

## **Making Strides in Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships: Implementing and Sustaining Successful Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships**

Randi Hopper: Good afternoon. My name is Randi Hopper. I am with the Partnership Center and I will be providing instructions and support on the technical aspects of the webinar. Thank you for joining the Making Strides in Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships: Implementing and Sustaining Successful Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships. The webinar will begin momentarily. As a reminder, today's webinar is being recorded. The recording and transcripts will be posted to the local early childhood partnerships topic page on ECLKC in a few weeks. All participants are in a listen only capacity during today's webinar. There is no call in option. We recommend joining online to fully engage with today's webinar. Please use the Q&A box to enter any questions you have at any time during the discussion. Questions that we are unable to answer due to time will be posted on MyPeers which you will learn more about following the presentation. Closed captioning will be provided throughout the webinar. Finally, you will find resources available for download on your screen. You may access that information at any time during today's discussion. Now it is my pleasure to introduce to you Rae Anderson, Project Director of the National Center of Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships and our first speaker.

Rae Anderson: Thank you, Randi. I'm pleased to be here today with all of you. The Partnership Center is jointly funded and administered by the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Childcare, and the Office of Head Start to support the effective implementation of the Early Head Start Childcare Partnership which are intended to increase access to high quality early learning environments for infants, toddlers, and improve childcare quality for all. Today's webinar will feature the Matrix Early Head Start Childcare Partnership in Detroit, Michigan. The webinar will feature Kathleen Coakley, the Director of the Early Head Start Childcare Partnership Grantee, and one of their childcare partners, Denise Lomax, Director of the Child Star Development Center. The partnership Kathy and Denise will tell us about has been in operation around two years and has made great strides in recruiting twenty-four childcare partners which represent center-based as well as family childcare home providers. Today we will learn about their recruitment process, how they implement it and are monitoring the partnership agreements, incorporation of the subsidy program, benefits and challenges of implementation, and finally how they are currently sustaining the partnership. We are looking forward to hearing from Kathy and Denise. We have four hundred and ninety-eight participants who have registered for today's call and we know some of those have several participants watching together at one site. To find out more about who is on the line with us today, we have a couple of polls. So I think Randi is going to help us with our polls today. Randi, would you put those polls up? So I'm sure most of you are familiar with how to take a poll online. So our first poll is a question about your interest in Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships.

So I'm interested in Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships because: I represent an early head start childcare partnership grantee. I am a childcare partner in a partnership. I support Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships as a TA provider. I am interested in joining an early head start childcare partnership. I am a CCDF administrator. Or I am a head start state collaboration director. So take a minute and vote and we'll see who we have on the call today. It looks like people are still entering their response. We'll just take a few more seconds. So it looks like the majority of folks are a little over 50% represent early head start childcare partnership grantees and then almost 30% are T/TA providers who are supporting early head start childcare partnership grantees. And then not quite 12% of you are childcare partners who are participating in partnerships. So there are a few folks who are interested not, almost 5% who are interested in maybe joining a partnership. So thank you, Randi. Let's look at our next poll. Our second poll is how long have you been in an early head start childcare partnership? So take a few minutes to tell us a little bit about how long you have been participating in a partnership. Okay. So it looks like the majority

of folks so far that have responded have been participating in a partnership for more than -- for two years or more.

Over 50% of you have participated in the partnership for more than two years. A little more than 16% are not currently in an early head start childcare partnership so that may reflect some of our T/TA providers. And then an equal number have participated in less than a year or less than six months, so we've got about 13% are reporting less than a year or less than six months. So we've got a great representation of partners who have been participating or folks who have been participating for more than two years and then some that are new to partnerships, so thank you very much for participating in our poll and that gives us a good sense of who we're going to be talking with this afternoon. So thank you, Randi. Right now I would like to introduce our first guest speaker this afternoon, Shannon Christian. Shannon currently serves as the Director of the Office of Childcare at the Department of Health and Human Services at the Administration for Children and Families. Shannon is a former associate commissioner of the Former Childcare Bureau at ACF where she advanced President Bush's Good Start Grow Smart Early Childhood Initiative and shaped the office's research agenda to better support state policy and spending decisions. Shannon has an MPP from Harvard Kennedy School of Government, a certificate in non-profit management from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Business, and an undergraduate degree in economics and international relations from California State University Chico.

So welcome, Shannon, and thank you very much for being with us this afternoon.

Shannon Christian: Thank you, Rae. I'm thrilled to be here and if you were in the room with me, I would have made you stop in the middle of that intro because I never meant for everybody to read that. Okay. So anyway, sorry in advance. So I just want to say welcome to all of you to this webinar on behalf of ACF and the Office of Childcare. I would have checked also the new to this, under six months.

