

Choosing a Parenting Curriculum: Lessons Learned
Implementing a Parenting Curriculum Using Implementation Science Webinar Series

Shela Merchant Jooma: Hello again and welcome to the fourth webinar in our series Implementing a Parenting Curriculum Using Implementation Science. Today's webinar will focus on lessons learned in the process of choosing a parenting curriculum. My name is Shela Merchant, and I'm with the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. So I'd like to have each of our wonderful presenters introduce themselves today starting with the one and only Kiersten Beigel.

Kiersten Beigel: Good afternoon, everyone. It's really nice to be with you all. Happy Friday. My name is Kiersten Beigel. I work at the Office of Head Start. I am a social worker by profession and have been with the Office of Head Start since 2007 and on the lead office on all things family related, so that's me.

Cathy Ayoub: Cathy. Thank you. Hi, everybody. I'm Cathy Ayoub. And I'm one of the principal investigators at the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement and have the privilege of working on the Parenting Curricula Project, so hopefully, holding some interesting information about all these parenting curricula. Brandi.

Brandi Black Thacker: Hi, Everybody. This is Brandi Black Thacker. I'm the director of T&TA and Collaboration at the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. I'm always honored to share time with Kiersten, Cathy, and Shela, but we are very excited to be with you in the fourth and final installment of this series. And you, if you've been following us, you know that we changed the plan of this one because we've been listening to you. You wanted to hear a little bit more about lessons learned around the parenting curriculum idea, and today, we're going to bring you some new updated information, answer some questions, so we're excited to jump right on in.

Shela: Thanks, Brandi. This is Shela Merchant Jooma. You heard my voice at the beginning of the webinar. I'm also at the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, and I'll be your moderator for this afternoon or this morning, depending on where you are. So a quick overview of the objectives. As Brandi mentioned, we want to review some of our lessons learned about choosing and implementing a parenting curriculum. We want to be responsive to the questions that we've been hearing. We're going to spend some time exploring some of the unanswered questions about this process, and at the end, we'll discuss some resources that might support program selection and implementation of parenting curriculum efforts.

Brandi: Thank you, Shela. Well, this is one of my favorite pieces of evidence to know that this is a process that we have permission to take good time on, in, around, and by, as you heard them say before, it's not linear, it's messy, you can go forward and backward, some of these stages overlap, but the thing I love about this the most is the total implementation time to teach really does take time to integrate. And as we apply that concept to the parenting curriculum, it gives us real permission to first and foremost go in and explore, to really do research, to think meaningfully about what you want to choose. Or if you've chosen, if it really fits, now that you're getting into it, so we just want to anchor ourselves back into these four stages. And in the first three webinars, we actually dedicated time to each of these, if you want to learn more details about them, and certainly, we can't do any webinar without Kiersten's voice and the standards.

Kiersten: Well, you probably all know the standard by heart now, but let me say a couple of things before we just review this standard on the parenting curriculum requirements. You know, this, kind of, as Brandi was saying with the four stages, you know, we had only just realized that, you know, as a field, we're all kind of coming together around this information in a new way. And while some programs have been doing parenting curriculum delivery for many, many years now, other programs are really just looking at this for the first time, thinking about the cost implications, etcetera. You know, our leadership at the Office of Head Start really wanted to make sure that we have the time to really work through a lot of our questions and to get some better TA and to pull together the latest, greatest information. And so that's why you're not going to see the parenting curriculum requirements in the monitoring protocols this year. So we're not going to be looking at that in monitoring.

