

Practical Strategies for Improving Staff Wellness

Joyce Escorcía: Hello, everyone, and thank you for joining us today. This is our fourth webinar in the series on prioritizing staff wellness in unprecedented times. Today, we are going to be focusing on those practical strategies for improving staff wellness. And again, thank you for joining us, and we look forward to hearing some great things that are happening out there in your program as well, and we're going to get started. And I am joined today by some wonderful colleagues from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning and also from the Office of Head Start. We are going to introduce each other along the way so you can get to know a little bit more about us and the work that we're doing. And with that being said, I am going to turn it over to Sangeeta Parikshak, who's going to get us started.

Sangeeta Parikshak: Thank you so much, Joyce. And hello, everyone. I'm Sangeeta Parikshak. I lead the behavior health work at the Office of Head Start. I am a clinical child psychologist. I'm just really pleased to be here with you all today to talk about something that is very near and dear to my heart and I think very important for all of us in the Head Start community. We are here today to continue our series on addressing staff wellness during unprecedented times. And I think it goes without saying that the unique stressor in all of our lives – which is the COVID-19 pandemic – has naturally elevated the importance of adult wellness. And that as we are focused on recovering and moving forward, we really need the staff who serve the most vulnerable children and families in our country to be well.

We know that research tells us in order for children to be well, adults caring for them need to be well. And it makes a lot of sense that the vitally important and often pretty demanding job that Head Start staff have can be accomplished most effectively if they are well themselves. However, making staff well-being a priority and doing so in a way that is easily incorporated into the day is much harder to accomplish. This webinar series has been focused on hearing about ways Head Start programs have been working during this time to support their staff and make sure they feel valued and heard.

This slide here that you see on your screen, it shows all of the elements of wellness that the Office of Head Start listed out in the information memorandum on wellness that was released in September of 2021. And as you can see here from the slide, wellness is fairly complex, and it can be addressed in a myriad of different ways. Wellness is about adult mental health and how there's a strong link between adult mental health and child mental health and it is about making sure that everyone in the program is safe. It is also about the culture of the program, making sure there's mutual respect and teamwork. Ensuring that employees are aware of their rights. And it is about doing everything we can to ensure that staff feel valued and have the resources that 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 this webinar series across our four National Centers to

provide an in-depth look at staff wellness and hopefully provide some strategies that really resonate with you to improve wellness for yourself and those around you. Today is the fourth webinar in our series on addressing staff wellness during unprecedented times. Thus far, we have heard about ways directors have prioritizing wellness within their programs, 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 focused on the joy and meaning behind the work of direct service staff reminding each other of the difference that Head Start makes every day in the lives of so many children and families. We have also focused on organizational wellness, working to understand how to integrate wellness at a system's level.

Today, I am so pleased to be able to continue this discussion of wellness with the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning who will be providing practical strategies for improving staff wellness. I would now like to turn it over to my colleague and friend, Jamie Sheehan. She is the co-federal project officer for the National Center on Early Childhood Development Teaching and Learning. And she also comes to us with a wealth of experience herself, having provided services directly to children and families. I know she truly understands the importance of wellness for staff in early childhood programs. Jamie, I'm going to turn it over to you.

Jamie Sheehan: Thank you, Sangeeta. As she mentioned, I am Jamie Sheehan, I am with the Office of Head Start and I do come with lots of experience as a former teacher and as a Head Start education manager. Prioritizing staff wellness is a topic that is near and dear to my heart as well and making that a top priority. In case you didn't know, there are about 127,000 staff members who provide direct services to children, such as teachers, teacher's assistant, home visitors, and family child care providers, and that's not including the managers, coordinators, and directors who support them. It's really exciting to see OHS recognizing the importance in promoting staff wellness, so that staff in the Head Start workforce can feel successful in achieving school readiness goals and promoting positive outcomes for children and families.

All staff in the Head Start workforce have an immense responsibility of providing or performing a job that supports young children's early learning, their health, their mental health, and their family well-being. And in order to perform this critical role staff need to feel safe, valued, and heard, as Sangeeta mentioned. We've learned from programs who pay particular attention to staff wellness and building community were able to retain more staff. Here we have that human connection really making a big difference. As managers, we are very familiar with the top-down approach, but in this case of supporting and promoting staff wellness, this is truly one cause that we can get behind and really promote. When staff wellness becomes embedded in practice within Head Start and Early Head Start programs, staff are able to regulate their emotions and feelings effectively. They're able to reflect on their stress level across the day and have the tools and the strategies to buffer that stress.

