind of think about, kind of saving, saving some money. So, I would check out those. I'd check out your Farm to Preschool program in your state. And what are they doing. And how can I get connected with them. And, and, and they might have some resource for gardening, and what growers have. And how you connect and can buy things locally.

Anna: Thanks, Karen. That, that actually brings, brings up one or the resources that we have highlighted in the, the box on your left-hand side at the bottom. And that is the No Hungry, I'm sorry, the No Kid Hungry campaign. If you click on that link; it should take you a member locator. Which basically it helps you find well. So, the No Kid Hungry network, I'm sorry, is managed by the nonprofit organization Share Our Strength. And it, it is made up of private citizens, government officials, business leaders and others that are providing hunger solutions in, in their communities. So, you can use that to try and find organizations in you states and communities that may be actively working on food security issues. And maybe, you know, willing and able and ready to partner with you. So, that's one place that you can, you can go. And of course, there's also the Farm to Preschool that we've already talked about. There are a lot of sort of new things going on around the country. So, I encourage you to check out the information there. Couple of other resources.

Feeding America has Child Hunger Fact Sheets. If you're looking for information about data. Resources on food insecurity and hunger. And fact sheets about child hunger. The, also the Economic Policy Institute's Family Budget Calculator, can help you. It measures the income that families need in order to attain a secure and modest standard of living, by estimating the community specific cost of housing, food, childcare, transportation and, and other things. For about 618 different U.S. communities and ten different family compositions. So, that's sometimes a useful tool for helping understand the situation for families in your community. Melanie, do you want to quickly check through the, the list of the federal programs that we have mentioned [Inaudible]?

Melanie: Sure. And, your local food banks can also provide you with information on the programs. But, SNAP is the largest federal nutrition program. And it provides families with benefits each month that they can use to buy groceries. Like, fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy products, cereal, all that. One myth is that you can use it at restaurants. You can't. It can only be used at food retailers. WIC serves pregnant women, postpartum women, infants and children up to age five. And gives you access to a specific assortment of foods that are considered necessary for young kids and pregnant women, to promote their health. And then, I'm sure many of you are already familiar with the Child and Adult Care Food Program, CACFP. But it provides reimbursements for meals that meet federal nutrition requirements, served at childcare centers. And in family care homes. Kids in Head Start are automatically eligible for free meals through CACFP. And then, just one other note, is that if you're working with families that have older kids, it can be good to remind them that they can enroll in the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program, to receive free or reduced price meals for those kids, just to take off some of the burden on the overall families [Inaudible].

Anna: Right. Great. And of course, I want to end, end the resources section by again, plugging our, our colleagues at the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness. Their nutrition page has several resources, including resources on nutrition assessment, food and nutrition assistance, and nutrition education. So, and there's more coming online all the time. So, feel free to check that out. And hopefully, you'll find it useful. So, we hit the top of the hour. I just want to wrap things up. Thank you to everyone who participated in today's event. To our speakers, to Melanie, Karen, Misha, Lori, and Gabriella. And thank you to all of my colleagues at the National Center for your help behind the scenes and all the planning and managing the technology today. And of course, all the participants, for joining us and making this a really, exciting and interactive and, and informative conversation. As I said before, we invite you to stay on for a few extra minutes to continue networking among yourselves. If you have questions. If you have best practices you want to share or additional resources, keep typing those in and sharing them with each other.

We'll keep the lines open for at least another 15 minutes. And again, a reminder that we will be back again next month. Our conversation will be focusing on the importance of helping families understand the importance of building good credit, and strategies to avoid high interest lending products and other debt traps. And of course, we will have the recording from today's webinar and the presentation slides and the resources available on the Head Start PFCE website in a couple of weeks. So, and in the meantime, you can go there and find previous, recordings from previous webinars, as well. So, thank you, everybody again, for joining us today. And we look forward to continuing the conversation with you.

Thanks.

[End video]