

Organizational Culture: An Important Link to Staff Wellness

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Sangeeta Parikshak: Thank you so much, Jenn. It's really nice to be here with everybody today. As you heard, my name is Sangeeta Parikshak, and I lead the behavioral health work for the Office. And we're here today to talk about a very important topic that is near and dear to my heart: staff wellness. The Office of Head Start recognizes and appreciates the vital importance of staff and staff wellness in promoting positive outcomes for children and families. We know that staff who are happier, healthier, less stressed, and experience less depression are also able to engage in higher quality interactions with children and their families. Basically, what I'm saying is, you are essential, and your physical and mental wellness is vitally important. Wellness is a complicated topic. In order to achieve wellness at an organizational level, it is much more than taking a deep breath or going for a walk.

This slide here, you see on the screen shows all the elements of wellness that the Office of Head Start lifted up in the information memorandum that we released in September of 2021. As you can see here from the slide, wellness is about mental health; it's about adult mental health and how there's a strong link between adult mental health and child mental health. It is also about making sure that everyone in the program is safe. It is also about the culture of the program, which will be hearing more from our speakers today; making sure there's mutual respect and teamwork; ensuring that employees are aware of their rights; and it's about doing everything we can to ensure that staff feel valued and have the resources they need to stay in their jobs, to do the important work of providing comprehensive services to all Head Start children and families.

After the IM of Supporting the Wellness of All Staff In the Head Start Workforce was released, the Office of Head Start developed a webinar series across our four National Centers to provide an in-depth look at staff wellness and to provide some strategies that hopefully resonate with you to improve wellness for yourself and those around you.

Today is the third webinar in our series on addressing staff wellness during unprecedented times. Thus far, in the webinar series, we have heard about ways directors have prioritized wellness within their program, from creating individual opportunities for staff to feel a sense of belonging and connection, to creating innovative wellness challenges to target wellness as a group. We have also taken time in our last webinar with the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement to focus on the joy and meaning behind the work that you all do with a specific focus on family service workers. As one participant said in that last webinar, these testimonials of what our staff do each and every day are creating ripples of hope in making our collective future a better one for our children.

I am really very pleased to be able to continue this discussion of wellness today with the National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations. Wellness certainly does not happen in a vacuum. It is vitally important that we look at the topic of staff wellness from a systems perspective. I would now like to turn it over to my colleague, David Jones, who is a

federal project officer for the National Center and has a wealth of experience himself in the area of organizational wellness. David?

David Jones: Thank you so much, Sangeeta, and welcome everyone. Again, my name is David Jones. I am a senior program specialist and the federal project officer for the National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations, and it really feels good to be collaborating with the Health and Behavioral Health National Center for such an important topic. What do we want to say about organizational culture in an effort to support staff wellness? To me, again, this is so critically important because the organizational culture typically sets the tone for everything that happens. What you're going to hear today from my content experts is they're going to engage you in some meaningful discussion of some of the essential tenets of organizational culture that contributes to and support staff wellness.

I really liked and anchored in on a comment that Sangeeta made about taking a deep breath, because really what we want people to do, if you look at the slide, is you want people to be thoughtful about being in a space where they feel safe, where there's mutual respect and teamwork, and all of the things that are pointed to or referenced in this wheel.

I want to bring a few different things that I think that my colleagues from the National Center are going to address and speak to, which is when we think about organizational culture, what is a healthy organizational culture that supports that wellness, and what does it actually look like? You're going to hear some things ... If you were fortunate enough to be with us at the PD meeting, and you heard the Gallup presentation, there was an anchoring on 12 engagement elements. You're going to hear some things today about those engagement elements under the auspices of staff organizational culture and staff wellness.

You also going to look at the role of leadership in supporting a culture or in developing and creating a culture that supports staff wellness. There is going to be some very specific things that you want to think about that resonates again with this slide on how do you take care of the people that are in your work, in your organization, that's doing the work? What about safety, what about organizational order, and how tuned in is leadership into the needs of the people that are doing such important work enhancing the lives of children and families?

I like to say that at PMFO we talk a lot about systems. We talk a lot about the connection between system and services. I learned recently, in looking at one of the webinars that my team created, that the job of any great leader within an organization is taking care of the people that takes care of the people. Essentially, what you're going to hear today from two very esteemed colleagues within the National Center is everything that I think we believe in, and it supports the great work of the health and behavioral health system as it relates to staff wellness.

Without further ado, I turn this over to Jacquie Davis, who is the professional development manager at PMFO, and Jeanette Boom, who is the director of management development programs within UCLA, one of the partners for PFMO. Jeanette?

