

Partnering with Families to Address Domestic Violence

Kiersten Beigel: Well, good afternoon everybody. My name is Kiersten Beigel. I work for the Office of Head Start, and I want to welcome you all to our latest installment in the Head Start Heals campaign. Let me welcome you back, if you've been joining us regularly, and/or welcome you for the first time, if it is your first time. This initiative, the Head Start Heals campaign, we started this back in March, and we've had thousands of you joining us, and we've been really grateful for that.

But the initiative was really about supporting early childhood programs such as Head Start, of course, to promote resilience and wellness for children and families. We think it's a particularly important time to be doing that as a community. So, again, I just would love to welcome you all. Today's topic is about partnering with families to address domestic violence, and we're going to be using an Office Hours format, and what that means it's essentially we're going to have some informal kinds of Q&A with a group of folks joining us today. So, it's not your usual webinar presentation, but more about answering some of the most common questions that we get from you on this topic. We ...

I wanted to let you know, of course, that we have certificates available for you; those will come out in an email when you're done. All the Head Start Heals campaign materials and events are available on the ECLKC, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, and you can go get all of that right on the front page right now at the ECLKC, front and center, Head Start Heals. This is being recorded and it will be available ... 30 minutes after we're done today, this recording will be available on demand.

So, if your colleagues are interested or you want to share it, or you want to come back and join us, you know, later on, that would be great, too. So, we have some wonderful people here joining us today, and I would love to give them the official welcome. We have Amy Hunter and Neal Horen, both from Georgetown and part of our National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness, and they are part of the, early childhood – I say they're part of, but really they're like – they're like, the whole thing; they do so much amazing work for the National Center on Early Childhood Mental Health. And then we also have our friends from the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, Virginia Duplessis, and Brandi Black Thacker, both joining us. We're very ...

Brandi's the TA Director for the National Center, and Virginia, we're really excited to have her. We're very tickled because she works for Futures Without Violence, and they're a wonderful partner for the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement and do amazing work to support children and families who are experiencing domestic violence. Couple of things before we get to hear from them more. Want you to know that we've got, you know, some handy dandy little trinkets here in terms of our platform, and you should just know that you can submit questions to us, or comments.

We will be closely monitoring everything you have to say and what you're thinking and your reactions, too, so feel free to put those under, "Ask a Question," you can see on the slide here. We also have a lot of handouts for you, including this presentation and some other resources

on the topic of domestic violence that we'd love for you to download and take with you today. We really, of course, want to know who you are joining us today, just get a sense for your role or your position. So, Daniel, if you could launch the poll so we can have folks weigh in and just let us know a little bit about them through our poll.

OK, so we'll just take a minute. You know, we've had, while folks are weighing in and letting us know who you are, I know you're so much more than just these staff positions, but we'd really like to know who's interested in these topics. We know, you know, just based on your role and your – the role that you play in the world of early childhood. So, take another, I guess a few seconds to tell us who you are.

And then, Daniel, when you're ready, why don't you go ahead and close the poll so we can all take a look, see who's joining. And so I think we're waiting for that poll to come up now so we can see it. And so I think if those slide results are visible, I'm going to invite Brandi to tell us what she's seeing. Are you seeing those results?

Brandi Black Thacker: I can. Kiersten, it looks like today we have about 35% of our colleagues on the line that identifies as family service staff. It looks like the numbers are moving just a little bit, but it looks like the second largest group we have are our teaching expert colleagues. I'm watching — I'm watching the numbers flow as they come in. We also have a good number of home visiting staff. So, it looks like a really wonderfully diverse group of roles from our Head Start programs today.

Kiersten: Oh, I see the results now. We've got directors and management staff joining us, some visiting staff, health staff. Wonderful. Well, welcome everybody. So, I think one of the things we would like to do to start our conversation — this is a tough topic — and really important that we take the time to create the space, the safe virtual space, if you will, to have this kind of conversation. I'd love to invite Virginia to kind of help us think about — think about what we need to be thinking about as we're having this conversation.

Virginia Duplessis: Great. Thank you so much Kiersten. I'm so excited to be here with all of you. And we really like to start all of these conversations, as Kiersten mentioned, creating this space for ourselves. We know that resilience and wellness is not just for families in our programs, but also for staff and management. So, we just want to start out really reminding ourselves what we know, unfortunately, as that trauma is prevalent, and we know that when we have a call with over 5,000 folks on the line, there are definitely going to be survivors here, and just kind of really honoring and remembering that.

We like to talk about this concept of choice and voice. So, really thinking about how we can take care of ourselves and others. Certainly, even if we don't have experiences of violence in our personal histories, supporting families has an impact. And so, we want to acknowledge that and remember that we are creating a space where folks can share as little or as much as they want, and you know, whatever feels good and healthy.

And then, of course, this is all grounded in practicing self-care. We all have, you know, seen the picture of, you know, you have to put your own oxygen mask on before you help someone else.