This is not an easy job. We know that staff wellness needs to be integrated into programs at all levels – so seeing show it up in classrooms and staff meetings, professional development

events, coaching and supervision. Consistency and continued time for these conversations, reflection, and skill building is necessary. This is not a one-time effort. These are things that need to be built and recharged in our culture, that these are things that we can talk about and are encouraged to talk about. Those opportunities to build trust and for staff to feel confident in their wellness is important and valued by many program leaders. When staff are attuned to their own staff wellness, they are better able to promote and provide safe nurturing and responsive relationships to children and families, and that's really what's important.

Today's webinar from the National Center from Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning is going to focus on three areas within the IM that came out around supporting wellness of all staff in the Head Start workforce. Programs encouraged, and what you see on the screen, foster a working environment of mutual respect, trust, and teamwork where staff feel empowered to make decisions and know that program leadership are there to support them. And that takes time right, building again that trust. Programs make mental health and wellness information available to staff about health issues that may affect their job performance and must provide staff with regular scheduled opportunities to learn about mental health wellness and health education. And then the next point that will be in this webinar, our programs are encouraged to consider ways to improve workspaces and incorporate more physical and safety practices and healthy options into their daily work routines.

I really want to just take a moment and thank you all for attending today and for making this a priority in your day. There are so many things that we know take you away from your day-to-day responsibilities. We are very happy to have you here. And just by being here, you are acknowledging to your staff that they are important and that their well-being is also important. I hope within today's session you find some strategies that also work for you because your wellness is just as important. It's like being on the airplane and when they tell you – when the flight attendants say, "When the oxygen mask drops, put that mask on yourself, and then help the person next to you." I hope that today has some bilateral strategies for everyone. I'm going to turn this over to your hosts, Joyce and Ragan.

Joyce: Thank you, Jamie, and thank you, Sangeeta. And we really are looking forward to digging in a little bit and just talking about what are some of those ideas and strategies for supporting staff wellness. We're going to go there and get some real practical ideas and strategies, and we hope to gain some from you as well. And then also, we really want to talk about how the wellness wheel can be used as a tool to promote staff well-being. Again, when we say staff well-being, it starts with us first to ... What Jamie just shared, that thinking about what can I do to promote my own staff well-being – my own well-being from what I hear today and then also, what can I do to help support staff as well. That's the plan for the day.

I do want to invite you to share any questions or ideas as we go along in the Q&A box. We will be – we're in there and we're looking, and we're eager to connect. And also, if you have any questions, please feel free to put them there. We will answer the questions that we can. And then afterwards too, if we need to, we can follow up and questions will be gathered and all of

that will go into MyPeers into the staff wellness community. We're always looking for ways to connect there as well.

All right, let's just start off by pondering or musing and thinking about how do you define staff wellness? What does that mean for you? We're going to just invite you just to drop that into the Q&A. Just something to get us thinking and you can carry that definition and that meaning with you as we have our conversation today. But what does staff wellness mean to you? How do you define that? And again, you can just share that in the Q&A. It could mean being inclusive. Katie says balance, that's definitely one. Lisa said it's all about staff enjoying what they do. Definitely, that's part of it as well. Mental health. Being mindful of your staff, Stephanie shared as well. Taking care of one mental, physical, and emotional health. Feeling ready to help others, that's great.

And let's see, they're coming in fast now. Empathy. Resilience. Positive outlooks. And all these are great – great ways to think about staff wellness and all of these things. The good answer is – the great answer is that everyone's right. Everyone's a winner. All of these things really connect into what defines staff wellness and what staff wellness looks like. And the strategies in one program are going to be very – could be different in another program. Again, it's about taking that idea or strategy that we share today. Don't feel overwhelmed like you've got to do it all, but pick out what are some of those things that would fit the need for your program now, and say, “OK, what does that look like for us?”

Thank you for sharing in the Q&A. Again, just something to get our minds going about what do we really think about staff wellness. We're also going to invite you that you keep in mind those effective teaching and home visiting practices and relationships with children, keep those in your mind. And then we're going to take a few minutes to explore first what we know about staff wellness and thinking about staff, like teacher, family, child care providers, and home visitors. Let's talk a little bit about what we know about staff wellness. Because really, before we can talk about how can we help, it's good to know maybe what some of the research tells us about teachers in Head Start. This is what we found, that ... There's extensive research and information out there about the health and wellness of children and families from low incomes and children and families within Head Start. And we have a lot there that we can connect to. But there's very little about health of those working with those children and families.