Jeanette Boom: We thank you so much, David. Hello, Head Start! Good morning, good afternoon! As David said, I'm Jeanette Boom with the UCLA Anderson School of Management and with the National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations. I oversee the

UCLA Head Start Management Fellows Program and the new Director of Mentor Initiative. In addition to Jacquie and myself today, we will also have two very special guests with us, who I will introduce to you a little bit later in our presentation. Jacquie?

Jacquie Davis: Hi, everyone! I too am really happy to be here with you today. As David mentioned, I am Jacquie Davis, and we are so excited to bring this presentation to you as it relates to linking organizational culture to staff wellness. Jeanette, I think we should just get into it and get started.

Jeanette: I think so, too.

Jacquie: Our first thing here is, we want to just start off by really saying “why.” We know that Simon Sinek, the author of “Start with the Why,” he has become known for that message. When you know your why, your what has more impact, and you are better prepared to get to the how. That is ... As we look at this, we just want to take a minute and just kind of sit here for a second and just ask you this question: Why is organizational culture important to a conversation about staff wellness?

If you have any thoughts, you can drop them in the chat. I know we have a really large audience, but we might catch a couple. And if not, we just want you to sit with that and just carry that through as we move forward with this conversation. As we continue in this conversation ... Jeanette, did you see anything in the chat before I move on?

Jeanette: No, nothing yet, Jacquie.

Jacquie: OK, right. As we continue, we want to also do that other part, which is focus on the how. As we go through this presentation, we're going to offer you a myriad of strategies that can give you some ideas about how to build a strong culture and also making the connections between what David was just saying and what this title says: Making The Organizational Culture with Staff Wellness. That's our outcome, our goal for our conversation within this next hour. And how ...

Jeanette: I was going to share some responses in the chat.

Jacquie: OK, great.

Jeanette: Reno Lopez wrote, “because people are important.” Carol Bellamy wrote, “Organizational culture sets the sets the tone for the entire program.” Emily also shared, “An unhealthy culture leads to staff feeling unwell.”

Jacquie: Yes, for sure. Please and thank you.

Jeanette: And “Unhappy employees don't bring their best.”

Jacquie: Yes! Unhappy employees do not bring their best – that is so true! What we want to introduce to you is what David mentioned a few minutes ago about Gallup. Over the course of nearly 20 years, Gallup has continually reviewed 12 statements and repeatedly found that they are key to employees being highly productive and feeling good about their work, similar to a couple of those comments right now. And they are known as Gallup's 12 Engagement Elements. What we want to do now is just give you a minute to sit with these 12 Engagement Elements, because Gallup says that underneath the changes and organizational culture are basic

workplace needs. One of them, of course, is clear role expectations, the ability to do what they do best. And, of course, communication about their organization, their mission, and purpose.

We want to take a minute ... We're going to share each of these 12 Engagement Elements, and as we share them, see how they resonate with you. What does it look like for you in terms of the work that you do? How would you answer these questions within your organization? I'm going to start, and Jeanette and I are just going to read them to you so you can think about them.

At my work my opinions seem to count.

Jeanette: My fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.

Jacquie: The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.

Jeanette: There is someone at work who encourages my development.

Jacquie: At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.

Jeanette: In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.

Jacquie: My supervisor or someone at work seemed to care about me as a person.

Jeanette: I know what is expected of me at work.

Jacquie: I have a best friend at work.

Jeanette: This last year I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

Jacquie: I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.

Jeanette: Last but not least, in the last seven days, I have received recognition for doing good work.

Jacquie: Thank you all for allowing us to do that. We offered these in that way because we want you to think about them, because when employee needs are met, they don't just become happier, they become better at what they do. These 12 elements, when they're used in the workplace to consider they have a great impact on what we're talking about today – staff wellness. These statements are so powerful. They can be used to develop, like we're talking about, stay interviews, stay tools, you know?

Jeanette, I have to say this because I was kind of not shocked, but just kind of “a-ha.” The other day – what's today, Tuesday? No, today is Monday, so it had to been Friday – on the Today Show, they had this big piece on what people are doing for the great attrition – now it's the great attrition – keeping their people. Guess what was the first thing they put up on the screen? Stay interview – that people are developing stay interviews. We just want to bring that up because we've been talking about it for a while, but now it's reached epidemic proportions. You have today the Today Show talking about it, so I just wanted to bring that up in terms of these. This is one how. It's a huge how because these statements – you can do so much with these statements. We have another how that Jeanette is going to share with you and talk to you about. Jeanette?