So, we want to really embody that spirit here as well. So, taking care of ourselves, so that we can do the best job that we can do helping others. So, because we do know that there are survivors among us and doing this work really can have an impact on our own health – mental health, and safety – we always kind of front load our presentation with resources that you can reach out to. The one that we have here is a crisis hotline that is actually not specific to domestic violence.

Whoops, I think we're jumping around a little bit. So, it's just a little bit of a reminder that for folks who may be in a situation in a home where their texts, their calls are being monitored, it might actually be safe to have a domestic violence specific hotline or resource written down or visible. And so, this crisis text hotline covers a range of services: It could be food insecurity, housing, suicide, and they have specific training and resources on domestic violence.

So, if this is a resource and a safety consideration, we want to make sure you have access to that. And then, our next slide does have some very specific hotlines that we always share: The National Domestic Violence Hotline, which has incredible language capacity. So, if you call there, they're able to connect you with folks that speak — I think it's over 200 languages. We have the 24-Hour Parent Support hotline, so for folks who are under stress and need some support around their parenting.

The StrongHearts Native Helpline, which is a domestic violence hotline that is specific to Native communities. And then, of course, we always like to include information about SAMHSA's hotline and also the National Suicide Prevention Hotline. So, the other thing that I would say when we think about how we can support families in programs and making referrals to these hotlines, it's always a good idea to call yourself just to see what that experience is like. So, if you are making the referral to these hotlines, you're able to share with families what kinds of questions might be asked and kind of how the process goes. And we also have very Head Start specific resources, which Brandi's going to talk a little bit about.

Brandi: Thank you, so much, Virginia. I can't express to you guys how thankful I am to be able to show you this next slide with the resources that already live out there for you on the ECLKC, and you guys know how we do it, depending on your geography, you might say, "E-CLICK," "EH-CLICK" or "the ECLKC," but you know, I'm from the country, so I do the "E" thing. You guys can go out there right now and find so much of what we have planned for you today. It's been available for a little while, but we're going to get to, based on the commonly asked questions that we've been receiving before the current set of circumstances we're in together, and certainly since.

We have made some connections for you through the course of this conversation with what resources may be useful for you where, but all of this lives over on the ECLKC for you for free anytime you need them. Also, we have everything over for you into the resource pod that you'll see down on the bottom left-hand side of your screen. The other thing that I would point out here is that you'll see peppered throughout the slides today, not only the crisis counselor text line that Virginia introduced you to, which guys, I'm really grateful to have this kind of resource also for things that can connect to not only our conversation today around domestic violence, but all the other things that we're really partnering alongside families and to support.

So, we're going to have that displayed on the slide throughout. You'll see it again at the very end. We'll come back to those resources both, this text one and the ones that Virginia just shared so that you'll have a chance to have those visually again. And then certainly we've also PDFd the PowerPoint for you.

So, if you would like to download that as well and have it, and they're also going to be embedded there for you and anybody that you feel like could use them. Before we get much further into the questions, one of the pieces that, you know, we really want to explore together is, what have you already been doing? Now, I've lived and loved in the Head Start community for a whole long time, and we get so excited when we get to celebrate the incredible things and partnerships that you've already forged. In the context of this conversation, Daniel's launched a poll again, and we want to hear from you guys.

What kinds of things have you been doing already? What kinds of interactions have you already been doing with your local domestic violence program? You have a few options here and you can see what they are. Of course, this is not inclusive. We were guessing that you guys are doing this perhaps and a lot of different new creative things. And I mentioned this on another Head Start Heals webinar as well. You are exactly where you ought to be with this.

I mean, this kind of conversation is not only used to hopefully confirm some of the incredible work that you're already doing, but hopefully together as a community, you know, inspire a little bit of what you might be looking to do as we're constantly in that vein of continuous quality improvement, not only for, you know, Virginia as you kick this off for ourselves and our colleagues and our communities, but certainly for the families that we have the honor to serve. So, let's take a look at what you guys said. Now, here you can select more than one thing — could select all that apply — and what I'm going to do is go over and see what you had to say. All right, let's check this out.

At least, about 77% of you, already coordinate with your local DV — or domestic violence programs — to make sure that you have posters and brochures displayed. And guys, I have to say to you, this is one of the most powerful pieces that you can do as you get starting in thinking about what this kind of interaction and what this kind of connection to community for your families will look like.

When we can showcase physically, with our words, with the way that we interact, that we are a safe space, and this conversation is, you know, open and safe to have, and we can do that both visibly, with our language, it just changes things in the ways that families are comfortable to come into this conversation with us. I see about 45% of folks are both doing warm referrals and also shared training.

It's another thing that we've heard over time that has really been helpful as you're forging and sustaining, which is equally as important to those relationships. There are some memoranda of understanding it looks like you've entered into and, Virginia, I bet you're excited to see this one, almost 16% of folks are doing co-located services, which is really exciting to see in here. I know you and I were talking about that just the other day.

So, thank you guys for participating there. We're excited to see what you're doing. We hope we've given you a couple of things to consider as we move forward in this discussion about the

most commonly asked questions about what you might continue to do, and with all of that, so we can get to those 10 questions, I'm going to turn it back over to Kiersten.