And that's really to give the program the time to kind of figure this out and to do it in a way that feels right and kind of best attuned to your families and communities. You know, we realize that there may be some fits and starts with this. We realize some of you may be reconsidering and reevaluating choices you've already made, you're asking each other, you know, about whether, you know, your sister and brother programs are implementing parenting curriculum that are working, and so we see all of that, we recognize all of that, and it's all okay. You know, one of the things that's really tricky about this for us in the Office and also with the National Center is while we're trying to provide training and technical assistance on the parenting curricula information, it's very hard, because we can't talk a lot about individual curricula, Individual curriculum, I said that incorrect, my matching was off there. We have to really kind of honor that. There's a lot of different curricula out there, and we can't, you know, endorse one over another, that kind of thing. So what we do is we try to provide checklists and information, and as many of you may or may not know, this center has been systematically gathering information about all the relevant parenting curricula that we know about and that you know about and kind of putting those through a process of analysis with our checklist. But we can't really talk about specific curriculum until we're done with that review. And the center has been working really hard at that, and we're hoping that we'll have more of that kind of information available to grantees in the New Year. Okay, so as Brandi said, we are pivoting a little bit here. We're going to try to focus in on these questions.

And I think the things to think about for the standard, let me go back one second to the standard 'cause I know I didn't really get into it too much. If you can see some terms there in bold, opportunities for parents, research-based parenting curriculum, knowledge it gives parents and builds on their knowledge, and it gives them an opportunity to practice. So these are some things that we are trying to provide additional clarification around in Training and Technical Assistance, and we know there are questions. We're going to try to get into those a little bit more as we go. But just to kind of summarize the questions that we have been hearing, just so we're all on the same page. Here's a few, they're on the slide here, the things you've been asking over the last many months. And we also invite you to add yours to the mix. We've seen a couple come in already in chat. We're pulling those aside as well. But just what's the difference between a curriculum and an intervention? Can we have a partner or a community partner do this or do we have to do it? What do opportunities really mean? Does home-based curriculum and classroom curriculum, do those count? You know, what other questions do you have that you don't see here? Feel free, again, to put those in chat. I'm going to stop there and let people kind of type. But in the meantime, I think we're going to move on to talk a little bit about a review of the checklist.

Brandi: Okay, so you're exactly right. We're going to be going through this checklist. You heard about it today. And you guys may have seen this from before. So based on what we've been learning from you, we wanted to revisit it and really unpack it in ways that is a bit more concrete. We have a lot of history with this checklist now. We've learned a lot not only from the research that our research and evaluation team has done but also from just hearing from you and what you've experienced as you've been comparing curricula, so we wanted here to give a history and a little bit of background on each of these characteristics, but we also have the one and only, the fabulous, with a beautiful brain, Dr. Cathy Ayoub is on the line, and she has expertise around all of these pieces and parts, and she can show us examples about what these physically look like. So if you are still searching, looking, shopping, or something that's just the right fit for you, you'll have that in your back pocket. Or if you've already chosen something and you just want to make sure it's going to be the best fit, you can have that in your toolbox as well. Cathy, Kiersten, anything else you guys would add here?

Cathy: I don't think so, Brandi. Let's do it.

Brandi: Let's do it. I know you'd be excited, Cathy. So let's just jump in. As Kiersten said, we are collecting the questions that you're offering in chat, these are really great. Some of which you just saw on the last slide. I'm seeing a little bit of a trend and pattern already. So let's get to those. And then we might collect some new ones as we go, but we are collecting those off to the side and we'll revisit those as best we can. But let's start at the top. So, Cathy, that first piece of the checklist really is about a set of structured, sequenced learning activities for parents that focus on a couple of domains that I know for the purpose of this piece of the conversation, we really want to start with what you see here on this slide, that set of structured, sequenced pieces, bits, what would you say to us about? Why is this important? And how does this become born?