So some of you know so much about this. I'm sorry; it's going to seem repetitive. But for those of us who are newer or thinking about partnerships, I think it's good to have some introductory remarks so here they are. An important part of the work that we share with the Office of Head Start is our joint oversight of the Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships and some statistics around the partnerships first round of funding, we're bringing comprehensive services and quality improvements to a funded enrollment of over 32,000 low income children. There should be -- there it is. Good. In more than 275 Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships across the country and that includes approximately 1,400 centers and 1,000 homes that were funded as partnership programs, and seventy-five additional partnerships were funded in 2017. Another point to highlight I think, important is the number of children and early childhood teachers and staff who are benefitting from the widespread positive impact of the partnerships. For instance, over 7,800 non-EHS CCP enrolled children also benefit from increased access to high quality early learning environments and more than 8,000 early childhood professionals have access to education and training opportunities to help improve the wellbeing of families and get more children ready to learn. So the benefits of the Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships go well beyond the children that are actually enrolled in the partnerships.

They're making a difference for all children and families and staff participating in the partnerships. So in addition to this partnership, bringing together the best of both early head start and childcare, the partnership supports a coordinated approach across agencies and within programs to be more responsive to the needs of all children and working families that we serve together. I want to mention five areas of impact. First is building supply and access to quality. The Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships are improving the overall capacity of communities to offer high quality infant and toddler care and increasing access to full day, full year service using existing resources in new and innovative ways. Leveraging new resources and implementing policy changes at the state and local level in order to accomplish this. Second, early childhood workforce and professional development. These partnerships are growing the infant and

toddler workforce and expanding professional development opportunities for childcare providers across the country. Infants and toddlers are benefitting from high quality early learning programs staffed by qualified providers that receive ongoing supervision, coaching, and an environment supported by training, technical assistance, and evidence-based curriculum. Third, continuity of care. The Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships are providing continuous and comprehensive child development services to promote consistency of relationships, environment, language, and culture which we know from the research strengthens school readiness outcomes as children grow and develop. Fourth, comprehensive services.

The partnerships are providing full day, full year comprehensive child development and family support services that enhance the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of infants and toddlers and supports family self-sufficiency with the fuller day services. Fifth, financing and fiscal responsibility. This is where a lot of the creativity comes in I think. The Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships are leveraging multiple funding sources and maximizing resources to create quality improvement opportunities for childcare providers that ultimately improve outcomes for all infants and toddlers and their families who are enrolled in these partnership programs. I am particularly interested in learning more about these spillover effects and how layering funding within the EHS Childcare Partnership funding model benefits children and families regardless of the particular funding source within the partnership setting. So we want to work with you as you continue thinking about the kinds of policies and provider business and fiscal management practices that support these partnerships and the funding model to reach sustainable program operations. I saw a really cute little dog pop past and then it went dark. Did everyone see that? Okay. I'm looking forward to hearing from Kathy and Denise about how they are implementing and sustaining their partnership in Detroit and the positive impact the partnership is having on children, families, and the local community. And in particular I want to thank all of the Early Head Start Childcare Partnership grantees and the partners across the country for all of the exciting work that you do in support of our children and families. So at this point I am going to turn this over to Eva Carter, our facilitator for the webinar. Eva?

Eva Carter: Hi, Shannon, and thanks so much. Nice to hear your voice again and you brought up two points besides all of the five areas that you will hear about today which I was excited and that is the spillover effect of reaching more than those kids that are just enrolled and Denise will be talking about that. And Kathy will be mentioning the layered approach of funding. So I think we're right on target and today is our fifth actual in the partnership series, Making Strides in Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships, and today we're focusing on implementation and sustaining. How do we, once we get the grant and get it on the ground, how do we implement it and then how to make sure it's going to be around for a while. As Rae mentioned, we will feature what I have learned as a really dynamic partnership, the Matrix Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships which you heard is located in Detroit. So today you're going to learn about how -- what was used in this implementation in the sustaining phase to recruit, train, and sustain and in this case, multiple childcare partners.

So we're going to hear about the challenges that they encountered along the way but more importantly, I think people will enjoy hearing about the successes and benefits of the partnership that it has provided for children and families. So the partnership you'll hear about today is a model of a large program with twenty-nine childcare partners. So some of you may think wow, how would that ever relate to what I am doing? I might only have one or two partners. What you will hear about today -- and these partners are a combination of center-based and family childcare homes. Most of the families that are already being served in these centers are already receiving subsidy, childcare subsidy, or they are eligible for it.