Jeanette: Great! Thanks so much, Jacquie. How does organizational culture support staff wellness? In a McKinsey and Company article titled – now let me get this right – “Thriving During a Pandemic: What Moves the Needle on Organizational Health.” The authors noted that companies that are thriving in today's uncertain environment are emphasizing a set of management practices that can be categorized into three themes. The first theme is doing things differently. Here, organizations are constantly looking at things from a growth mindset. They're looking for opportunities to grow. They're looking for opportunities to innovate. In particular, they're emphasizing bottom-up innovation – that is where ideas are bubbling up from people at all levels of the organization. Companies who are doing this management practice, they also have a weekly Q&A session with their employees. One, because they're sourcing new ideas, but two to me, I think more importantly, shows that everyone's input is valued and heard.

The second theme that they're doing is protecting the core. Protecting the core is all about becoming more effective and more efficient. Its focus is on improvement. Organizations that are protecting the core have put systems in place where everyone in the organization knows their clear roles and responsibilities. And all of this is leading to effective decision making. The third theme that they're doing is motivating through meaning. Here, organizations are focusing more on meaningful recognition and inspiration to maintain and actually even increase employee motivation. Here, leaders are engaging with employees in a conversation or dialogue matter rather than telling them what to do. They're instilling trust and empowerment. They're also letting their employees know that their contributions matter and how their work is connected to the overall success of their organization.

Jacquie, I'm curious, how do you see these three themes connecting to Gallup's 12 Engagement Elements?

Jacquie: Jeanette, thanks for that. A couple of them are just right on. I mean, it seems like they pick those straight from the Gallup 12 Engagement Elements. For example, in “protecting the core,” “I know what is expected of me at work,” and then the “motivating through meaning,” “In the last seven days, I have received recognition for doing my work.” They're connected, and we can go deeper, and we can talk more and read more about these three elements, and we'll be able to make more connections. But I just want to draw those out as we continue this conversation. And this, of course, is another how, right, Jeanette? Another set of how.

Jeanette: Definitely, I think it contributes really to a healthy and successful working environment, where – both David and Sangeeta mention – it's mutual respect and teamwork [Inaudible] feels empowered, and they know that their leadership is supportive of them.

Jacquie: For sure, thank you. Then, of course, as we're having this conversation and for any Head Start program, a monumental indicator of operating in a state of wellness is how the governance structure operates and performs. The governance structure is the heart of workplace success, resilience, and wellness. And as we see there, provide leadership and strategic direction. That's the goal, as we all know so well, of these three: the governing body, the policy council, and, of course, the management staff and bringing back together. If that's at the core of this work of this team, we really can't even move forward to have a positive workplace culture and/or a really thriving staff wellness program going on if we're not

connected to our leadership. It's part of the board's role to connect with that organizational culture. And the Board ... This threesome here, they set the stage for how an organization of grant recipients, how you all operate out there. It's very important to bring this to the surface and make this the embodiment, the base of any of the work that we're suggesting and talking about, and that you're going to hear from Corey and Maria in a few minutes. I just want to bring that up.

As we move on and we get to this conversation, the big conversation that we're here for, organizational culture. Culture is like the unspoken social order of an organization. Culture shapes the attitudes and behaviors in a wide range and sustaining ways. There's a lot of academic literature, there is a lot of all kinds of content and information out there about organizational cultures. You know the quote that Drucker says all the time: "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." When you really delve into this conversation about organizational culture and you get deep down in there, you can kind of see how that statement has a lot of merit.

As we go on, we want to lift up four attributes that were identified by Edgar Schein and some of his colleagues. One of those attributes is that culture is shared. It doesn't just exist within a single person. Another one – the second one – is that culture is pervasive. It goes through many layers, and it is applied very broadly. The third one is culture is enduring. It can direct the thoughts and actions of the groups of the many. And, of course, the fourth one is culture is implicit. People are hard wired and compelled to recognize and respond to it. You come into a culture within an organization, within your grant recipient programs, and the culture that's there is the direction that your people will begin to move in as they become part of that work environment. That's one of the reasons why really thinking about that culture, as you are bringing people on from that very beginning – the onboarding, the interviewing, and all of that. I wanted to bring that up because that's an important part of building that culture that you're really looking for.

Jeanette: Can I add something there?

Jacquie: Sure, you can.

Jeanette: You can also look at culture as a living creature. It's so susceptible to daily changes. An organization consists of so many different people, and every single thing contributes to that, to your organization in so many different ways.

Jacquie: Yes, for sure. Thank you for that, Jeanette. Now we're going to take a minute, and we're going to look at these eight distinct cultural styles. These cultural styles were identified by Harvard Business Review in some work that they did around the culture factor. We're sharing these from the perspective that these are eight, and as we're sharing them and you're thinking about it, you could probably say, "We're a little bit of this, and a little bit of that, and a lot of this." We want you to be able to look at these from that perspective and with that thinking in mind. We're going to go through them, and we're going to go through them in a way that we're going to just say what they are. And between me and Jeanette, if we come up with an example of an organization that might ... We're not going to promise that we can do it for each one of

them, but you all may be able to come up with some as well that you might be thinking about. We'll just share them if we think of something. I just want to share that with you.