Cathy: Actually, this is one of the core definitions of a parenting curriculum that it is a set of structured and sequenced sessions that include learning activities that are specifically for parents. And the word "structured" is really there because each session has a particular structure and there's also a particular order to the sessions. Now there are some curricula that say you need to do sessions 1 and 2, and then you can choose, you know, in 3, 4, and 5, you can change the order. And there are some that have 29 or 30 sessions, and they let you mix and match after you've done some basics. There are other parenting curricula that really say, you know, we've got these 8 sessions or these 5 sessions and you really need to follow them. The aim here is to be able to deliver the parenting curriculum in a way that it's been developed because that way, you know it's going to be effective. And so that's one of the reasons for looking at structured and sequenced. Again here, one of the key ways to figure that out is to actually see if the developer will share a table of contents. You know, and I have some kind of made-up examples here. But here's one that starts with resilience. So there's a session on introducing resilience at the beginning. Strengthening caregiving, and then it gets into strengthening children's skills and protective factors, and then promoting resilience in an adult caregiver. So for this particular parenting curriculum, you can hear this curriculum is all about resilience. And you see that there are sequenced sessions that the developer has actually tried out with groups of parents — to really make sure that it works. And what you really want to look at in these structured and sequenced learning activities, you want to know what the content is and you also want to know about how the facilitator should actually deliver the information. Let me stop there, Brandi, and see what kinds of questions you have or others have.

Brandi: Well, I think that's very helpful, Cathy. And we'll certainly watch for our colleagues as they start to tell any more details. And one of the things that's come up a lot, we talk to you guys a lot not only virtually but out in the big wide world, and one of the major questions we've had for us is really related to this next slide. And I have to say this has been one that actually has been a bit of a game-changer once folks have the knowledge behind this one. If you're thinking about that checklist you remember that it said not only with a set of structured, sequenced set of learning opportunities, it should touch two or more of these following domains that you see on the screen. The big learning here that's really set our understanding apart or the whole intent of this seminar and what's really gonna help as you compare what you're looking at the parent is the beneficiary here, but we all do our work in service of the little bitty ones, but for the parent curriculum piece, all of these domains of learning are for the actual parent. Of course, there's going to be overlap 'cause of what we do in service of the child. But, Cathy, can you tell us a little bit more about some specifics not only with these domains of learning? And certainly, Kiersten, feel free to jump in as you'd like to with your federal perspective but certainly emphasizing the parent as the beneficiary here.

Kiersten: Sure. These domains of learning were actually pulled from across a great deal of literature. And they could be organized in a number of different ways is the first thing that you need to know. So one of the reasons that you're not just — You aren't just looking for the word nurturing, there may be lots of different ways of describing nurturing. For example, there may be one curriculum that's all about attachment that might really be great for infants and toddlers, and it might really be focused on nurturing, warmth, responsiveness, attachment, might be focused on self-regulation, it might be focused on social emotional skills, so there are lots of different words that you might hear to describe nurturing, and part of your job is to go in and look at a curriculum and get a sense of whether or not, for example, this particular domain is really represented. One of the things that we know is that the more comprehensive the parenting curriculum is, in other words, the more it really delves into each of these five domains of parent learning, the more likely parents are to be able to walk away with information and with activities and with practice that will actually help improve their parenting. So when you're really looking for a strong parenting curriculum, you want to make sure that you're looking at a curriculum that covers at least two of those domains. Now some of them cover all of them.

By the way, many curricula cover these domains and they also have kind of a front end where they really talk about parenting and parent self-care or stress or coping as a parent. And in those cases, that's actually family well-being support for parents in the context of thinking about these domains. And, you know, we can talk about what some of these other domains are if any of you've had questions or you wonder, so please make sure that you send us questions. But again, we're not just looking for parenting curricula that have these particular words in them, but we're really looking at making sure that the parenting curriculum conveys that construct and spends time — Really describing and supporting parents and help them practice the domains of learning. And as Brandi said, this is all about what the parent does. And we're so used to hopping to thinking about, "What about the child?" That's very important, but with a parenting curriculum, this is a different focus. It's really a focus on what is the parent learning. So we talk about school readiness with children. Here we're talking about parenting readiness with parents.