So what we hope for all of you who may have a smaller program or something that looks a little different, we will highlight the principles and the processes that happen to get these programs where they are and

you will be able to take from that, ways in which you can apply it to your own program. So we also like to remind you of the importance of understanding that we're kind of in a kind of critical place right now. We have new, revised head start performance standards and at the same time, we have new CCDF regulations. So this is a time when we're getting to put some of those all together and to me that is an exciting time of looking at the progress that has been made with these new regulations. So now let's get into this and let me introduce the individuals that are making all of this happen. We have Kathleen Coakley, the Director of Matrix, and her partner, Denise Lomax who is the Director of the Child Star Development Center. Hi, Kathy and Denise.

Kathleen Coakley: Hi.

Denise Lomax: Hello.

Eva: Hi. We are so honored to have you here today to tell us about your partnership and we are excited to learn about how you got started, all that you're currently doing to implement your partnership, and then like we said, how are you sustaining it? How do you know it's still going to be here down the road? So Kathy, I'm going to take just a minute and get to know you. How did you get to this position of being the Director of such a big Early Head Start Childcare Partnership?

Kathleen: Hi, Eva. So I like to call myself a generational head start employee. I have been an assistant teacher, a teacher, a center administrator and while I was serving as education specialist, I spent a lot of my time training our teachers. I am very proud to say that we had twenty-seven of our assistant teachers obtain their CDAs during the 2011 and 2012 program year. We were really proud that nine parents who went through the course also received their CDAs, all were Spanish speaking, and one or two were bilingual. In 2015, Matrix was awarded the Early Head Start Childcare Partnership Grant which I have directed for the past two and a half years.

Eva: Wonderful. You've got quite an experience coming into this. So Denise, we're so glad that you could join us. It's so nice having the childcare provider as we go down this journey. How did you get to be a director of this program and partner with Kathy?

Denise: Well, that's easy. Well you know, I started off -- first of all as a teenager I worked at a childcare center. I didn't like what I saw and as I got older and become a single mom, I started teaching second grade and I learned about what goes on behind the scenes. So when I had my second child, I decided to become a family childcare provider because I didn't really trust anyone to take care of her and I wanted to make sure she was safe and healthy and cared for by someone who had the heart to care for children. I think a lot of caring for other peoples' children is about trust and I pride myself on being a trustworthy person. Your word is your bond. I gave my word to the parents that I would take care of their children. I learned that being a childcare provider is also like running a business and I took that on to help my husband with finances. Before long, the state of Michigan started calling me to provide support and training for other families, childcare providers, and soon I could not meet the demand of families who wanted their children in my program. That is when I decided to open up my own center and now twenty-three years later, here I am. It's been fulfilling. I now have children who were in my center years ago that you see the pictures, come by and still see their pictures on the wall and that they are in college now. And when Matrix opened up this program, this is how I met Kathy and I thought Kathy was a wonderful person and I'm so glad I did it.

Eva: Wow. Thank you, Denise. And you are going to hear Denise say several different really catching phrases. You'll see some of them on the screen but this one particularly I wanted to highlight is your word is your bond. And we certainly learned that working with Denise and Kathy and they -- they have really proven to us how closely they work together and that is just so good to learn about. So with both of you having this wealth of experience, Kathy, tell us a little about your parent agency, the one that you were

working with as you started the Early Head Start Childcare Partnership? I know it's been around a long time so just tell us a little bit about it.

Kathleen: Sure. I'd be happy to tell you about Matrix Human Services. Matrix Human Services started as a league of Catholic women and they have been serving Detroit over one hundred years. We're located in midtown Detroit and we are right now experiencing a huge revitalization and we are located right in the middle of it which is really an advantage for us. Matrix is leading the way in fighting poverty in the Detroit area. We have twelve programs across all of metro Detroit which consists of youth programs, senior programs, homeless, and many others. In 1981, Matrix Head Start program began as a delegate under the city of Detroit and in 2014, we became a grantee serving children zero to five in all of southwest and southeast Detroit. In 2015, we received the Early Head Start Childcare Partnership Award. The overall Matrix Early Head Start Program now serves children -- over 1,900 children.

Eva: Wow. That is a big and an old organization and I bet there are a lot of resources you can grow on from that agency. So tell us a little bit about under this umbrella, how did the Early Head Start Childcare Partnership start?

Kathleen: The partnership grant was awarded March 1, 2015. At that time -- excuse me -- at that time, Matrix brought in a project manager to get us started. Although this person, she had no head start background, she knew how to start up a new project and that was so helpful. We knew our first primary task was to recruit and identify our childcare partners and that is how we got to meet Denise. Now we have twenty-four childcare partners, sixteen centers, and eight family childcare homes, all of which were recruited from the people that attended our very first meeting and we have a funded enrollment of 360 children.

Eva: Wow. That is quite a large program. That is pretty impressive just hearing about it. So Denise, we know that you were one of those first childcare partner applicants that applied to work with Kathy. So tell us a little bit about your center. Now that we've heard about Matrix and the partnership, tell us -- give us a good picture of who you serve and what your center is all about.