Kiersten: Yeah. We had a question, too, about an MOU. That stands for a "memo of understanding," and it's typically a formal agreement that you would have with another organization. So, we sometimes get carried away with our acronyms around here, so thanks for asking. Speaking of MOU, you can see it right in front of you now on this slide, I didn't even have to say it. But we do get ...

I'm going to kick us off with our first commonly asked questions for folks: How can I work more intentionally with my community to prevent and respond to domestic violence? And I would like to just point out that someone in particular had wondered even so far as, with police, working with police. You can speak to this broadly, but it would be great if you could also touch on law enforcement connection there, too. Thanks.

Virginia: Sure. So, a couple of things that I just want to say from the get-go, when we think about working with community, you're not alone in this. I know that we, you know, have already thrown out a lot of information and potential strategies. And just to remember, you know, it's important to have those partnerships with your local domestic and sexual violence programs to really investigate what's available to community members, and based on the previous poll results, it sounds like many of you are already engaging in those conversations, which is really exciting, and to think about the range of what you might be able to do in terms of prevention on response.

So, as Brandi mentioned, you know, having displays, the posters, and brochures really sends a message to all families that your program is one that understands domestic violence is prevalent, that your program understands there are resources available, and that program staff want to help make that connection for you. So, that's one key strategy, and then thinking about if your program wants and needs additional training and information on domestic violence. So, I will also say that today's Office Hours is not a, you know, "Domestic Violence 101: What are the dynamics? How do we define it?"

That's actually one of the roles that your local programs can play. Many of them have community outreach, prevention educators that can come into your program to train staff, and also do workshops and groups for families in your programs as well. So, I'm really encouraging, again, those connections, knowing that you're not alone. We think about prevention, remembering that, well, first there's primary prevention, so stopping violence before it occurs.

So, opportunities to have conversations about what healthy and safe relationships look like. Unfortunately, you know, we talk with folks who have many years and have been in many relationships, and no one has actually sat down with them and talked about what a healthy and safe relationship might look like. What does it mean to have open communication and respect with a partner? So, there's definitely an opportunity there.

And then, in terms of prevention — preventing further harm, so perhaps you have someone in your program who has, unfortunately, already experienced violence, really connecting them with folks that can help. So, again, and again, we're going to lean into our partnerships with our local domestic violence programs, and also think about how we can prevent people who are

using violence in the relationship from repeating that behavior, and we'll talk about that a little bit in the future. And then in terms of police, you know, again, I think it's helpful to perhaps connect with your local domestic violence program because they have a lot of information about what that experience is like and it's very community — it differs by communities.

And so, you can just get some information on how police typically respond, what that process might look like, and of course, making connections directly with your local police department, calling to ask questions. I'm a true believer in, if whenever possible, a great idea to get information about, you know, process and people before an incident comes up. So, you know, rather than in that crisis situation, Googling, calling, trying to get the information in the moment, hopefully having some info in your back pocket.

Brandi: I really appreciate that Virginia, and I just have to say, this whole notion of connection to community, just within the Head Start construct, means more to me today than it ever has. And I really am grateful for your reminder about, you know, that we aren't alone because just given our own journeys and given, you know, how sometimes, you know, sensitive, worrisome, maybe even scary, these conversations might feel because we come with the heart to serve. We want to do the good, hard work together and we want to make sure we say the right things, we do the right things, we have the proper connections.

I love where you took us, Virginia, in these preparation conversations, you know, that we're having ahead of, you know, these kinds of events so that we can be ready to mobilize in the moments when we need to. I'm really also thankful that, and you guys see it here on the screen as Virginia alluded, we have created a sample of memorandum of understanding whereas Kiersten alluded, an MOU, some folks call it "MOA," for memorandum of agreement, but we have a sample one over on the ECLKC for you to take a peep at and we have some language that might be useful to solidify relationships that you might be fostering through local domestic violence organizations.

For those of you that might already have an MOU, we, you could, you know, also, we hope that you take a peep at it to see if there are things that are confirmations for you based on what you've already written or if there's things that are new and exciting that you might embed as you review those. So, I am just grateful Virginia too, for ... We get questions a lot about, "Is that my role?" "I'm this kind of expert in Head Start," or "I play this kind of role in the context of our program, doesn't that mean I would be stepping outside of my own, you know, lane, for instance?"

And what's great about this is when you get to have these conversations ahead of time, both within the construct of your program, but also as you make those connections to community, and you've explored those ahead of time. So, you know for sure that you have, you know, that depth of connection forward with your families, then it just really does benefit each one of us.

Kiersten: OK. Thanks guys. Let's move on to our next question: "There's a family member in our program that I know/suspect is in an abusive relationship. How can I get them to admit it to me so I can help them?" You know, I know that there's a lot in this question that you'll want to kind of talk with us about. I ... There was a question about someone who was on a home visit and witnessed someone hurting someone else.