Brandi: And, Cathy, I love the way that you say this because one of the things, and well, I'm going to mash up a couple of points, so you guys know me by now, so that's not a shock. My mind is busy. I was thinking about what Kiersten said at the beginning of our time together, and then Cathy what you're

saying here about, you know, this is really is in service of our families and then what Kiersten said at the beginning about, you know, we really can't endorsing anything. So we've then taken out this decision-making checklist and folks that had questions about specific curricula. What we've been doing is very transparently saying we're going to answer your questions with questions.

So we've been saying things like, "Okay, when you look at your parenting workshop, for instance, as part of the curricula," curricula or curriculum, whichever is appointed for all, "that you are considering and you try to, for instance, look at some of that and see how it might fall into one of these domains. How does that work for you? Can you make connections to some from the content that you're going to do over time to the parents?" Because what we found is some of the curricula actually really is focused more on the child and the child's development. But that's been a great aha moment for folks. So this one, for me, has been a bit of a game-changer. All right, well, let's transition 'cause this next one really does overlap a bit. Let's look at this slide. Cathy, this one's for you, I think. When I see this picture, when I see the opportunities for parents to actually practice, it makes me think there like, we need to be able to offer families multiple modalities, perhaps different ways to practice together or individually. So from your expert mind, Cathy, how would you say it much more articulately than myself?

Cathy: I think the issue here is that there are lots of ways to engage parents in active learning. And this is why one of the things that we really talk to you about considering is not only what are the parenting domains in a parenting curriculum but also -- Well, the parenting domains which is a "what." But what about the "how?" How do parents sitting in a group like the one on the slide, how do they best learn and be able to take that information and actually turn it into skills and turn it into practice with their children? And we know that one of the key ways that this happens is when they actually have to get up and practice these skills. So this is one of the key things that you want to look for in a parenting curriculum.

And I was so pleased that whoever wrote the standard was wise enough to make this one of the key points in the standard. So this is really more than getting up and having parents listen to a lecture or have the facilitator give some guidance. It's really about asking them to role-play a given situation, inviting them to have discussion. There are even parenting curricula that begin, for example, with the parents as a group, and they meet, and then they bring their children in and they actually work with their children on the areas of parenting that they talked about. Oftentimes, they may want to pair up and practice with each other or they may want to divide up into small groups and talk. Sometimes there is one child that might come into the group with a facilitator and have all the parents watch as, you know, one parent works with his or her particular child, and then oftentimes, there's homework. Now homework alone doesn't fully meet the criteria for Opportunities for Parents to Practice, but oftentimes, parents may practice two or three things in a group session, and then they're asked to go try it at home and to come back the next time and really have an active discussion about how this might work. So again, the idea of Opportunities for Parents to Practice is because this is really what we know from adult learning research as the very best way to help any of us as human beings to learn skills and actually be able to practice what we learned.

Brandi: Well, this is really helpful, Cathy. Let's look at this next piece here on the — Oops, I think I skipped one too many or two of us were doing this at once. This one, I got a bunch of questions, but I know there's an enhancement here. Tell us more, Cathy.

Cathy: Okay. Well, this is one of the key differences between the revised decision-making checklist and that is that we're really talking about three or more sessions. And part of that was because we reviewed all of the parenting curricula out there and there really isn't one that just offers two sessions. Matter of fact, most of them don't -- don't even offer five or six at least. So this, with three sessions, it really gives you time to have an introduction, to get to know parents, to build a relationship, to really talk about and to have parents practice in whatever way the developers have decided that's helpful, the skills that are part of the content. And then to come back at least for a third time and practice what you've learned and also have some closure. So this is really the reason for three sessions. And this is one of the ways a parenting curriculum is very different than doing, you know, a parent night or even a single socialization session for home-based families. Each of those activities with parents can be very helpful. But we know that parents really need to continue to come for multiple sessions in order to really solidify the skills and make a change in their practice. Brandi, back to you.

Brandi: Thanks, Cathy. All right, well, this is the one that we've had a little curiosity about 'cause folks are trying to process time limited the 3 sessions to 12 to 16 we get ongoing? Tell us more, Cathy.