The first one is caring, and this one is a cultural style that looks like this: They focus on relationships and mutual trust. That's really important in an organization that has culture as one of their main cultural styles. The next one is purpose and that one is being idealism and selflessness. An organization that really has purpose at their core is really thinking of themselves – thinking of that organization, that has been idealistic, having a lot of ideals and that selflessness – thinking about other people, other organizations, the community, and all of that. Then we have learning, and this one is exploration, expansiveness, and creativity. I know I have one for that – the same one we talked about yesterday, right, Jeanette? It's Tesla! The Tesla, if you think about that, in order to come up with that car that runs on – it doesn't run on gas, whatever it is it runs on – they had to be prepared to do a lot of big exploring, and do it big time and to be creative in that. That was an example for me, [Laughter] that we talked about yesterday.

The next one is enjoyment, and this one is where fun and excitement has a really big part of how your culture is put together and how it shows up. Another one is results, and this one is achievement and winning. An organizational culture that is really focused on results is about achievement and winning. The next one is authority, and that's defined by strength, decisiveness, and boldness. Then we have safety, and that's planning, caution, and preparedness. We talk about this one and think that many organizations have safety as somewhere really, really close to their heart because their safety is so important in the work we do with the children and families. Then of course order – that's respect, structure, and shared norms.

These are the eight distinct cultural styles and, as we were just reading them, I would love ... I know you guys probably all came up with “yeah we're a little bit of this, and a lot of this, and maybe not so much this.” These are the eight distinct cultural styles. We embrace them from the culture factor.

Maria McNair: Building trust and boosting morale.

Jacquie: Did someone ask me a question? OK, we're good. Now, what I want to do now ... We're ready for the big moment, and I'm going to turn it over to Jeanette to get that moving.

Jeanette?

Jeanette: Thank you so much, Jacquie and, yes, I couldn't help myself either – when you're showing all the eight distinct cultural styles, I'm like “Whole Foods is like purpose or Patagonia, right? Enjoyment is Southwest Airlines, right?” And safety, I always think insurance companies – kind of boring!

Jacquie: [Laughs] OK, thank you for that.

Jeanette: Now, I'd like to introduce you to our two very special guests today. First, we have Corey Holcomb, who is the early childhood education director at Community Action Alger Marquette in Marquette, Michigan; and Maria McNair, who is the deputy director at Lutheran

Services Florida in Jacksonville. Welcome, Corey and Maria! Thank you so much for joining us here today.

Maria: Thank you for having us and inviting us to take part in this.

Jeanette: Oh, definitely.

Corey Holcomb: We're very happy to be here.

Jeanette: Thanks, Corey. As Jacquie was sharing the eight different cultural styles, I'm really curious to hear which style or combination of styles represents your organization's culture. And then, how do you think your culture has contributed to your staff's well-being. Maria, would you like to go first?

Maria: Great question! For us at LSF, it's been a little interesting because we inherited a program that came with, unfortunately, a negative history that became our own on day one. Building trust and boosting morale became two big priorities as we transitioned the staff under the new organization under LSF and under our new culture. We had to figure out a way to balance accountability and transparency – accountability for producing results for the grant that we have been entrusted to do. But also, we had to balance that with fun. We had to make sure that staff felt comfortable. That's what we focused on. We also recognize that we spent a great deal of time together. Most of our waking hours are in the workplace.

For us, making sure that we were promoting a fun work family was kind of part of the key messaging that we were sending out to staff, but also, we had to make sure that we demonstrated that in our work. From top leadership down, we had to make sure that we were promoting that family and health comes first. And it doesn't matter if it's the Executive Director who's going through something and we're supporting her, or if it's our frontline staff at the center that's going through something that we need to support them. Those were some of the things that we focused on, and I think that directly contributed to the overall wellness of our staff.

Jeanette: I love that Maria – family comes first, whether it's your extended family, it doesn't matter. Corey, how about your organization?

Corey: Well, I would say, similar to Maria, several years ago, actually, right before the pandemic hit, we took a look at our organization and noticed that we were starting to experience some negativity and some dissatisfaction with our staff. We really wanted to get to the root of that and see what we could do to make some positive changes in our organizational culture. I think the three that kind of stand out to me from your list was caring, purpose, and enjoyment. Caring, because one of the things that we did to kind of get to the root of what was behind the culture was we asked our staff in a survey – we use the survey based on the five languages of appreciation in the workplace – and actually, we were a little bit surprised that the number one thing they wanted to do was they wanted to feel valued and to be appreciated, feel like they were appreciated. That goes to the caring.