So, I think, let's, if we can think about this question in two ways. One is, you know, you think something's going on, right? And you really, you know, you want to help, what should you do? Or how can you get someone to, kind of, open up to you?" The other question is, "What if you actually know something is happening? You see it and you – and you, what should you do in that situation?" So, if you would go forward on those two questions that would be swell.

Thanks.

Virginia: Great. So, this is definitely the number one question that we get at Futures when we do training and technical assistance for folks that are working in communities. I will say off the bat that having someone disclose that they are experiencing domestic violence is not the goal of our helping and support. The goal of our helping and support is really to make sure that everyone has access to information and resources that they are able to access through a domestic violence program or other kinds of community resources that might be more culturally resonant and helpful to them.

So, one of the things, again, you want to make sure that you know about your resources in the community ahead of time, so you're able to share those with them with people. We do have a Head Start specific card, which is displayed here and is available on ECLKC: "Families Thrive Zero to Five," and it has some guidance on how you can use the card in talking with families, and it really covers a range of topics, from prevention to support to helping a friend. So, I think it's a really good tool that you'll be able to access and use in your programs. So, if you suspect someone is in a relationship where they're being hurt, I would encourage you to not try to get them to admit that it's happening.

There's many reasons that folks don't feel comfortable talking about what's happening in their relationships and just offer it up as universal education, a conversation that you have with all families, resources that you offer all families so that they don't feel as if they are being singled out because it can feel shameful and embarrassing. If you're experiencing violence yourself, you might think it's your fault that you deserve it, and so, we don't want to add on to those negative feelings.

Now, if you have seen, actually witnessed someone being hurt in their relationship, again, I think this is where it's really important to, first of all, talk with a supervisor, get support around that, and also have ahead of time, the kind of training and information from your local domestic violence program so that, you know — you know, in your state, tribe, or territory, what if there are any legal obligations that you have if you witness that.

And certainly, being able to respond in a trauma-informed way that doesn't put the safety of the person experiencing harm at further risk. So, that, again, you want to have these conversations and resources with your local programs who are truly the experts in this, before you get into that situation.

Kiersten: And then, if somebody does, if somebody does tell you that they're experiencing domestic violence.

Virginia: Yeah.

Kiersten: What might be some next steps, maybe some immediate next steps there, assuming you have some of those things in place that you've been talking about, Virginia?

Virginia: So, I was trained as a domestic violence advocate many years ago. I did, you know, 40 hours of training, and it is, there's a lot of nuances and a lot of very particular skills with supporting someone. But I can say that there are a couple of key messages that everyone can help convey: "I'm sorry that this is happening to you. You're not alone." Such a big part of experiencing domestic violence is you feel like you're the only person in the world that this is happening to. "It's not your fault."

Oftentimes, people who are using violence and harm in a relationship will tell the person they're hurting, that it's their fault; so, we need to make sure that we're countering that message, and that there's help available. So this is, again, where you're able to offer some resources and support, and then once you're able to do that, it's again, based on the poll results, it sounds like many programs are able to offer those warm referrals, which is fantastic. Helping to make that connection to other resources, and then in the future, doing a little bit of a follow up, you know, "How did it go when you called that hotline or went to that group or talked to the person that we connected you with." Just to let them know that, you know, you care about them and you — you're just — you're just wanting to see how it goes."

It can be very jarring for someone who discloses something that's so vulnerable and important and big, and then for you not to follow up. People might think that, "Maybe I wasn't supposed to say something or maybe it really is my fault," and so, we just want to follow up again with those supportive messages.

Brandi: And you know, Virginia, I think another thing that ... So, is it OK, KB to jump in?

Kiersten: I was just going to say, Brandi, what are you thinking?

Brandi: [Laughing]

I read your mind. There are so many things here to pull apart. The other piece that I wanted to bring to the forefront here, as Virginia mentioned the card, and you can see it here on the screen, and we do have that in Spanish. Both are over on ECLKC for you. But behind that, if you look closely, there is also a document that coincides with the card, because wonderful thing about being able to give this card, there are like two or three things that are on my mind, so, I want to organize those for you.

One, the document that you see behind it actually gives you the context of, you know, how you could offer the card, and Virginia just did a beautiful job of showcasing for us things that we could use to say that bring folks closer to us, especially if they'd share something so vulnerable and it can make them feel worried: "Oh my goodness. Should I have done that? What's going to happen now?"

Will that change our relationship? Will that set up a whole 'nother set of things?" So, in that spirit, we want to make sure that they know that we're here, that we've heard them. And the document that you see behind that, the smaller card, really gives you the language to practice, and you guys know, I mean, if we were with you in-person today, this would be such a role-play

opportunity, we've actually done, you know, with some folks before when we've been able to share this content.

But I think it's also such an opportunity to be ready in your own minds. You know, when you get the chance to speak with a family member whose receiving harm or who has received harm and they're at that place where they're really open and up to think about it. You already have, you know, in your back pocket the words and the script. 'Cause you know, it can bring, you know, feelings for you too, worry or fear, anxiety. So, we want you to, you know, have that kind of natural as it can.