Cathy: Okay. Most of the parenting curricula that can be delivered to a group of parents are what we call time limited. In other words, the developer suggests five sessions, seven sessions, eight sessions, as I said, sometimes there is an obligatory three that all parents need to come to and then you as a facilitator have the ability to say, "I think they could use session four, seven, and eight," for example. In other parenting curricula, it's not quite that flexible, so you want to take a look at flexibility or not. But all of these curricula are developed in time limited. In other words, they say, if you do 10 sessions, you are good to go. If you deliver 10 sessions the way we describe delivering them, then you can feel pretty comfortable depending on the level of research that once you do that, you can see the outcomes in parents that we say you're supposed to be finding. And that's why most parenting curricula are developed.

However, when we really started to look at or when developers started to look at what was the most effective way, particularly, to work with home-based programs, they decided that what many home-based programs really might be able to use is an ongoing curriculum. In other words, you continue to deliver the parenting curriculum at a home visit for as long as the parent, parent's family, and the child or children are engaging in the home visitation process. Now there are some ongoing home visiting parenting curricula that do have a limit, and oftentimes, they're limited by age. They may say, "These are applicable for children birth to 3." So you know that that parenting curriculum really serves those children. Now most of those ongoing parenting curricula are embedded in home visiting curricula. And I know that there was a question early on about what's the difference between a parenting curriculum and a home visiting curriculum. So if it's okay, Brandi, I'm going to try to address that.

Brandi: Yeah. And you and Kiersten may want to step in too. A parenting curriculum is just what it says it is. It's a curriculum that addresses those areas of parenting and is focused on teaching parenting. Oftentimes though, some of the more comprehensive home visiting curriculum have a component that is about parenting. That home visiting curriculum may also have a component about how do you work with the adults around their own well-being and how do you really work with the parent around some of the child's needs that are not directly related to supporting the parent in learning and being able to practice parenting skills. So any time you're looking at a home visiting curriculum, you really want to also ask is there a parenting curriculum that has really been tried out at least through a descriptive study,

which is what we're calling research-based, so that you know that those components are built-in. Now there are parenting curricula that are not attached to any home visiting curricula, and they're free-standing, and they may be ongoing or they may be time limited, but they're add-ons. And so for those of you who are involved in home-based, and the choices in the way that you disentangle this is a little bit different than those of you in center-based programs where you're most likely looking at something that's time limited and that serves families or parenting groups. Brandi, Kiersten, do you want to add anything to that or clarify?

Kiersten: No, I think that was great. I do think there was a question about, you know, where would you hold a parenting curriculum for home-based, could you use socialization time or parent community time, and I think, you know, programs really have, at their disposal, creative ways to do that. So I mean, those seem like really great options for considering a place to embed a more structured time limited or ongoing parenting curriculum if in fact the home-based curriculum you're using isn't really offering, as Cathy just kind of described so well.

Brandi: I know that's been one of the biggest questions that we've been receiving in the field to Cathy and Kiersten and it coincides with something we've clearly already mentioned about parents as the primary and intended audience as the beneficiary. But, Cathy, there's some other sort of intent here.

Cathy: Exactly, Brandi. The aim here is that these parenting classes or the parenting work with a home visitor and a parent around parenting need to be delivered directly to parents as the intended and primary audience. And first, this is to differentiate from the kinds of curricula that may be intended for children. For example, Creative Curriculum is a curriculum for children. And I'm actually using a name here because it's not a parenting curriculum. You know, it's intended for work by teachers in classrooms, and yes, there are activity sheets and there's information to share with parents, but it is not a parenting curriculum that is primarily intended to help support the learning of parenting skills with parents and family members. Now the other thing we actually are talking about delivered to parents as an intended and primary audience, there are some developers of parenting curricula that actually have some very nice models for including parents and family members. There are others that really want to, that suggest narrowing the view because they want one parent to work directly with the child and do some intensive work around attachment. So you, each in your own programs, have to decide what it is that you want in the context of this delivery primarily to parents. And we really are talking about delivery in the group as we see it or during a home visit to the people in that home that are receiving the home visit.