Denise: Okay. I opened my center in November 18, 2003 and my center has the capacity to serve seventy-five children and families and we're operating in that capacity now, especially thanks to Matrix. We're trying to expand because they are knocking at the door and 85% of these children participate in the Michigan Childcare Subsidy Program and twenty-four children, all on subsidy, are participating in the EHSCC partnership program. And again, Matrix as I said before, I had never heard of Matrix being in the field for twenty-three years and when the mail went out and the call was made, I went to find out what was going on and I am so glad, very glad that I answered the call and was one of the first to participate.

Eva: We are too. Thank you for taking that bold step. So let's talk a little bit now and just leave that slide up one more minute if you would, if we could go back to that slide for a second. You're going to hear Denise talk about her center later down the line and all that has been improved about her center and the neighborhood as a result of this partnership. So I just wanted to make -- highlight that center. You may not be seeing it again but you're going to hear a lot about it. It's very impressive to learn about. So okay, now let's talk about that application process, the very beginning. Kathy, how did you put the first call out? What were you expecting? How did that all work?

Kathleen: We put our call out to the community. We sent out e-blasts and e-mails, posted on our Matrix Facebook, web page, and we held a large community meeting. We had over eighty-eight childcare providers attend the informational meeting where we shared the specifics of the program and had them complete an application. We then prepared a spreadsheet of the applicants and reviewed their star rating, number of children, how long they had been in business, all of that, and then we implemented a process

of elimination based on the information in the application and we had to focus and identify those childcare centers that were located in our designated service area.

Eva: That sounds like quite a process. So Denise, you did say that you were one of those first applicants. Can you tell us a little bit about that meeting and how -- what it meant to you?

Denise: Well the meeting -- when I attended the meeting, I looked at Kathy for some reason. I was able to connect with her heart and as she was explaining and telling us about the Matrix program and the partnership, I saw that she had a love and a passion for people and for children and for the community, especially in Wayne County. So when I attended the meeting and they were telling us what they expected from us and that we had to have a certain star rating, I was just pleased to even complete the application knowing that with five being the highest with the star rating in the state of Michigan, that we were a four. So I knew we would have a chance of becoming a partner with them. And so with the partnership you know, when I got the invitation from the mail, you know, I had no idea what it was about but again, listening to what Kathy was speaking about and really seeing her heart, not just hearing her talk but I saw her heart, and then how they explained the requirements of what they expected out of us to be in a partnership, it made me realize that Matrix believes in standards and that is what I wanted for my center and for the community that I serviced. So it gave me an opportunity to apply. I saw that and I heard that it would help my employees receive higher education, receive a decent wage, and how it would help the parents. I decided to apply for it so I said let's try it.

Eva: Good for you. And already being at a four star is pretty impressive as well. That says a lot about your program and you know that some of the things that you can't put in writing is that those love and passion attributes of the people that we work with and the relationships that we develop among ourselves as we go into this. So thanks for mentioning that about Kathy. I have learned the same thing about her.

Denise: Thank you.

Eva: So let's move on now to partnership agreements. They are a little different now than they used to be for some of us who worked in partnerships a long time ago where we just you know, say you bring the diapers and I'll bring the formula and sign here and we were done. Now it's a little different. These are really a legal document, binding document, so the wording in it has to be very clear and precise and these are important guides as you implement the partnership, something to go back to. So Kathy, tell us about the development and implementation of your partnership agreement?

Kathleen: Sure, Eva. Matrix Head Start has a retired lawyer on board on our Board of Directors who helped developed our agreements along with our startup project manager. Our first agreement consisted of about sixteen pages in our contract. In the beginning, you know, we thought we had covered everything. We realized quickly after that first eighteen months that we really needed to be specific and add some stronger language with very clear expectations. We needed to address you know, things like staff/child ratio issues, structured daily routine, and subsidy loss just to name a few. We decided to add an appendix with the samples of the new editions of the contract. We added specific language about subsidy loss and a form for the provider to complete if a family lost subsidy and the regulations from the state of Michigan to support the additions. And now for year three, we are revising it yet again. In the revised agreement we are doing a better job of delineating roles and responsibilities of each partner and just tightening things up a little bit to provide clarity around some fiscal requirements. We request feedback from the providers so that we make sure we are doing what we need to do to support them, and the contract builds in monthly meetings for providers and we recognize that our family childcare homes had some additional needs. So we had an additional meeting with just the family childcare homes and we can address their issues as they come up.