And Virginia, I want to say this one thing, but I know that you'll bring it back, 'cause this is both our, you know, one of our favorite things about this entire card is it's given not only in the context of a conversation and relationship, but also with a, what we call a "universal application." Virginia mentioned a little earlier, like the text — the crisis text line that we shared doesn't have any words like "domestic violence" connected to it. So, if a person is receiving harm and they have to be careful, you know, about what's on their phone or about what they say out loud, then that's really a strategic, you know, resource, right? Similarly, when you print out these cards, they are the size of a business card.

So, if a person who's receiving harm needs to shove it in a sock or in, you know, a garment, or keep it closed, like in their wallet, they can do that, and you'll notice that there aren't the typical kind of pictures that you might remember from public service announcements of yesteryear that have, you know, that have an individual on the front who you know, may have bruises. We want to make sure that, you know, if a family member who needs this card wants to accept it, that they can do it without worry.

So, you'll see that we strategically chose the imagery with those beautiful babies and language even, "Families Thrive Zero to Five," so that if a family member is in a place to be on sort of teetering about whether to accept that kind of a resource or not, those kinds of things are already embedded subtly for them to be able to, if they're in that place of readiness. Now, I said the word, "universal," and one of the things I love about this card, obviously you can tell there meaning, is that we figure out within the context of a Head Start program where to embed these, so that they're in common areas, so that they're part of intake packets, so that maybe you're giving them out at parent meetings or Policy Council meetings.

We know even in today's day and time where we've had to be away from each other, you guys are still incredible in figuring out ways to do, you know, drop off a packet at the front door for your families. And we also encourage that these are given in the context of a conversation because you don't have to just give them to families that you have heard, or you might suspect are in this kind of a situation.

If all of your families receive two of these cards, again, in the context of a conversation, you can say things like, "Well, we're giving these to all of our families." We want to make sure that if our families need a certain kind of support, if they are in a place where they're receiving harm, that they have this at their fingertips if they need it. If that doesn't fit for you right now, that's no problem. But if you have a family member, a church member, you know, somebody in your

community that you feel like, you know, might need it, we're giving you two just in case. I'm going to pause there, Virginia, 'cause I know that you usually have things to add there as well.

[Laughing]

Virginia: No, you know, I really think this is perfect. I do want to highlight, once you have a chance to take a look at the card, this really important piece about, "How to help a friend." And so, when you enter conversations about healthy and safe relationships, and you know, it could be that someone is, you know, they're a sister, a friend, what have you, and they really – they really want to know how to help. It's been very powerful to hear from folks, you know, that they appreciate that kind of trust, right?

By saying, "Here, I want to give you this card to share with someone else." What we're saying is, "We know that you are an important member of your community that helps others. You have the know-how to really be an ambassador, right, of healthy and safe relationships as well." And especially during these times where we feel, you know, a social distancing where it's so isolated and helpless, being able to help someone else is so important to our own mental health, right?

Whether it's volunteering at a food bank, going to the post office for an elderly neighbor, or being that close connection for someone who is experiencing violence and harm at home. So, just a reminder that, you know, altruism is — is good for us as well, not just the person that we're helping.

Brandi: And Virginia, the other thing that I would add here, also as many of you in the chat have picked up on the nuance of some of the language that we're using. I would offer it this way: This is my little humble, you know, this is the Brandi-ism part. When we come into any situation that we share with a family, we want to make sure to use person-first language.

And one of the things that we have been thinking a whole lot about is not only being in support, and you heard Virginia mention this earlier, of the person who's receiving harm, but also as family members are ready in support of the person who may be giving harm. So, with this holistic family approach, and you guys know who we are, we're a two-generation model. We just wrap ourselves around the whole family again, as they're ready and as they're open for us to do that.

So, you'll hear us using words that really put the person first and don't describe their behavior. And you've heard us do that in other places where we've shifted language from, you know, "homeless family," to "family experiencing homelessness," or even, "challenging child," or you know, "child with challenging behavior," to "child that has, you know, behavior that challenges us." So, this is in that same vein and spirit of really owning the language in a way that honors wherever we are in our collective journey, and making sure that as we build those relationships with each of the players that might be in these situations, that we do that in a way that allows those conversations to continue and keep them that person-first.

Kiersten: Thanks, guys. I'm going to move us on to our next question. This one is about ... Well, before we take this question, I think that, so this one is about wondering, "Why people don't leave?" And sort of feelings of frustration when somebody's getting hurt over and over again. But I think, before you guys speak to that, could you just take a minute to talk about, to define

what domestic violence is and — and to help us understand the ways that domestic violence doesn't, unfortunately, discriminate in terms of who it affects.

Virginia: Sure. So, this is Virginia. So, a couple things that I'll just mention. We're talking about a pretty broad definition of domestic violence. So, we're not talking specifically about laws, you know, what constitutes domestic violence in order to call the police; we really have a broader definition because we want to be able to prevent domestic violence before it gets to the point of dangerousness where the police is being called.