The next one was purpose, and we felt that it was important for us to go back to the why – why of we were doing things, why we were asking people to do things. We made a particular effort

to connect things that we were doing with performance standards or different regulations. People understood what their job meant in the big picture.

Then, of course, like Maria was saying, you have to have a sense of enjoyment of your work. If you don't like going to work on an on a regular basis – and everybody has a bad day – but overall, you need to look forward to going to work because the work that you do is so important to the children and families that we serve. We really looked at how can we improve staff morale, build a better sense of community so that staff really look forward to working together as a team. Those were some of the things that we took a look at as an organization and got to think through what can we do to make some changes to create the environment that we want to work in and our staff want to work in.

Jeanette: That's awesome, Corey. It brings you back to what David said: "The job of any great leader is to take care of the people who are taking care of the people." Leadership's role in informing your culture, intention – caring and purpose and enjoyment. Leadership there should be emphasizing teamwork and positive relationships and really emphasizing your contribution to the greater cause. Those are really all excellent.

I'm sure our whole audience is very curious as to what strategies you have implemented to ensure your organization's culture supports a healthier workforce – can you speak to that, Corey?

Corey: Like I said, we started with asking the staff what they needed. One of the things that rose to the top was better communication. We really had to look at what we were doing from a management level, a leadership level, and recognize that we were actually part of the problem as well as part of the solution. We have a catchphrase now: "Use more words." We've looked at different ways that we can improve communication, but also help the staff feel heard in what we're doing. One of the strategies that we've implemented is a staff advisory committee. We started out with doing a listening session with each member of the staff. They all had a chance to speak individually with a member of the management team, and really had a chance to share with us what their perspective was, especially after the difficult two years that we've gone through. We wanted to know really what they were experiencing on the frontline working with children and families, as well as some other thoughts about our organization in general.

Through those listening session conversations, a couple of themes rose up to the top. We brought those to our staff advisory committee to discuss. Every position in our grantee agency and had a seat – a representative – on the staff advisory committee, and we brought those themes on to that committee to talk through and come up with some suggestions of what they would like us to do to make some changes. One of the things that they suggested was they wanted more opportunities to connect with each other, which can be difficult when you have multiple centers located across a large geographic area like we do. We created a virtual message board where they could have a chance to post questions, or suggestions, or ideas with each other, and to share with each other that way.

We've also implemented a recognition program. We call it THRIVE, which is an acronym. It stands for "Together Head Start Recognizes Individuals as Valued Employees." We do spotlights

each month and really highlight some of the good things that our staff are doing, as well as an opportunity to get to know a little bit more about each other.

Then we really, again, looked at how are we letting the staff know what we're doing and why we're doing it. We also started sharing our management team minutes with all of the staff so that they knew what we were discussing and some of the things that we were talking about and working on, and they could stay up to date with that. One of the feedback that we heard was they would bring something to the management team and then not know what happened to it afterwards. Even though we were having continued conversations, we didn't always close that feedback loop with them. That let them know that, yes, we do value their input, and we're taking their ideas into consideration as we try to improve our program.

Jeanette: That's wonderful. Corey, can you say again what THRIVE stands for?

Corey: Sure. Together Head Start – which, the S isn't part of that [Laughs] – Recognizes Individuals as Valued Employees.

Jeanette: Love that. I think that our audience is also loving that, and I love your "Use more words." It's all about improving communication – it seems like that became key for you.

Corey: Very much so.

Jeanette: Maria, how about in your organization?

Maria: Sure. We wanted to make sure that we were very intentional about our wellness work. It is embedded throughout our program design and program goals. One of the program goals actually is specifically focused around staff wellness. That allows us to make sure that we are looking at it systematically, from everything that we're doing – from staffing the program, looking at the classroom environment, and making sure that it fosters not only safety, but also, it's fun. We have mindfulness embedded into our schedule; what we call "brain breaks" is embedded in the curricula. We also looked at the health insurance offering, and we recently changed to a new insurance system that comes with an app that promotes wellness – and not just in terms of physical, but it's healthy eating habits. It's really focused around healthy behaviors. It also has some features to allow for us to do different challenges together as part of teamwork.

We also have our own local initiatives that we do through ... Whether it's walking ... We have what we call a "wellness bingo poster" that is posted at each location. Staff can pick and choose the healthy behaviors that they feel that they can implement, and that they're happy implementing so that we're not tied to one single thing, even though we have done those big agency-wide weight loss challenges and things of that nature.