Eva: That's great to know that they have differences and I'll just point out for those of you who may be running smaller programs, some of the principles that Kathy talked about as really delineating roles and responsibilities and language about subsidy and what happens when it's lost and having these partnership meetings to keep everybody on the same page. There is a lot in this section and the bonus gift that we get is that Kathy has decided she will share her partnership agreement with us and you'll hear more about that at the end of the webinar where you can find that on MyPeers. So we're excited to get to have that as a document that we can learn more from. So Denise is on the other end as the partner that works with this agreement. How does that work for you?

Denise: Well I see the partnership agreement as a way to let us know what is expected. When you put it in writing, there is no excuse. So by signing this agreement, you know, we were able to strengthen our staff knowledge. We got help with furniture, supplies. We were able to provide outreach to parents. Most certainly it helped with the staff wages. We just made a lot of improvements to the building, the facility, and you know, we have an open door policy and we know the importance of getting things in writing. So the partnership agreement helped enhance our business as a whole also.

Eva: And that is so important and those of you who are in the audience will hear Denise talk a lot about being -- running her program, her center as a business and I think these partnership agreements are one of those foundations of a business, of getting it in writing. So thanks for telling us about that. Let's move on now to this whole childcare subsidy piece that is such an integral part of these partnerships and for some in some areas that -- some areas don't have as many children eligible for subsidies as you guys do - - you are certainly in a poverty-stricken area -- but it is important that we think about what happens when the child does have to drop off a subsidy and here is where we can pull in the new childcare and development fund regulations that are allowing programs to only check eligibility once every twelve months. And I think Kathy, you'll tell us a little bit about that. Tell us about how this whole childcare subsidy part works in your partnership.

Kathleen: Okay. In our grant narrative, we had stated that 50% of our families who enroll in the partnership should be receiving childcare subsidy, but in order for that layer of funding model to really be successful, we have to have 50% of our children enrolled in a center receiving subsidy. We learned that it had to be, you know, at each individual center or home because as some of our providers might have had a 95 like Denise, 95-99% of their children on the subsidy and others maybe at 30% and this was not as effective for them as the childcare provider. Michigan does approve, as you said, the twelve month subsidy for the families but things still happen and families lose their subsidy. So when this happens, Matrix covers that subsidy loss and the family advocate assists the families in getting reinstated in the subsidy program. To make all of this work, we work hard with our state childcare people in Lansing and fortunately we have had very few families who have lost their subsidy. We developed a policy that our childcare partners have 50% of the families must be enrolled in the childcare program and on subsidy before being enrolled in the Early Head Start Childcare Partnership.

The childcare providers are now paying very close attention to who is enrolling and who is eligible for the childcare partnership and if there is any turnover, providers are making sure that the new children receive subsidy. It is the best way for them to operate and have them dually enrolled in both programs.

Eva: That is another highlight or principle or key learning that the children are enrolled in subsidy before they come into the Head Start Partnership, the Early Head Start Partnership. So Denise, tell us a little bit about the subsidy. It doesn't sound like you have too much trouble with it but tell us about it.

Denise: No, I'm sorry. I don't have a lot of trouble with it. One of the reasons I don't have much trouble with it is because Kathy had a meeting and she had a meeting with the Department of Human Services and we were able to learn the new rules and regulations with that and to find out that parents are, once

they receive the subsidy, they are eligible for a year. Now when I joined Matrix, all of my parents were on subsidy. Of course 85% of my children are subsidy eligible and the only problem that I have with the children is that they age out at the age of three and once they age out, you know, they still stay with us. But we did have one child that did not receive the subsidy that was under the Matrix program and after attending the meeting that Kathy set up, I was able to connect with the people in Lansing to find out why wasn't this parent eligible for subsidy and with that person in Lansing doing her due diligence and I am speaking with the parents, we were able to find out that this parent was eligible for subsidy and that they end up -- they ended up paying us for the time she started up until present time. So you have to go beyond the call of duty. You have to help these parents out. You know, they are working parents. Some of them are single mothers. They don't have the time to do the leg work that we have. So going beyond the call of duty is something that we specialize here at Child Star Development Center.

Eva: Thank you, Denise. Another one of your words of wisdom to go beyond the call of duty and I just want to point out as another one of these highlights or principles that we're talking about. No matter how -- what size your program is, those relationships that you have with the state, just like Kathy has talked about the relationship in Lansing with the Department of Human Services, it really, really makes a difference and you can see how in this case, they were really able to go beyond the call of duty for this parent. So we're going to go on kind of quickly here because we know we have to follow all of the Head Start Performance Standards and all of that and so Kathy, how do you make sure everything is working and you continuously improve any kinds of areas that you need to work on?