So, one common definition is that domestic violence is a pattern of abusive and coercive behaviors in an intimate relationship that are used by one partner over another to have — to maintain power and control. And so, that's a lot of words. A couple of things to highlight. It is within the context of an intimate relationship, so that's different than child abuse, other forms of family violence that might be occurring.

It's also important to remember that it is about power and control. Sometimes, when we think about domestic violence, we actually, consciously, we define those violent outbursts as someone being out of control when it's actually the opposite. It's exerting those behaviors to cause fear and control someone else. And it's not just the physical, right? So, it's beyond what you might typically think of physical abuse, think about financial, how money can be used, how children can be used to manipulate the situation.

Certainly, emotional and mental abuse, spiritual abuse. Again, you know, I really want to encourage you to connect with your local domestic violence programs because all of them have really rich resources and training to help you define and really understand the dynamics.

Kiersten: Virginia, that's really helpful.

Virginia: That's kind of the basics.

Kiersten: Thank you. That is really helpful.

Virginia: Yeah.

Kiersten: Just to kind of ground us, I know we jumped right in with some of the questions, but I also wondered if you could just clarify for us, you know, sometimes people they wonder about cultural norms

Virginia: Oh, yes.

Kiersten: and family norms, you know, versus like what you're talking about. Power and control.

Virginia: Yep.

Kiersten: So, what would you say to us about kind of being clear on those distinctions about what is domestic violence?

Virginia: Yes. Thank you for bringing that part of the question back. So, what we always say is that every culture has elements that condone violence, and every culture also has elements that resist violence, and what we want to do in our programs, in our lives, in our families, is to lift up those messages, values, and traditions that are about healthy relationships.

So, unfortunately, I mean, domestic violence doesn't discriminate. It happens in all communities, cultures, socioeconomic statuses. It's a social problem that has been in our society for generations, eons even, so really thinking about how we can remind folks who are perhaps saying, "Well, in this certain culture, it just happens more. It's, you know, part of what, how these people act or do."

For every cultural belief or tradition that might encourage violence, you're going to be able to find one that absolutely says, "Violence is wrong." And we, again, want to be lifting up and encouraging those.

Kiersten: That's really helpful.

Brandi: Virginia, I want to add something quickly here, too. Kiersten, maybe you were thinking about me again. [Laughing] I'm reminded of this story and you know me, I love a story and because it comes from our Head Start community that I want to offer it here because we're one, just knowing who we are and how we really like to go back to these kinds of concepts and think about it meaningfully. I mean, even with our performance standards, we're taught to think about, you know, every single word in these statements.

So, for you guys who, you know, you heard Virginia describe the definition of domestic violence. We actually have a resource over for you in the, on the left-hand side of your screen under that resource pod, it's actually called, "What is Domestic Violence."

So, it has that language captured for you that she shared out loud, and so much more. I believe it's like a three-page document but the thing that I want to bring back in the way of the story is that, when we've been able to take this dialogue out, you know, into training experiences and really think meaningfully with groups about this, we hear a lot of stories. And the one thing that I want to offer here, and I'm know we're going to come back to this later, but I don't think it's ever too early to say it, and I don't think we could ever say it too much: "We're not defined by our experiences."

And the really wonderful thing, even in that tip sheet on, "What is Domestic Violence?" is we get to address together, you know, is healing possible? And the answer is: Absolutely, Yes!" with an exclamation point. And we each have a series of strengths and protective factors, and you know, Virginia, it brings to my mind those things that you said about the cultures that make up who we are, you know, as individuals, 'cause those are the layers of those.

But I just want to make sure that you guys had not only the connection to the resource in case you find it useful, and many of you are thinking about, you know, potential pre-service, whether that's virtual or depending on where you are and what's going on, we just want to make sure that you have those, and just that sentiment. There was a mama that approached us at the end of one of our in-person sessions a couple of years ago, and she was in tears. She said to us, "You're the first person who ever said to me that I didn't have to be a statistic."

That because of what's happened to myself and my son, that it doesn't basically solidify our trajectory." Meaning, you know, there's hope and there's healing and there's possibility, and I just think that's so important, you know, to have here and throughout this conversation.

Kiersten: Thanks for like highlighting that message of resilience and that people can heal from this experience. And I just wanted to, Brandi, if you want to jump in on this question, people ask it all the time. We've actually seen it in our chat today: "Why do people stay in relationships that are abusive, or, you know, in a domestic violence situation."

Brandi: Yeah, this is certainly one of the major questions that come up in this conversation every single time we get to have it, and I'm going to start with this, and now I also want to create the space for Virginia to come in here as well. But in that same storytelling vein, there's a comment from one of our participants that comes to mind that is the event for me, every time this question comes up.

And what they said was, "I love my partner. I love my partner, deeply. I didn't want to lose my partner. I just wanted the hurt to stop," and I think it speaks to so many things here, but one of those is what we started with, which is this holistic approach, you know, support for the person who's received harm, support as folks are ready for the person who's giving harm, and how that together we can figure out what that looks like if that situation, you know, there's a lot of considerations here, of course, around safety.