We also do a lot to show employees appreciation – that's one of the feedback that we received from them early on, that they want to feel valued and appreciated. We do that through a number of initiatives. One is the LSF Heroes Award, and that's given to somebody that really goes above and beyond in exemplifying our values. That individual gets not only that recognition, which is shared during the town hall meetings, but also receives a day off that they can use at any time.

We also have the High Fives – those are smaller type recognition. Employees that accumulate up to five High Fives would also get a day off. Then we have our weekly communication that includes kudos for individuals or departments that have done amazing work during that prior week. More recently, with COVID, we've also added some bonuses to that that we give to staff that is not necessarily linked to performance but rather it's just an appreciation for the hard work they do for showing up, even with the level of uncertainty that we have seen in the last two years.

Those are some of the things that we've done. We also, as an organization, have implemented a trauma-informed model, and that's across – not just in Head Start – but we really are on this journey across all of our staff. And we're implementing a model called Trust-Based Relational Intervention, and that comes with not only training, but now we're getting into the next phase of it, which is coaching around specific strategies that are embedded in TBRI.

We do have mental health support for children, for families, but we also are very intentional about supporting our staff. LSF as an organization have a division called LSF Health Systems, and it's all about mental health. We have staff from other divisions that do webinars, and our staff are able to take part in that. We also did a huge campaign to promote our Employee Assistance Program. And then the last thing, which I believe is also part of what Corey is doing with her team, is really looking at reflective supervision as a practice that we do across the board. That also helps for more respect and professionalism, but also, really put value in the voice of the staff. We really wanted to make sure that our staff felt heard. More recently, we started working around JEDI – Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion – and have done what we call “Voice of the People Tour,” similar to what Corey did – just going out and providing a small and safer space for staff to share their feedback, concerns. And then we do communication as a follow up to make sure that there is a solution to what they shared with us.

Jeanette: Wonderful, Maria. I know some people are curious – could you share more a little bit about the High Five program how they get the high five.

Maria: Sure, the High Five is the nomination initiative. Any staff member can nominate an employee; they don't have to be part of management. Say I'm a teacher, and I see my teacher assistant doing something amazing to support a child or to support a family, they can submit a high five nomination, where they describe what the person did to go above and beyond their work. And then they submit it through our corporate HR office, and they capture that. And then at the town hall meetings, they also promote all the people that receive a high five as a result. One an individual accumulates five, and they can ... There is no limit; they could do five, get a day off, and then they accumulate another five, and they get a day off, but they do get a day off every time they accumulate those five.

Now, the LSF Heroes Award is something really extraordinary that the person does. And that is, once the nomination goes through, whatever that period is – if it's usually once a quarter that they look at it – when they're doing that, they're looking at different departments and different divisions of LSF. It doesn't always have to be somebody from, say, Head Start, but the individuals ... And I have been fortunate to be one of the ones that was nominated at some point and receive that Heroes Award. But it is a great feeling, and we've had many of our staff do the same. And it's just really good to see that camaraderie that is built whenever somebody

is selected, even if it's from another program. Definitely I would encourage ... When I was at Next Door, they used a similar, it was Rock Stars, or different stars, and depending on how many you accumulated, you also got an opportunity to receive rewards. A lot of programs have done different things to encourage recognition of staff. Definitely encourage others to do so if they do not already have established program for it.

Jeanette: I love that! The camaraderie that those programs have been building in your organization – that just speaks volumes and contributes so much to the wellness of your staff.

Given all these strategies – and I know there's like a lot going on in the chat, which I know – Jacquie, I will get to you in a little minute – but given the strategies you have put in place, what do you see is the connection between the organizational culture and staff wellness? How does one impact the other? Can you share a little bit about that, Corey?

Corey: Sure. Definitely I think there's a direct link because if a staff member is not feeling their best, whether it's because of personal stresses or work stresses, then they're not bringing their best to the children and families that we're trying to serve. As much as we can do as an organization to help each individual be their best, that's only going to have a bigger impact on the services that we provide. Like Maria mentioned, we've really invested in the reflective supervision model. We made an impact by having all of our leadership team trained in reflective supervision so that we were able to offer that to staff on a more frequent basis. Because we really noticed that they needed a chance to talk through what was going on and have somebody to bounce things off of, just things that were going on. Having that opportunity to go to multiple people in our organization to do that reflective. If they didn't feel comfortable going to their direct supervisor, there was somebody else in our leadership team that they could talk to. If they weren't even comfortable going to somebody within our organization, then we offered reflective supervision through our mental health consultant. But we offer that individually.