Kathleen: We have several ways. We work really closely with our childcare partners to build this relationship and we make sure that we are working together. Some of these -- some of the ways that we do this, we have a monthly childcare meeting. We have bi-weekly curriculum training for the teachers and the family childcare providers. We have building business practices through workshops and trainings for the owners and the directors. It is small business focus. We have a finance partner that provides speakers to our monthly meetings and also conducts workshops and training sessions and one of the tools they use with our providers is called a break even analysis. It is a very lengthy tool but it provides a really clear picture of what the provider can do to break even and increase profitability --- I'm sorry. Excuse me. We also use one of the national Early Head Start Childcare Partnership fiscal consultants. She helped to create a binder for each of our providers to keep all of their fiscal information in and it is monitored and reviewed by our fiscal consultant on a quarterly basis, accountant.

The national fiscal consultant, she insisted on developing fiscal policies and procedures as it relates to fiscal operations and she attended several of our monthly partner meetings and was made available to answer any questions or concerns that the partners may have. We --- I do quarterly visits with our childcare partners. We have family advocates and child development specialists that are multiple weekly visits and ongoing support to the teachers and families. We have a disability specialist who is a great resource. We currently have seven children with IFSPs and thirty-nine more children identified with having special needs. We have a quality and compliance officer who completes audits and follow-up on areas of concern. We have our internal data associates reviewing the data on attendance and enrollment. We have our partnership. Partners are invited and encouraged to participate in self-assessment and attend all national, regional, and local conferences. Our team is really starting to bond and take ownership to their content area. It is still a work in progress but we see it continuously getting better and better. One of our best additions I feel was our operations manager. He supervises the CCP team. He meets with the team weekly, visits with the childcare centers and the family homes. The operations manager and I work closely together but he essentially handles the day to day operations. He always keeps me informed and up to date and this provides me with the opportunity to work directly with the childcare partners, our delegates, and the community partners and executive leadership.



Eva: Wow, Kathy. That is quite a list and quite a number of ways to continually being in touch with your partners. I feel like we need to make that into a checklist almost. There are so many different ways that you keep in touch so thank you. How does that feel to be on the other end of that -- that checklist or continuous improvement list with Kathy and her staff coming out and making sure everything is working right, Denise?

Denise: Well it was a challenge.

Eva: I bet.

Denise: I am a person that believes in standards and maintaining standards. So the Head Start Performance Standards far exceed life requirements and I like that. I like that a lot. And some of these Head Start Performance Standards open our eyes to a lot of things that we could improve on, boy a lot. It made our center safe. That is key, number one. And it made it better for our children. That is another number one key. It helps me to see things differently, identify things that we could do differently for the child's benefit. They came in, they gave me literature. We do monthly meetings as she did say and we do conference calls and the conference calls and the meetings, we go over the Head Start Performance Standards and I learned a lot from the process. It just makes us better overall. As a childcare provider and as a business, it changes how parents look at us, not as just babysitters but as educators. So they see us differently now. Now we did have to work on our relationship with Matrix staff. They were coming out to my classroom. We had to help them understand that it is our classroom and we help them to see things from our perspective and we develop a mutual respectful relationship. So we're good now. We have everything straightened out.

Eva: Sounds like you were both committed to it and you had to make sure everybody knew it was your classroom that they were coming into so thanks for that, Denise. So we're going to move along now to the benefits. I know you could talk about this for a long time but Denise, tell us a little bit about -- you have talked about staff and your parents seeing you differently but tell us a little bit more about how you have seen this partnership -- the benefits to your program, to your children and families?

Denise: Well you know, we may have to take another hour but I'll do it -- I'll try to keep it as short as I can. Well to start, let me tell you. It made improvements to the building. I was able to take out the fluorescent lighting that was in this entire building. Now this building is forty-five hundred square feet so I was able to take those fluorescent lighting out and put LED lights inside the entire building. I was able to put brand new energy efficient windows in the building. Children are able to sleep better. They don't hear firetrucks. They don't hear anything. The building stays warm when it is cold and it stays cool when it is, you know, hot outside. It is really beautiful. Now with these improvements, it brought us more business and parents want to bring their children here. This is why we have to expand. And you know, it made the staff come to work with a different attitude, you know, come into something that is beautiful. You like to get up and to come into something like that. The neighborhood looks better and you know, it just gave us all a better feeling about ourselves. The children, you know, it was just a better feel. The children became more independent. The children's language skills improved. And the parents became more knowledgeable about early childhood development just by the way it looks and the standards that we were able to change and uphold here. Again, I don't want to take up too much time but it's been a great help to us and a blessing to the community.

Eva: Thank you, Denise, and I know that those are part of the spillover effects to the parents and the -- giving them a good reason to want to come in and participate and parent involvement. Thank you. Kathy, I know it's a little early as far as data collection and all of that but tell us what you have seen as benefit so far?