We wanted to share a little bit of data that we found from a study published by Whitaker and colleagues back in 2013. And it compared the physical and mental health of women working in Pennsylvania Head Starts to the health of women with similar sociodemographics. The study identified that women working in Pennsylvania program had higher rates of stress related to health indicators. And that included things like severe headaches, migraines, lower back pain, obesity, asthma, high blood pressure, diabetes, pre-diabetes, like all of the things, right? It identified that women working in Pennsylvania Head Start programs identified at least three of these health indicators – stress-related health indicators in their own life.

Now what's even more concerning is – so that sample was higher than the national sample is one – but what's even more concerning is that almost 22% reporting having three or more of

those stress-related indicators, but when we looked at that national samples only 12.6, like 12 and 1/2% of women in the national sample reported three or more of those stress-related indicators. That's a little bit of like an aha moment.

The research also tells us about how Head Start and Early Head Start teachers were doing regarding mental health. The prevalence of diagnosed depression was higher among Head Start staff than the national sample. Also, in addition to poor physical health, they were struggling with poor mental health. It's kind of like both of those things. Also the study, even though it included just teachers and looking at teachers within this specific state, we imagine that these patterns are similar to other staff in Head Start and Early Head Start. Again, just talking a little bit about what we know.

We also know that in the past couple of years that people across the country that all of us have struggled with mental health during the COVID pandemic. And then a recent study looked at physical, mental, and financial stress impacts of COVID-19 on early childhood education. These researchers, they went out and they asked early childhood educators in Indiana about their mental health before, during, and – before and during lockdown. They went out and said “OK, like we want to know about your mental health before and during the lockdown.”

The number of early childhood educators experiencing moderate to severe mental health concerns almost doubled. That was one thing. Symptoms of stress were 2 to 3 times higher during lockdown than before. And then prior to lockdown, 1 in 10 early childhood educators reported difficulty controlling their temper, while during the lockdown almost 1 in 4 expressed that same concern. And we've provided the link if you want to know more and dig into that bit of research more. We've got the link there for you as well. But again, just some really eye-opening and interesting information to think of. We know that mental health of our education staff also affects the children and families that they work with.

And to Jamie's point, about the importance of being well in order to support those that staff is working with. Also, recent research indicates that staff wellness is related to feeling less confident in work with children and negative relationships with children. There's a definite like correlation there. And that staff who are happier and healthier and less stressed and experience less depression are able to engage in higher-quality interactions with children. That's kind of the why. Why is this so important, and why are we focusing in on it?

Again, we just thank you for sharing the time with us. We know that staff wellness really needs to be integrated into programs at all levels. Group care settings, home visits, staff meetings, socialization, supervision, and all the different places and levels across the program. And a consistency and continued time for those conversations, for those reflections, for skill building, for just being mindful and present, that it's necessary, and it has to be intentional. And that adult well-being is linked to child well-being, and that the better adults are doing and feeling, the better the kids are going to do. That research also suggests that supporting staff well-being and that social and emotional confidence may improve their performance and quality in those settings and interactions that's happening. Again, now that we've laid a little bit of that foundation, I'm going to start talking a little bit about some of those strategies.

We want to start that part of the conversation with this poll. When you think about a flat tire, what do you – what's the first thing that kind of comes to mind? And we see these four choices. and we're going to send this poll out, and you're going to choose one. What's something that happens when you have a flat tire? Do you have difficulty steering? Is that ride just not as comfortable? I know I can remember many times I hear that “thump, thump, thump.” Is it you lose control of the vehicle? Increases stress level? And it could be all of these. We're going to invite you just to just pick one. Like what is it? What is that thing that kind of comes to mind? Many of us probably have – we can think of a time when we had a flat tire, and it just didn't make us feel well at all. I'm going to give just a few more seconds here. I'm watching to see who's still – how many we have coming in.