We also started group reflective supervision so that centers and teaching teams – and we do one for our transportation staff – they would just have an opportunity to get together and talk about what was going on. Because the more people hold that in, the more that we've seen that that just starts to become an anchor on people. We really wanted people to feel like they had a safe place to go and talk about what was going on. And again, we recognize through the pandemic that as much as things are impacting the families and children that we work with, it's also having the same impact on our staff. They're just as challenged by child care issues when their own children can't go to school. Then, how do they get their own job done and still take care of the kids that they have at home? Or challenges with finances and things that everybody is experiencing. We wanted to give people the opportunity to be able to put that aside as much as possible so that when they were doing their jobs, they could focus their best on the services that Head Start was trying to provide.

Jeanette: Thank you so much, Corey. What about LSF, Maria?

Maria: We know that staff who are happy and healthy are more productive, and we know that the more that they can bring the best version of themselves. Typically, the more engaged they're going to be with our children, and even with one another in fostering their co-teaching

relationship with their peers. And there is a direct link, of course, between having a good organizational culture and promoting staff wellness. We know that wellness can help achieve those results.

To me, it's almost – I'm trying to think of how to say it, when they say about who comes first, the chicken or the egg – in order to have a good, positive culture, you have to have wellness embedded into it, because that's directly linked to your workforce. They're the ones doing the work and delivering the services that are being provided. But also, the more that you invest in wellness and the more that you do it, the stronger your culture is going to be. The more that is going to be resilient in change and evolving with everything that is happening. I do see it as interconnected. But also, I think that, overall, it helps to define the overall organizational health for your agency.

Thinking of it in terms of not only your employees are well taken care of but then it's going to also help with the systems that you have in place, your shared governance, how you structure your grant. It's going to really affect everything else that you're doing. To me, it's a direct correlation and definitely something that, as leaders, we have to make sure that we're taking the time to invest in. It's not just another thing, but it's one of the more critical things that you need to do to make your job easier.

Jeanette: Thank you, Maria. Jacquie, are you seeing any comments or questions in the chat?

Jacquie: They muted me because I think I was doing too much writing and all of that, and I was making noise. Yes, I did. I saw a couple, and it was early on that Latisha asked – I think it was for Maria – your wellness bingo, some ideas for that, for the wellness bingo. Did you have anything you want to add to that to help Latisha out?

Maria: Sure. The wellness bingo works in the same way that bingo cards and the bingo games operate. We have a card with different blocks, and the blocks have an array of different healthy behaviors – it could be going for a walk, or I'm going to choose to drink four glasses of water at least so many days out of the week, or I'm going to have a salad at least one day out of the week, or whatever the case might be – it's just an array of things. What we put in the bingo cards actually came as feedback from the Fun Committee, which is our employee advisory committee that helps with developing some of these wellness strategies. It's an array of things. And then typically, the way that it works is each center has a poster. Like I said, all of them have the same type of activities, and they just change periodically.

Once they're selected, they have to have – at least 80% of the staff at that center have to participate in whatever the activities they decide to do. And then each employee checks whatever they're going to do, and then they mark if they have done it for the period of time that was designated. And when they get a line across or vertical or whatever, then they get a prize. The prize is something that we do at the center. It could be a team-building activity where we bring whatever it is that they want. It could be a luncheon, it could be just a healthy snack, it could be things like that. Oftentimes, we have an amount of what is given, but the center has feedback on how they want to use it.

Jacquie: OK, thank you for that. Latisha, I hope that helped you out there. Thank you, Maria. Paul had a question: "How do we assure that people feel heard or valued even when we cannot

implement the ideals or directions, and there may be some disagreement about between accountability and responsibility, and all of that?" I don't know if Corey and Maria, if you all have something that you wanted to add to that particular question, something really quick, like a 30-second response to that.

David: Jacquie, I'll weigh in, too, after they do.

Jacquie: OK, thank you. [Laughs] If David is going to weigh in, I probably won't have to say anything. Corey and Maria, did you guys have anything that you want to share about that question?

Corey: Sure, I'll chime in on that. I think giving people the opportunity to share their ideas, even if you can't implement all of them, they still feel like their input is being considered. And for a lot of people, that's enough, just to know that you know their input was part of what was being considered. I do think that having our staff advisory committee has helped with that, because then they know that multiple people are looking at suggestions, and it's not always just the very top making that decision.

Jacquie: Thank you so much, Corey. Maria, did you have anything to add?

Maria: I would just say part of our promotion of Fun Family work, we try to let them know that like any other family, we care about each other, but we're not always going to agree. When those moments come, we just have to be able to talk it through. We're going to overcome whatever challenges come. They know that there is a process for their voices being heard. And what we try to do is at every meeting opportunity to keep reinforcing "You said this, so we took this action." If somebody shares their concern, "Who have you talked to about that concern?" We can always keep letting them know that we may not necessarily go with your idea, but we're going to address the concern and go with an idea that the team is going to agree on. I think communication is key.