Brandi: Cathy, this next one, that's coming up is certainly one that we've already heard on this webinar. If we can deliver within the context of our program or in community?

Cathy: And I can come in here. Kiersten, you maybe, too. My understanding is that you can do either, but you can't just hand this off, you can't just hand off participation in a parenting curriculum to your community organization, be it social services or other organizations, that you really do need to do an assessment and make sure that the parents in your program are really going to be able to benefit from the parenting curriculum or curricula, curricula is plural, that are offered in your community or community setting. So the other piece of this particular part of the checklist about implementing parenting curriculum early childhood centers and community based organizations. The notion here is that you're really looking at what we, for the most part, call universal parenting curricula. And those are really parenting curricula that can be offered to a number of parents from a number of different backgrounds with a number of different issues. And it's appropriate for those to be delivered in a Head

Start center or an Early Head Start center. That's really different than some of the highly therapeutic parenting interventions that can only be delivered by a mental health specialist and often have a treatment component, a clinical treatment component. So there really is a difference. And so you really want to take a look at what would you feel comfortable implementing in your program or in a similar community-based organization. Now that doesn't mean that social service organizations aren't implementing some of these and that you can't use them as a resource or you can't refer families there because my understanding is you can. And I'll trust Brandi and Kiersten to come in and correct me if I'm wrong. Let me stop there.

Kiersten: Should we go on to manual?

Cathy: Okay. So why a manual? A manual is really a detailed guide that really helps the facilitator describe what the hope is that parents will be learning, what are the domains, what's the content but then also how to present the information, what are those really great activities or exercises or role plays that work, that help parents learn, and then in what order do you present the information. And again, you're looking for the manual because it is your guide and it should really include these three components. Often you can tell this, by the way, if you take a look again at the table of contents in the manual or if you ask the developer, "If you can't share your manual, can you at least share your table of contents?"

And so here is an example of a table of content. First, there is an introduction about what is the parenting curriculum, then how do you plan for the group, what do you need to know to lead the group, what kind of process issues are there, things like how do you do consultation with a parent, how do you develop a collaborative relationship, what kind of strategies help present process problems, how do you respond to questions that parents ask, how do you use active skills training, how do you set homework tasks, and what do you do around troubleshooting. So you can already get a sense, and this is just a small part of what you might find in a large manual that would tell you something about — That was about the how to deliver, what you might have an introductory piece that talks about helping children develop or positive parenting. And then if you were getting into discipline, how do you manage behavior and misbehavior, how do you plan ahead to anticipate issues with your children, how do you develop positive parenting strategies, what are those strategies, how do they work. So this is what a manual does. And comprehensive and well-developed parenting curriculum does have a full manual that really provides you with the guide.

Brandi: Hey, Cathy. I know this isn't totally connected to where we are right now, it's actually user manual for the parenting curriculum. But I know that we continue to get questions about the compendium. And what we want to say to folks is that you are not bound by our compendium of parenting interventions. And, Cathy, you're one of the birth mammas of that. Do you want to give folks a little bit of background? And certainly, Kiersten, you as well, how that was born, when it was born, and the flexibility that we have today?

Cathy: Sure, let me start, and then, Kiersten, you can -- The parenting compendium came out in September 2015 before the standards. It was actually written not only as an informational tool for all of you in Head Start and Early Head Start but really for programs across the administration of children and families. And it essentially is a -- We put together a group of what you would now call parenting curricula, we, back in 2015, called them parenting interventions, in an effort to categorize them and to describe them a bit. Now, the requirement for research evidence was very high, so all of the parenting

curricula in the parenting compendium have to meet either the promising or the evidence-based levels of research. And again, this was really developed as something that we hoped would help the field and inform the field. But it is just one of a number of different compendia or lists that might be helpful to you. And there are a number of registries out there that have also done an assessment, a review of parenting curricula, and I'd urge you to look at them under parenting curricula or parenting interventions, and they also have categorized these different parenting offerings. Each registry does it in a little bit of a different way, and it's just another source of information for you, but none of them contain the universe of parenting interventions. So you certainly can look well beyond the parenting compendium or beyond what you find on any of the registries.