And again, it can be like all the things together right. We have them across the board. Again, we're ... This is one of those that everyone's a winner and everyone has kind of shared the right answer. All of these things can happen. We can have all of these experiences when we have that flat tire. And the reason we brought that up is that we're going to talk about the wellness wheel. We want you to think about your wellness wheel like that tire. Are there certain areas that make things a little bumpier? What's happening within your life when you're thinking about wellness that may make for a bumpy ride? May make that stress a little bit more than usual? All of those things together. Again, just things to think about while we dig into some of these strategies. And now, I'm going to turn it over Ragan.

Ragan McLeod: Thanks, Joyce. As Joyce said, I'm Ragan McLeod. I am also with the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. And I am so glad to be here with you here today to talk about the Wellness Wheel and to share some strategies with you. This is the Wellness Wheel. You might have seen it in other presentations that we've done or the other National Centers have done. And just as Joyce said, you can – as we're talking about this, I want you to think about that flat tire that we just looked at and thought about. Just to give you a little background. The folks at Northwest Missouri University have developed some really great tools and resources around balancing the Wellness Wheel. They have identified these six facets or areas of wellness: financial, physical, social, emotional spiritual, and intellectual, which are the ones we have here.

And really again, thinking back to that flat tire, if we have one area that's a little bit – that's not balanced, then that can really throw off our tire or our overall wellness balance. We really need to find balance across all of these different areas. It doesn't mean we're perfect in every one of those areas, but if we notice that we are really not focusing on our financial wellness, that's a place to really turn our focus back to.

But you may think that there are some other dimensions to your wellness wheel. For example, some people think about environment wellness or occupational wellness. We invite you right now to if you have other areas of wellness that you consider to include those in the Q&A as well and tell us what are your areas of wellness, as we're talking about this. What we're going to do in the next few minutes is we're going to walk through each one of these areas of the Wellness Wheel and talk about specific strategies that you can use for each one of those with your staff.

And also, as we've all mentioned, things that you might use – strategies you might use for yourself as well.

I noticed a couple of people have added in chat that – Mary has said family wellness. Relationship wellness from Lisa. Nutritional and creative wellness. I love that one from Martha. Definitely some – your wheel may not look exactly like this, but thinking about that you have this Wellness Wheel to consider. As we're going through these next few slides and talking about these different areas of wellness, we're going to give you lots of strategies. What we really want you to do is to think about your staff and yourself and think about what's going to be relevant and helpful to yourself and to those you work with. What would work in your program? What will be culturally appropriate and meaningful for them?

Let's start by talking about physical health. And really that's about taking care of your body to support positive health and functioning outcomes. This includes having an active lifestyle, so being active throughout the day. Maintaining a healthy diet, so eating a balanced diet to fuel your body and drink lots of water. Maintaining hygiene and disease prevention, so keeping your body clean and free of disease by washing hands, brushing your teeth, sleeping the right amount. And physical fitness, so intentionally strengthen your physical body by working out. That's all encompassed in this physical health realm.

Let's talk about some ways that you might support physical health in your program. You could create healthy snack guidelines and post those in the staff room. These might include suggestions for healthy snacks or ideas for choosing health snacks, like choose snacks that are low in sodium, fat, and cholesterol. No candy, chips, donuts, or high-calorie sugary snacks. You could also provide staff and children with water bottles. This would be a way to encourage drinking water throughout the day. You could incorporate movement activities into professional development events, so things like having learning centers or doing a stand up make and take activity. Having gallery walks or scavenger hunts. Things that really add in some movement when you're doing those professional activities.

These are a few ideas. We'd love to hear if have you some other ideas of you want to add those to the Q&A that you use to promote physical health in your program. Some of the other ideas that we see, adding more outdoor time or recess to your schedule. Providing flexible seating options, like standing desks or balance boards or yoga balls. Another one that we see is to have a movement competition or a movement challenge where say every day at noon everybody has to do 15 jumping jacks or something where it's something that we're all doing across the program. You could also add green to the classrooms by having plants in your rooms. Or if you have the space, growing a vegetable garden, that can be great for the staff and if you're a center for the children as well to be involved in.

I see some additional ideas coming into Q&A. Having a sunshine cart from Fay with healthy snacks. Oh, walk and talk individual meetings from Ally. Lots of good things that people are doing to promote that physical health. Thank you so much for sharing your ideas. I see lots of really good ideas in there.