But one of the other things that I want to mention here is, too, this is a place where we as helper-folks, you know, folks who have this heart to serve and really want to do that in a meaningful way, that sometimes even our own journeys come up here. And it's really hard, you know, not to be in a place of, "Well, gosh, I think I know what to do," and offering that in a way, you know, from our own perspective.

So, I really appreciate this space to kind of take a step back and say, "Well, no." Let's pull apart what's really happening for the family, what might be the next best step, and almost suspend my own reactions as much as possible so that we truly can meet them where they are, if that same sentiment really is, "I don't want to lose my partner. I just want the pain to stop."

Kiersten: Virginia, would you add anything?

Virginia: Yeah. Just quickly, 'cause I know we want to move to some additional questions. I think it's important to remember that, especially right now, as we're social distancing, the logistics potentially if you live with your partner who is hurting you, it would be pretty, you know, there's a lot of other considerations to make right in this moment.

There's also fear and danger. We know that when someone leaves an unhealthy abusive relationship, that is a time of heightened risk, and so, simply leaving a relationship does not necessarily mean they're going to be safe, and people who are experiencing violence and harm know that because their partners have often said things like, "If you leave me, I will kill you," or "I will hurt your mom," or what have you. So, you know, we just need to be aware of all of these dynamics.

Kiersten: So, sometimes, it's a protective choice that a person is making. OK.

Virginia: Yeah.

Kiersten: You know, you started touching on it, Virginia, as far as, the times we're living in right now. What kinds of resources are and services are available for parents right now who are being hurt by their partners, while social distancing?

Virginia: Yeah. So, I think the number one message to get out there is that programs are still providing services to folks that are experiencing violence. A couple of things that I want to mention. You'll notice that we have not used any gendered language in terms of who may be experiencing violence and folks who are harming their partners.

Programs, all the hotlines that we mentioned, and certainly in Head Start, you know, we want to make sure that we are making our services accessible to people of all genders, so I just want to put that out there. Domestic violence programs are mandated really to help people of all genders, and I know that that's been a question in the chat. The other thing to know in terms of seeking out services, like a domestic violence program for shelter, support groups, that kind of thing, you don't have to have a police involvement.

So, I know for people in some communities, there's a reluctance and fear around calling the police, and so just know that you can access these services regardless of any criminal legal involvement and also, regardless of your immigration status or other kinds of ... Everything is free and completely confidential. So, if that is a concern, know that you can confidently refer folks to these programs.

So, right now, we're looking at domestic violence programs still offering virtual support groups and counseling, doing a lot of advocacy for folks who might be interested in filing a restraining order or calling the police. Advocates at this point have gotten more information about whether or not courts are open and how police response might be different during this time. So, again, it's important to connect with those programs. And because we know that there are some COVID-specific benefits available for folks who are experiencing violence, advocates can help walk people through that process.

We also have ... OK.

Kiersten: If you want to go right ahead, please do.

Virginia: Let's go.

Kiersten: OK. OK. I was just noticing the time. It's really flying by.

Virginia: Yeah.

Kiersten: Well, there's been some questions about, "Are family members that use violence a safety risk to Head Start staff?" And I wondered if you could just speak about risks to staff.

Virginia: Certainly. So, we know in general, the answer to this question is, "No." Over 90% of folks that use violence against their partner exclu ... That's the one person that they target their violence toward. I will say if someone is explosively angry and violent, you would probably already know that because it would come out in different ways.

This is someone who kicks chairs and yells and, you know, we all know folks that are like that, and so, yeah, the disclosure of domestic violence would not necessarily be a surprise; however, even though we know it's not very common for someone that uses violence against their partner to lash out against others, like staff at a Head Start program, we need to make sure that we all have safety protocols, so that if there was a situation where there was, you know, an incident at a center or some kind of other, you know, dangerous situation, that you have

protocols in place so that you're not having to kind of scramble around in the moment. I do think it's important just to remember, you know, if we assume that all people who use violence in their relationships are harmful and dangerous to everyone, and that keeps us from engaging with them, we really miss an opportunity to intervene and to help them change their behaviors.

Kiersten: That's really helpful to hear. I know people have a lot of different feelings about that. But I appreciate what you, what you're saying. I want to make sure that we get to some questions that have come in that have to do with healing and with disclosures as well. So, some people are wondering if ...

Sorry, I lost sight of the screen there. Some people are wondering what to do if a child discloses and I hope that we can also kind of, after thinking a little bit about that, thinking about the healing and resilience that is possible for children and for families who may be receiving harm.

Virginia: So, I know that we saved this question for last and we really went back and forth because, in our heart of hearts, we think that this is probably the most important question and answer of today. Really thinking about healing and resilience, right? That's what Head Start Heals is all about, this campaign.

And while it can be scary and kind of overwhelming to think about the long-term impact that experiencing violence might have, you know, really some of the devastating outcomes that we see, we also know that our families are full of resilience. We talked a little bit about those protective factors. And because Head Start really already focuses on family strengths in other areas, that's how we also want to approach this issue of domestic violence.