Brandi: Well, Cathy, I realize that it would be helpful here to do two things, one, let's cover quickly this last little bit, this piece, last piece from the actual checklist, and then many of you have had questions about the research-based definition and you're talking about your actual chosen or hoping to choose curricula in chat, so we want to get you the most current, fresh, hot off the press information today before we leave you. So let's touch this last one from the checklist and then go right to the research based.

Cathy: Okay. So available for public use means just that. Can anyone use it? Again, you may have to pay for it, but is it available for you to use publicly. It's not something private that you have to go somewhere and find it and only given programs can use it. So that's really what public use means. And you really want to make sure that any parenting curricula, when it is available for public use, you know, has the pieces that you're going to need, you know, is there training, is there a manual, is there support, and what does the public usage domain for each parenting curricula look like and what kind of support do you need in order to be able to implement.

Brandi: Now, Cathy, folks that know our work are going to recognize right away we've added something here. And actually, what I want to say to you guys is the addition is from your voices because what you're discovering, a lot of the folks that are offering ideas and products in the way of curricula are potentially research informed and not necessarily research based, so we want to give you the distinction here, and Cathy's brain is the one who is going to do that for you.

Cathy: And you'll help me out, Brandi, right? Please.

Brandi: I'll give it a go.

Cathy: Okay. So research-informed essentially means that the curriculum is founded on theory and practice research about parenting concepts and parenting skills and the influence of parenting on child development and about parenting behavior, and about adult learning. What that means is that the curriculum was put together with really solid information founded on both research and practice about the kinds of things that are involved in parenting skills around what we know about nurturing, what we know about discipline, what we know about language, you know, what we know about safety. So that's what research informed is. And it means you take research that was already done before you develop the curriculum and you use it to inform your curriculum. Parenting curricula really need to be research informed. It's a prerequisite for almost anything you look like. And it's really necessary, but it's not sufficient, it is not research based. So if you do go on to a website and you're reading about a parenting curriculum and they say, "Oh, you know, we took all these theorists and all these child developmentalists and all these parenting experts, and they gave us information to put into our

curriculum. That's really important, but it's not enough. It's a step toward research based but is not yet research based.

Kiersten: I think, Cathy, I just wanna clarify something that when you say it's not enough, you're talking about the standard, like the Head Start standard.

Cathy: Yes, I am talking about the standard.

Kiersten: Because there are a lot of research informed materials, different kinds of curricula, different kinds of family engagement activities, and things out there that may very well be great enhancement for Head Start programs. And so, you know, it's really on the program to get smarter about some of these things for the standard. But there are different kinds of things out there programs can choose to implement that are research informed. We're really talking about the standard here. Okay, back to you.

Cathy: Right, yeah. Thank you, Kiersten. So let's go on to research based. What is research based? What research based is is that this curriculum that's research based was research informed as it was developed and the piece we add to that is that the developers or a researcher actually studied how that curriculum worked when it was implemented. So when you look at a curriculum that's research based, you can be assured that at least someone systematically took a look at "What happens when I actually have parents coming to each of these sessions with facilitators who have been trained who have offered the content as the manual describes it and complete the sessions?" The study, the research-based study is about that process. It's about actually taking that curriculum and trying it out in a systematic way and documenting how it works if and how it works, how did it work, what did the facilitators do, what did the parents think ideally, what were the parents thinking about their own parenting skills before the curriculum started and after it ended, do parents think they learned anything, can they tell you how they learned something, can the facilitators tell you about what the process of the curriculum delivery was and what did that look like, and there's a whole number of ways in which we can talk about a high-level research based curriculum which is more rigorous research, still just a description with those groups of parents that went through the curriculum.