Let's also talk about social health as the next part of our wellness wheel. And this is really having healthy friendships, understanding how to be a good colleague and a friend, and knowing how to navigate social situations. Again, if you have some great ideas around social health, we'd love for you to pop those in the Q&A, and we'll share a few of them. Some of the strategies that we wanted to share. One is to begin staff meetings with opportunities to meet other people. You might do this through those kinds of icebreaker activities, like human bingo or speed dating with question starters. But some way where your staff can interact with each other at the beginning of staff meetings or throughout those staff meetings. Another idea is to have a Padlet that your staff can add their kinds of ideas or interests or ideas for social activities in the community. Just a way to share those ideas with each other. Also, you could plan some community building activities, like have a community game day or a community potluck, healthy potluck, say a salad bar potluck or a community talent show. Those are a few ideas.

Some – Janice suggested making time to connect with lunch carry-ins. Having some guidance you organize groups or communities of practice for some of your professional development. Let's see. Having an organized welcome for new staff. That's a great idea to really incorporate new people in your social circles in your program. Or even family events or staff could be another way to really build that social health. Great. Thank you again for those of you who shared ideas. I'm going to turn it back over to Joyce for the next piece.

Joyce: Thank you, Ragan. And I'm also seeing in the chat come up asking if we'll be able to have a copy of all the great ideas that have come forward. And one, I'll say, some of the ideas are shared via the PowerPoint, but also, we can pull some of the ideas from the Q&A as well and we can share those via MyPeers as well. Definitely. Lots of really good ideas. There's strength in numbers, so I'm loving this. The sunshine cart stood out to me just because anything involving snacks. I thought ... I appreciated that one as well. But definitely, we can find a way to share those ideas via MyPeers as well in that staff wellness community.

Now, we want to keep of moving along the wheel, and we want to talk about financial health. When we think about financial health, of course, we are all about thinking about advocating for ways to increase salaries. When we think about financial health, it really is more than just how much money one makes. That financial health is really about managing your money and debt to support you in the present and in the future. And many of our staff have experienced financial stress. Many of us have experienced financial stress during the pandemic in different ways. And financial stress is a condition that really is a result of financial and/or economic events that create anxiety, worry, a sense of lack, or there's not going to be enough. And it can also be accompanied by those physical stressors that we were just talking about that people experience that ... That when someone struggles with financial health, that it can eventually bubble up that way as well. Definitely some things to think about here.

And now, we want to continue the conversation about these ideas around how we can support financial health within our program and for our staff. We're going to ask you just to continue sharing in the chat all of your great ideas as we share some of the ones that we have here. When we're thinking about that financial health, it could be things like providing financial

literacy seminars. I know I was able to support that when I was in my program. We just did financial literacy seminars and just took education and knowing resources and all those things that are out there, so that's one way. Finding local discounts to share with staff. Like I was just sharing with Sangeeta before, I am the ultimate bargain hunter. Finding those local discounts to share with staff. And even with here, it could also be ... You yourself may not be the bargain hunter. That may not really get you as excited, but maybe you have a group within your program that that's really what they love to do.

Again, finding like are there folks that this really identifies with them? Maybe they could be your hunters there for finding discounts and sharing. Exploring loan forgiveness opportunities. Again, information is power. Being able to share with staff, like are there opportunities there for loan forgiveness that many staff may qualify without even knowing it, for public service loan forgiveness. And right now, there may be additional benefits to those that apply before October 31st. Just to get that information out there. And we've also included a handout with that information with the resources for the webinar. Again, just some more information to share there. And then seeing what has come up in our chat. We see Santana shared like office lunches, gift bags. We can keep talking about like those different ways to show appreciation. What are some other ways to think about promoting financial health as well?

And again, just keeping sharing away in the Q&A. It could be like maybe you have like a "deal of the week" e-mail that goes out, maybe that's something. Encouraging staff to use employee assistance program, the EAPs, through their human resource manager. That's a great idea. There's so many things available for staff that way as well. Katie shares being aware that just being aware that staff are living in different circumstances and may be in poverty. Just being aware and being sensitive to that and just thinking about that and like, "OK, so what can we do to help our staff move forward and feel connected, feel affirmed, feel like 'Hey, I've got support around me?'" That's another great idea. Maybe trading goods among staff. A little bartering, maybe you have your own little swap shop within your program for certain things. Creating coupon baskets. Those things are all great ideas.