Kathleen: I think it's a little early to determine our direct impact on families because we have been so focused on reaching full enrollment and training the teachers. The family advocates are beginning to work with families on establishing their goals, making referrals, and all that comes with that. Our teachers have participated enthusiastically in all of our CDA curriculum training and additional required trainings. In March of 2017, each teacher was assigned a child development specialist to support the teachers, provide guidance, and model best practices in early childhood. The Early Head Start Childcare Partnership Program, it's all about building relationships with childcare partners. It takes time to build a trusting reciprocal relationship and have a shared vision with clear expectations. It really is a work in progress.

Eva: Right, and it will be a living work in progress for a long time. And I know there is a lot in the revised Head Start Performance Standards that you know, talk about this and talk about professional development and all of that so thank you for telling us that much. Now onto challenges. We're going to quickly go through the challenges. We want to hear about sustainability and lessons learned. So tell us, Kathy, what was your biggest challenge?

Kathleen: Probably our biggest challenge was maintaining the staff, the teachers at our childcare partners. We do a lot of training and assistance with getting their CDAs. Right now we have about thirty-four teachers with CDAs, twenty that are in progress, and thirty more brand new ones that just started. We get them all trained and ready to go and then they move on to other positions that offer benefits or possibly higher wages so I think that has been our biggest challenge, maintaining that staff.

Eva: I bet if we were able to open up the polls right now to participants, they would all be nodding their heads and saying yes, we know that. We feel that. And although it is certainly upgrading our field, it is hard when we need staff. Denise, what would you add to that?

Denise: Well I would agree with Kathy. It is hard to recruit and keep good staff. We have to hire for caring for children. Getting them acclimated, it's getting the right fit. Some people might have the education but don't have the interpersonal relationship skills and understanding the importance of treating everyone with respect. So it's a challenge but again, we've had employees that left and went to other facilities and they had to come back because they realized that you know, wow. Matrix standards are better and they saw the difference. So it's hard but so far with being in the partnership, we were able to maintain our staff so I am grateful for that.

Eva: Thank you and I know with so much in the Performance Standards to talk about that that we can implement. So it again is one of those work in progress things that Kathy talked about. So as we're kind of winding down here, you know, our webinar has been focused on implementation and sustainability. So Kathy, what can you tell us about things that you have put in place that you know, if you decided to retire tomorrow or move onto Tahiti and lie on the beach the whole time, how is this partnership going to be sustained? I hate to put that in your mind. I didn't mean you should, but how is this going to be sustained in the future? What have you done to keep it all together?

Kathleen: I recommend to maintain an open and trustworthy relationship. Be intentional with regards to the Head Start Program Performance Standards, licensing regulations, and best practices in early childhood. Have very clear, detailed expectations with input from both sides. Allow the childcare partners to have a voice in the partnership. Remember that we are only a part of their childcare center or family childcare home. Recognize it is a journey and take the time to reflect and adjust and make changes as needed.

Eva: I really am so impressed with this list that you have given us and just wanted to reiterate your words about we are only a part of the childcare center and family childcare home and I think if we can look at this, it's that truly mutual respect and both partners having so much to give, it will really be even more beneficial. So Denise, how are you going to make sure your center is still there and part of this partnership?

Denise: Well I always say that -- and I live by it -- each one, reach one. So it is my duty and it is up to me to give what I have been given and I have to share and using that philosophy, I bring in new people and teach them and show them how the program operates, how to open up a childcare center, what is expected of them, and I do that with my staff because I tell my staff you have to think past just being a lead teacher. What are your goals? Once they explain to me their goals, it is my duty to help them reach those goals. Even with parents that have come to me and they are interested in early childcare, you know, I sit with them and I tell them this is what is expected. But you have to have a love for children and a love for people. And with that, my daughter who went to college to become -- she studied for medical, she is a biomedical science major, she changed her major and she went into education and received her Master's degree in education and now she is going for her PhD. So -

Eva: Wow.

Denise: It's important, what early childcare development is and what it has done for her and what impact it made in her life. So my legacy will live on.

Eva: And you will continue to live by that mantra of each one, reach one. I love it.

Denise: Yeah.

Eva: Thank you. Alright. Just as our final question here, let's talk a little bit about what you've learned by doing all of this. If you had a new partnership person come by and say okay, I'm thinking about doing this, I'm not sure, what would you tell them, Denise?

Denise: Well if they were thinking about doing this I would tell them if you are a person that believes in doing what is best for children, what is best for people, if you believe in maintaining standards and moving standards forward, I say get with it. I am really -- if I could say happy glad that I did it, I am. You know, they made us more conscious of our environment and the children. The funding helped us maintain a quality program and you need to understand what is behind the standards. Better services for children and families. The standards tell us much about health and safety and nutrition. They are a great guide honestly. Some people find standards scary but I think the Head Start Performance Standards make better people. If you have standards, I really believe standards make better people so I would tell them again, you have the heart for people and for children, if you want to see your employees succeed, you need to join the partnership.