So, on the screen, there's a little snapshot of one of the resources we've created that is really about healing and resilience, and it shows gestures — gestures that parents can use to help young children who've experienced domestic violence heal. And the secret is it's not just for parents, it's also for Head Start staff. So, really thinking about those concrete strategies to promote healing and emotional self-regulation, small things that you can do in a home visit, in the classroom, even on the phone talking, you know, if you're talking with parents and kind of coaching them through different ways they can support children.

Kiersten: Brandi, did you want to ...

Brandi: Yeah. I do. You know I can hardly stay quiet there for very long. The other thing I was going to say is that, you know, these same gestures work on grown-ups. I mean, there are so many in here, and of course we just changed the application or the access point, for instance, that we might, you know, have with them. But these same kinds of strategies that we would use to wrap around in the way of resilience and healing for our littlest ones, are certainly applicable to the adults, you know, in their lives as well.

So, one of the things that we've done in programs before is have folks really think about the, what they look like and how you could concretely manifest them for kids. And then, we take it one more step and ask the group to do that for families as well. And if you get really savvy, you know, as another extension is to think about how you use those same gestures at the community level, because we really are all in this together and this community connection is so incredibly important.

But Virginia, I wanted to circle back to something here that Kiersten offered to, and it was about disclosure, 'cause this has come up in chat a couple of times now. I wonder how you would advise us here. If a child discloses something or uses words that give us, you know, may be cause for pause or, you know, or wondering, or if they flat come out and say, you know, "This person in my home is hurting this person." What would you, how would you advise us? What are the things that we should sort of put in the front of our frame?

Virginia: So, as always, we want to focus on safety as the priority. Before any kind of response, kind of taking a deep breath, managing your face. I don't — I don't have a natural poker face, so I just have to work on that. And really thinking about, you know, how to support the child in that moment. You don't need to get into a lot of questions and investigate; certainly, thinking about how you can talk with the parents about what's happening and offer support.

So, we know that one of the most important things in terms of promoting healing and resilience for children who may be living in a home where there's violence, is to offer support to what's called the "non-abusive parent," right? So, the person who is not harming and trying to figure out services to support them. I would say that those are kind of the key elements.

And again, this is not something you want to do alone, and you want to do this in consultation with your supervisor and also getting support from that local domestic violence hotline to see what's available for the child and also, for the adults. You know, just those scale-down-to-young-children messages around, you know, "What you're telling me sounds scary. I'm sorry this is happening to you." And then, of course, you have the resource of your mental health consultant within your program that you can draw on.

Brandi: You know, Virginia, I appreciate that you brought that right to the forefront. I mean, we're required to have those mental health professionals, you know, a connection into, you know, our Head Start programming. And I really love what you taught us earlier, too. And, you know, it's a lot of great information for us in the Head Start community to just acknowledge, you know, what the child must be feeling. "Well, that sounds like a lot. I'm just so glad you shared with me," and acknowledging where that child is and just letting them know that they've been heard [Inaudible] the way that we do.

We're really good at that. And as you say, Virginia, then making that connection back with all of those again, resources that we would have put together, and probably already have together in a lot of situations in service of just a moment like this.

Kiersten: And a reminder about those resources too, right? Some of the ones we have available, which we've talked about earlier in the presentation, some of you were wondering what were those resources that were mentioned earlier? So, you have that here.

Brandi: And yes, Kiersten, all of these resources are also in Spanish, just for folks to have as well. I know we got that question a couple of times in chat. So, when you go to the ECLKC, you'll see each of these over there, and the link that was on this previous slide, which I'll go there quickly, has both languages for you. And all of the things that we've showcased for you today is under that one link. So, if there's any link that you grabbed, that's going to be a good one.

Kiersten: Well, I really want to thank you both so much, and Neal and Amy for being with us today and answering some of our are harder questions on a really challenging topic. I want to remind folks that we do have the ongoing campaign, the Head Start Heals campaign, and you can join some of the related MyPeers communities. Here's some information about how to do that. We have some open communities on Mental Health, Opioid Misuse, Substance use Disorders, Staff Wellness, and we have the PFCE Deepening Practice community.

Lots of folks are joining MyPeers right now because of our virtual working status. Upcoming events for Office of Head Start, Head Start Heals Campaign: We have on the 21st another Office Hours on "Supporting Families Impacted by Substance Use." The following week, we have one on "Family Engagement and Child Welfare," so, partnering with families who have some child welfare involvement, and then we have another webinar done by the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement in early June called, "Preparing for Challenging Conversations with Families." I want to remind you of where you can send information about the Head Start Heals campaign.

Email us at trauma@eclkc.info. And of course, we've talked quite a bit about the ECLKC today; so, here's that final link. I think I'm going to end up by leaving this link that Brandi mentioned and the text HOME up on the screen for those folks who'd like to grab it before they go. Thank you all so very much for joining us today and thank you again to our presenters.