And then giving education staff a supply budget. This is a big one. Thinking about resources and budgetary things that maybe there's funds available for them throughout the year so they're not spending out of their own money. That's another thing to think about that way as well. Lots of great ideas here. Erin says that they have a financial advisor who's always available in our program. And that's great, getting that connection there to more information. Just some ideas, please keep them coming. We're going to keep going along the wheel here. Again, just start thinking about that intellectual health and keep the conversation going in the Q&A.

When we think about intellectual health, that other spoke on the wellness wheel, it's about having that love for learning, just being curious, expressing creativity, and believe in yourself just capable of growing and learning. When we think about for our staff and say "OK, so what can we do for ourselves and for our staff to really give that sense of empowerment and that sense of 'Wow, you're capable of growing and learning and always stretching,' and moving towards different goals and interests in life?" When thinking about that, like what does that

look like right in your program? Could that be thinking about different forms of professional development? Maybe it's like creative or art space PD events, and kind of thinking of that. Even having guest speakers from outside of early childhood education introduce different topics during PD events. Organizing article or book clubs and that has actually come up in the Q&A a couple of times as well, article or book clubs.

Also, puzzle clubs. I'm a fan of puzzles, so even that, anything to stretch our brains and just know that like we're still growing and evolving. And I just encourage you to share in the Q&A what's happening in your program or could be happening. Maybe some ideas that have come to mind. What could this look like in your program? While we're waiting for some things to come in the Q&A. I see Maddie says knitting. You could have a knitting group. I would be all in on that. Carrie also says like college student support groups. I think that's a great idea. I was actually a part of a college – like a support group within my Head Start program, and I was so grateful. And it actually really helped me move forward with my own education goals. I was a part of that idea, so thank you for sharing that, Carrie.

Another thing is like organized like visits to places like museums, like things related to history or interest within the community. All of those kind of things. Karen said that she wants to support staff with thinking about preparing for teacher certification. Any of those support groups and connections there, those are all great ideas. Morning yoga, recipe swaps. All of those are really great ideas. Thank you for sharing and keep those ideas coming, please.

All right, now let's talk about the spiritual health for just a few minutes. When we think about spiritual health, it's really living with passion and purpose in accordance with your core values and with a moral compass. When we're thinking about that, think about what's happening in our program or what can we do to support staff where they're really living in that place of passion and purpose that aligns with their core values and their own moral compass? Like what's happening or what could happen? When we think about that and spiritual health within our programs, what does that look like? And it could be opportunities for guided meditation. It could be having times during staff development, and I've seen this pop up in the Q&A as well, to really consider your why and that could focusing in on the why. Like what is that thing that drives me? But giving staff time to process that and share that if they're comfortable during a PD event. It could be really beneficial.

Also, it could be providing opportunities for yoga breaks or classes. And I've seen yoga come up in the QA a few times as well. David shares in the Q&A that playing calming and meditative music can also be really great for a few minutes. Yes. Discussing core values and how they relate to our work. What does that look like? Definitely. And then Karen shares that having a staff wellness group at each site to see what – where on the larger wheel as different things, what's happening to have that coordinated effort. That's a great idea, Karen as well to connect the dots there. And then Roxanne shared that she has like a cohort of groups that she's a part of. That's a great idea as well. Just keep sharing those in the Q&A as far as like what is it, what are some other ways that you can promote that spiritual health within your program? Again, what does that look like there? All kinds of great days – all kinds of great ideas coming up there.

And as we're continue sharing, we're going to keep going along the wheel, and we want to talk about that last spoke on the wheel, that emotional health. When we're thinking about emotional health, it really is about the understanding of emotions. This is something that we really work with our children and families with. But again, that parallel process of support is understanding emotions – like staff, do we understand our own emotions? And does staff understand their emotions? And is there a space created to where they have the tools that they need and are able to identify their own emotions?

Learning how to process and express those feelings in a healthy way. And having coping skills to deal with the stress and just the demands of life. We all have these – this need to feel safe, to feel satisfied, to feel connected, and if they're not met, it's just natural to feel stressed or worried or frustrated. And that happens with children and families that we support and that happens to us, it happens with our staff. It really is important to think about “OK, what can we do to really foster that sense of emotional well-being and thinking about emotional health?”