Eva: Thank you. Thank you so much, Denise, and I promise we did not plant these words in her mouth. We didn't say oh talk about how wonderful Head Start Performance Standards are. They came right out of her mouth from the first time we started talking. It is so refreshing to hear somebody talk about what is behind the Head Start Performance Standards. It's not just a bunch of rules and regulations. There are some real reasons for it and so it's refreshing hearing you talk about the benefits of those. So Kathy, how about you? I'm a new Head Start -- I'm a new partnership director. Help me. What have you learned? What do I need to do?

Kathleen: I would say take it slow. Don't be in a hurry. If you do, you're going to be backtracking on a lot of things because -- and once you get going, it's going to move really quickly anyway. And as far as talking with other Early Head Start Childcare Partnership grantees, I recently got a call from a neighboring Head Start Program and they had been funded for one of the expansion grants and I asked if he could bring his staff and his team to Detroit. So we're in the process of setting that up. He is going to bring his staff here for a visit. And I shared our partnership agreement with him. I also have had conversations with another grantee here in Detroit pretty regularly and just remember that it's not a competition. It's really just about working together.

Eva: Another one of those incredible mantras. Not a competition. It's about working together and that is the kind of philosophy that is behind these partnerships and why we're so lucky to have -- that believes in that. So I want to just thank both of you so much. It has taken a lot of time behind the scenes to get everybody together to talk about how we want to present this and so Denise and Kathy have really given a lot out of their daily time and we all know what it's like to run a center. You don't have a lot of time to be sitting on conference calls. So we really want to appreciate, tell you how much we appreciate all of this information. It's just been such good advice and so helpful to all of the other folks that are trying to do this same work. So thank you. Thank you both so very, very much. I think I'm going to now turn it over to Alejandra, another one of our partnership center team members, and she is going to tell us a little bit about any questions we have or how to get into MyPeers. Alejandra, I'll just turn it to you.

Alejandra Alvarez-Ibanez: Thank you, Eva and Kathy and Denise. Well I think we have time for one question. Kathy, can you expand on the role of the fiscal consultant that you mentioned and how it supports Matrix?

Kathleen: Yeah. We brought in a fiscal consultant from the National Center for Early Childhood and she was really instrumental in developing our policies and procedures and really guiding us on the -- putting together a binder so that we could capture all of the documentation and the things that the providers have to keep fiscally. So she came to several of our provider meetings. She has went out and visited a lot of our centers. She was always available for questions and answers, you know, talks about non-federal shares. So all of those things that are kind of wrapped up in the fiscal bubble, she was able to really guide us and help us with that.

Alejandra: Awesome. Thank you for sharing and unfortunately we do not have any additional time to answer questions but we are very pleased to share that today's conversation will continue on MyPeers. I think most of you probably know MyPeers. It is an online social and learning network for Head Start and Early Head Start program staff and partners to dialog and share thoughts. It is a positive and supportive environment to ask and answer questions of your peers, brainstorm solutions, and learn from the experiences of others. In fact, we are very happy because Kathy and Denise, they are already members of MyPeers and they have agreed to share information with all of you following today's webinar and they are going to do that on our Early Head Start Childcare Partnership Learning Community on MyPeers. So we're going to be able to continue the conversation and answer some of the questions that we were not able to address today and as Eva mentioned, they have agreed to share the partnership agreement as a resource and so we hope that all of you will visit and join the Early Head Start Childcare Partnership Learning Community on MyPeers and engage with others in solution oriented conversations. And now I'm going to turn it over back to Rae Anderson for some closing remarks. Rae?

Rae: Alright. Thank you very much, Alejandra. Thank you to Eva and especially thank you to our guests on today's webinar and Kathy and Denise for sharing their experiences with implementing Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships and some of their key lessons about sustaining their partnerships over time. I think my biggest takeaway from today is that part -- relationships are critical to the success of the partnership and we've heard that time and time again over the last three years. So I note that we are quickly out of -- running out of time so I have been asked to remind everyone that at the end of the webinar an evaluation will be available on the screen for those who can respond immediately following the webinar. Further communications will also be sent within the next few days for other opportunities for you to complete the evaluation. We really appreciate your help in completing the evaluation. Your feedback is really important to us because we use it to determine topics for future webinars and for developing any other resources to support the successful implementation of the partnership.

So thank you for joining us today and please stay in touch with what is happening around the country with the partnerships, through our web pages, through the updates, through the MyPeers Learning Community that Alejandra mentioned and through email. So have a great day everybody and thanks for joining.

Goodbye.