And then there are some that are not as strong, and, you know, we can get into those details. We may not have time to do all that today, but that's research based. Now the report of the research does not need to be published in a journal that is peer reviewed, but there does need to be a formal report on the research that says here's what the parenting curriculum is. It was 5 sessions and we had 10 parents at each session, and here are the sessions that the facilitators implemented with the parents, and we delivered it weekly, and at the beginning, before they started, we asked them about their parenting skills that relate to this particular curriculum, and at the end, we asked them again and we found a positive change. And parents also told us what they thought they liked about the curriculum. Those are the kinds of characteristics or qualities that you would find in a research-based study. And we call those kinds of studies descriptive studies because they describe what happened during the evaluation of the curriculum. But there isn't another group of people who didn't participate in the curriculum that you would compare them to, so it's just describing the people who were in that particular parenting curriculum series.

Brandi: Cathy and Kiersten, well, we get this question out in the field, you tell me if this is too simple, but one of the things we've been saying is if you're wondering if the curriculum you're looking at or if you've chosen is research informed or research based, as we said, research informed is not sufficient as

it relates to the Performance Standards, it's research based that's the base requirement, it's the bottom line. The way to ask is what Cathy has given us this language, "Show us your study?" And if the study on that exact curriculum, and some curricula actually have a partial component with the parenting component, and we've grown to know and, you know, sort of appreciate those guys over the years, some of them have a really great reputation, so we're just really excited to think what you guys about being wonderful consumers so that you're thinking about, "Okay, the child portion of this curriculum is research-based, we know it, we love it. Let's test it out on the parent side. Let's make sure that it's there and the research base exists." But, Cathy, there's a question here I have for you too, as this evaluator, you know, expert, the research base can be established, but it takes some time, right? Tell us a little bit about that.

Cathy: Oh, dear, yes. It takes about three times as long to evaluate in a limited, in a first-step way, a parenting curriculum takes us three times as long to evaluate it as it does to actually develop it. So if you're looking at a brand new curriculum, it is likely, or you really need to be careful to ask, "Is there a descriptive study of the implementation of your curriculum, i.e., is this a research-based curriculum?" Now there are some curricula that did extensive studies before they ever released it, so you have to take a look. But -- You do need to be really careful and think about, you know, how am I going to know that if I put all the time and effort into offering families a parenting curriculum that is going to work, and that's the reason for talking about research based or a promising research based or evidence based, is then you have more assurance that the parenting curriculum is gonna work.

Brandi: Cathy, I can't believe we're already to the end of our time. - I know. I can't believe how fast it goes when we get to talk about this topic in particular.

Cathy: Brandi, can I say one more thing? I saw one really quick question. - Yes. Can you combine different components from different curricula and that would not make the curriculum research-based?

Brandi: Oh, I see.

Cathy: Because we really don't know if you take one piece from one curriculum and one from another and one from a third, it has to be fully tested that those three pieces that you've chosen to put together work. The other thing is if you're thinking of that, you really need to talk to the developers 'cause they often are not happy with that as well. So if you really want to adapt and change the curriculum, you really should talk to the developers.

Brandi: Yeah, good point, Cathy. Well, I know we have a couple more things, but don't forget, guys, we will still get to hang out with you in chat for a little bit if there are other questions, and we've been collecting a few. We are, as Kiersten alluded at the very beginning, working on several resources to make sure you have the freshest, hottest, and latest resources that relate to opting parenting curriculum, so be on the lookout for those.

Shela: Thanks so much, Brandi, and Cathy, and Kiersten. This has been a really interesting and really clarifying conversation. And that's all for us formally, and thank you for joining us once again.

[End video]