And in the Q&A I see ideas keep – are coming through. But just share what's happening, what does that look like? We talked about what it is, now what does it look like in your program? That could be like celebrating milestones and staff successes. I'm all about a celebration. Think about what are the small things that we can celebrate? What are big things that we can celebrate? We just – do we need to celebrate every once in a while that we made it to Friday? Whatever that is, we need to celebrate. We made it to day 100. Whatever that is within your program, and think about what are some of those milestones that we can celebrate?

Starting PD meetings with that deep breathing and intention setting, and I've seen that pop quite a bit in the Q&A as something else. And then providing daily and weekly mental health tips, again, whether that's verbally, via an e-mail, a text, all of those things can happen. And again, just going to ask you to keep sharing in the Q&A, like what does that look like for you? It could be Meditation Mondays or a different day of the week. Something else that's come is easy-to-remember tips for refocusing, because things are going to come up and how – what can we do for staff to help them bring them back to center? Encouraging staff to take mental health days if needed. Lots of really, really great ideas coming up here in the chat.

Let's see, Michelle says that in her program, that staff meetings are started with a question for everyone to answer. Monthly calendars with daily wellness tips. All of those are really great ideas. And again, all of this can look ... Emotional health practices can look different in your program, depending on what your specific need is at the time. It can even look a little different say across centers, depending where different sites are and what's been happening in those different communities. It's really about taking these ideas and making your own.

We've discussed these six types of health, and as Ragan mentioned, there can also be other areas. And now think about that flat tire that we talked about before. We know that none of these components are exclusive of the others. That really one area can affect another area and that everything that we do and is about us is all connected. When we think about the Wellness Wheel, and this is an activity and we've included the Wellness Wheel and information how to facilitate these activities that you could do with the Wellness Wheel and with the resources for

this webinar. When we're thinking about the Wellness Wheel as a whole and the individual pieces, we could really use this with staff in different ways. As a personal check-in, how full is each piece of your wellness wheel? How full is each piece of the wellness wheel for staff?

And again, back to a point that Danny made in the beginning about putting our mask on first, taking care of ourselves first so we are well to help others. Maybe it's about doing a check-in with ourselves on, "How am I doing with these different pieces or considerations of wellness in my life and taking that self-inventory?" Another way to do it is a check-in for what's in place for staff. Taking the Wellness Wheel and saying, "OK let me think about this as far as my program." Maybe you and your team go through and say, "OK what are we doing for these different areas?" Kind of use it as like a group check-in.

And then again, just as a self-check-in for all staff, how full is each piece for everyone to facilitate that discussion? We're not going to be walking through and doing that activity during our time together, but again this was developed by the Northwest Missouri group, and the guide and everything that walks you through the activities where they actually go through and fill out each piece, there's different questions that they ask. And staff or your team or yourself can go through and fill it in on like all right, do I do this? Do I not do this? Those kind of things. And then from there, you can have some intentional conversations and planning. We've included that with the resources. Just some ways to use the wheel that we talked about today.

And again, here you see, you may have some parts of the wheel that are filled in like, "Yes, I'm doing this," and you may have some that are a little iffy, maybe not all the way but working on it. Again, it's just a way to be able to maybe put our finger on different opportunities for growth and also to identify things that are going well. With all that being said, we can use all of the strategies that we've learned to really develop like personal wellness plans. And the question here to really be thinking about, what can we do to support and protect the well-being of staff? For all the reasons that we talked about, that we know that programs that pay attention to staff wellness and building community are able to retain more staff. Retention and just the workforce in general, like we know there are things happening and turnover. These are just ways to build morale, build connection, build a sense of community. That when staff are attuned to their own wellness that they're better able to provide a safe, nurturing, and responsive relationships and interactions with children and families.

Again, we've given you a lot to think about. The question is, what can we do with the information that we've been given? And with that being said, I'm going to turn it over to Ragan who's going to talk about a couple of ideas on how to use some resources.

Ragan: Thanks so much, Joyce. Yeah, we have shared a lot of ideas with you today for how to support yourself and your staff in these different wellness areas. But we want to share too with you that can help you to – or you and your staff to organize how you might use some of these strategies. And this may look familiar to some of you. This is what we call an activity matrix, and you may have – actually, if you're in the center-based programming, you may have seen this used with children. We often use this with the children to organize across the different goals or needs that we want to address across the day in a classroom or in a group setting. But we can

adapt this for staff as well, and they can really organize how they want to use these different wellness strategies across the day and across the week.