Jacquie: Right. Thank you so much, Maria. David?

David: They nailed it! Honestly! I was just going to say, what we're hoping for – and most organizations have to get to this place over time – is a management structure that is grounded in solid communication, but that communication has to be bilateral – it can't always be top down. You got to hear from the folks who are close to the children and families, that are doing the work, because their input is so valuable. And if you can get to a place where you're constantly striving for that structure, then you'll get to a place where you understand that sometimes there are decisions that have to be made that will incorporate feedback, will inform the final decision, but it won't be one that'll make everybody happy. But it hopefully will be the best decision because you have stakeholder input.

Jacquie: Thank you so much for that. "Trenches data is key," Stacy is saying – I just saw that. That's an interesting comment, but I got it, I think I know what that means, and that is very important. And thank you for that, David – for sharing that.

I'm going to wrap that up, but I do want to say this, because I tried to hold my tongue: That organizational culture ... that's why that's so important – that you have a positive organizational

culture, because these kinds of things happen. And communication and all of that is part of building that solid, strong organizational culture.

I'm going to be quiet. I'm going to turn it back over to Jeanette to close out Maria and Corey, thank you.

Jeanette: Thank you. Before I let you, Corey and Maria, go, I was wondering if you had maybe one piece of advice that you would share for other Head Start recipients as they work on their or try to develop more their organizational culture and staff who are in this program.

Maria: I would say just for them to give themselves – especially if you're a leader that's looking into implementing something like this with your organization – give yourself grace and know that it's going to take time. Cultures are not built overnight. It takes a lot of time before you get to a place where you feel like “OK. We have some stability, it's consistent, people know what it is, and they know what to expect.” Give yourself that time, and then think systematically. It's not about a strategy or an activity, but really thinking about your whole organization holistically and how wellness fit into each of those pieces.

Jeanette: Thank you so much, Maria. Corey?

Corey: I would say, you really have to think about changing organizational culture, like a cycle. There's so many cycles in in the Head Start framework, but you really have to look at what you're doing, try to implement it, assess the results, get some more feedback, go back, and try something else. It's like Maria said, it's not a one-and-done thing. You really have to keep revisiting it. And the other thing I would say is, staff input is critical. You need to have the support from the leadership, but the voice from the people.

Jeanette: Thank you so much, Corey. All right, Jacquie, I'll hand it back to you.

Jacquie: We heard this at least 10 times throughout this whole presentation: People want to be heard, respected, and valued. We just want to lift that up, because that is a huge part of this – that staff voice, Corey just said a second ago – we just want to lift this up as we round out with Jeanette.

Jeanette: Thank you. You know it. We know it: When people feel heard, when they feel valued, when they feel respected, they feel good, they want to give back. And I also think this is connected to purpose, because obviously we've seen a lot of studies that suggests that having a sense of purpose impacts your well-being. It can reduce stress, you can make healthier lifestyle choices. If you think about this this match, all chemical reactions require a certain amount of energy to get started – this is called the activation energy. That's my science side coming out. For example, starting your car you turn the key, you push the button, this causes a spark that activates the burning of gas or electricity. I ask you: What can you do to find your activation energy and help others also find their specific purpose? Purpose provides activation energy.

Jacquie: Thank you. I guess that's going to round us out. We have some next-step questions for you all to just think about with us coming to a minute. What strategies and ideals excited you or caught your attention? And then the other one: What are your next steps, and how are you going to move forward as you think about these? We want you to think about that. We saw some of your thoughts in the chat, and we just wanted to end this by saying thank you.

There was some comments in there about the actual session. And yes, that will be provided to you and you will be able to see ... I'm not sure if all of the comments and the things that Corey and Maria shared are there, but I mean you can catch ... Maybe talk back with your region, and they can connect with us if there's something in particular that you really wanted to know more about.

I do want to ... Before we close out, we want to announce that the National Center on Development, Teaching, and Learning, on Tuesday, April 26 – mark your calendar – that National Center – we call them DTL, the National Center on Development, Teaching, and Learning – are going to do their presentation on “Prioritizing Staff Wellness in Unprecedented Times: Practical Strategies for Improving Staff Wellness.” That's going to be on Tuesday, April 26, and mark your calendar. You'll probably be getting the e-blast soon – that'll give you the actual time – but if you mark that date, you'll have it, and you'll know. Don't be doing anything at that time because that's probably going to – that is going to be another dynamic presentation, really sharing some thoughts and ideas.

With that, I'm going to say, thank you all for participating and being here with us today.

Jeanette: Thank you so much, everyone. It was an honor to be here with you today. Have a great rest of the week!

Jacquie: Thank you, thank you. Have a good one!

[Music playing]