What you see here on your screen is a blank matrix that a teacher or a family child care provider might use to identify specific times during the day and the week that they'd like to really embed a wellness activity. They could customize this however they want. This is again, a sample, so they might customize the schedule. And then they might add wellness activities. They might add one a day or a couple a week, or they might add one at every single time point. It's really up to you – well up to the staff person as to how they want to use those. In your resources, there are samples of these. Here's just an example of a matrix that can be used for any staff member. The one we just looked at really was more a center-based or a group-based care setting. This could be used for any staff member, including for a home visitor.

And again, they could create this however it works for their schedule. They could change what the schedule is and use this to add wellness activities every day or a few times a week. However, it really fits their needs and their interests. Let me show you a completed version. Here's an example of a completed matrix, again for someone who's working more in that group care setting. And you can see here this staff person has added activities for almost every time slot. And some of those activities change from day-to-day like in the before arrival time point right, they have something a little bit different in each one of those time slots. And sometimes they're exactly the same. For the arrival, the activity is the same across those. You can really adjust this however or the staff person can adjust this however they want to really fit their needs. And they may not want to fill in every slot because that may feel overwhelming. And certainly to start out with, they may not want to fill in all those spaces, but only fill in some of those.

And then again, here's an example for other staff, again home visitors or you family child care, I'm sorry, your family service worker or any of those people that might not be on a center-based schedule can use something here. And again, you can see some things change each day, some things stay the same across the day. As a program leader, what you might do is you might fill in a couple of these slots. For example, if you know about a financial webinar that's coming up, you might add that to the schedule for that week, so that they – your staff people have that as an idea that they can access. Or if you're doing one of those movement challenges that we talked about earlier, you could go ahead and put that on here so that it ... lunchtime every day, everybody has a different movement challenge they're doing. And then staff people can fill around that. Or you may just give them a blank copy, whatever seems to work best for your program and how you want to structure that.

But this can be a tool to really planful – be planful about doing these wellness activities across a week. Another resource we wanted to share with you is something that might look familiar as well if you're a coach or are participating in coaching in your program, and this is a wellness plan. Let me just say that we are not in any way saying that coaches should be coaching on wellness, this is really a different way to use what we call an action plan but for wellness. And this would be used by the staff person themselves. They could set a goal for what they want to

do around wellness and then identify those specific steps towards achieving that goal. It really can be a way to help them take action towards wellness in a way that's structured and gives them support to do that. Again, identify a goal and then the steps towards achieving that.

You may be wondering what are some example goals. We have a few to share with you. Goals for your staff might look like, "I will complete my wellness activity matrix for the week." If that's something that the staff person is doing, that you're doing in your program as an option, then they may want to set that as their goal. Or something, if they're just starting out and they feel concerned about setting up a whole plan that's so full as that wellness activity we show, it may just be that, "I'll complete one mindful activity each day as we saw in the action plan." Or it might be that I'll choose three strategies to improve my wellness each week. Those goals can be as big or from a starting point that feels more doable, depending on what the staff person really wants from this. And again, this is all with the idea that ... And for you as well as leaders, you may want to use this where you set a goal and develop an action plan for you wellness and that could be a good model for your staff.

We have given you so much to think about today. We hope that you really had a chance to access some new strategies and hear strategies from each other. We do have a couple of minutes, so if you have any specific questions for us that you'd like us to answer, we could do that for the next minute or so. And I don't know, Joyce, if we saw anything come in that we want to make sure we address? I do see from Martha that, and I hope Martha that the second example was helpful, but she asked is there a version for other roles? That first version is very center-based, so that second version we have you could use for any of your roles. And either of those versions honestly, they're adjustable, so you could change that schedule on the left-hand side to be whatever a schedule that might make sense for you or for a staff person.

Feel free to take those documents, and you can adjust them however works for you or your staff for that activity matrix. There is this landing page on the ECLKC, I believe that we were going to pop the link in the chat, so thank you so much. I believe that was sent out to everyone, the link to the resources on the ECLKC. Please feel free to access that. Again, resources will be in MyPeers as well. And I see that we are getting right to the end of our time.

Thank you. Thank you, all so much for sharing your ideas, they were wonderful ones. We will share those with everybody as well on MyPeers and the staff wellness area. And then we thank you so much for taking the time today and also taking the time to think about your staff wellness and your own wellness and everything that we've all experienced. Thank you all so much for joining us. We hope that you found some great ideas from the webinar today.