

## **IDEA 101: Partnering with Service Providers to Support Effective Inclusion**

Jennifer Fung: Hi, everybody. Good afternoon and welcome and thank you for joining us for our fourth webinar in the Inclusion webinar series for this year. It's hard to believe that we're already at the end of one year, and for many of you watching today, at the beginning of your program year. Thanks for joining us. And I am really excited and honored to have you join me today to talk about IDEA services, which we know are really important for our children and families who are receiving disability services and inclusive services through our Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

This webinar is the first, actually, in a three-part series about services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, law. As you can see here, this first – this first episode is really going to be focused on those IDEA 101. IDEA essentials, that need to know information about this really important federal law. And our next two episodes, which will be in October 2022 and February 2023, will focus on partnerships with specialized service providers, including IDEA partners. We know that this is something that's top of mind for many folks, especially as we begin this new program here. Share your question with us, whether it's in our Q&A today during the webinar, or in our MyPeers community.

Before we do any housekeeping, I have a couple of announcements to make, as we often do at the beginning of our Inclusion webinars. But I want to pose an important and not small question to all of our participants out there. I'm inviting you to think about this question, to reflect on this question, and if you feel comfortable, share with us by using the purple Q&A widget. What or who inspires your work? Really, what it comes down to, what's your why? I once heard somebody pose a similar question to this and they said, "Who do you carry with you when you do your work?" I invite you to reflect on that, to either jot some thoughts down on your own, maybe share with us again in the Q&A.

But let's do just a little bit of housekeeping before we get started. For those of you who haven't yet checked out and downloaded our Viewer's Guide, I definitely encourage you to do that. The Viewer's Guide was created especially for this Inclusion series webinar episode. And it builds on some of the information that we'll be talking about today, provide some really, what I think are helpful resources, and has some space for your own reflection, and for you to set your own goals and intentions related to the content that we'll be talking about today. If you haven't yet, click on your resource list widget and you'll be able to see a PDF copy of our Viewer's Guide that I encourage you to download, to open up, and it's a fillable PDF. You'll be able to work along with us today.

Just a little more housekeeping before we get started. My name is Jennifer Fung, or Jen Fung, and I am the Inclusion lead at the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, or DTL, as we call it. And I am proud to be your Inclusion webinar series host. As I mentioned, I'm not alone today. I'm joined in the background by Ryan and Dougle, our media

team, who are here to answer tech related questions, and Krista and Brittany, who are IDEA queens. They can answer pretty much any question you have about IDEA. And if they can't answer it, they'll be able to provide some resources to help you find the answers. Or if we don't get to your question today, we definitely encourage you to follow-up with us on the MyPeers, the Disabilities and Inclusion Community in MyPeers.

OK? All right. And then before we get started, let's just take a quick look at our learning objectives for today's webinars. Really, we want to take this large federal law – the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, as I'll be referring to the law as – we want to focus on a few key components that really impact and shape your daily work supporting and facilitating disability services in the programs. And then we also, as we're talking about these important key components of IDEA, we really want to explore the disability services coordinator or other program staff role in supporting and facilitating these key activities that are really associated with IDEA services for children and families.

I'm really excited about this webinar. Not only do we have some key information that we hope is helpful, we also have lots of videos where we'll be able to hear from families and your colleagues about IDEA and what their experiences have been supporting and facilitating disability services and the provision of IDEA services in Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

Let's revisit the question that I presented to folks at the top of the webinar, what's your why? Who do you carry with you? What or who inspires your work? We know that this isn't easy work. There are challenges, there are various demands, at times there can be barriers, but we also know that it's important work. And I know for me, when it feels overwhelming, or when things feel especially difficult ... I know the past two years, COVID, and moving from in person services to remote or virtual, and sometimes back and forth, partnering with our various partners, there have been some pretty acute difficulties, and some challenges over the past couple years. And I know for me that's felt overwhelming. I have a hard time dealing with change. But I've found for me that it can be really helpful to ground myself again and revisit my why.

I'll share a little bit and then I'd love to look at our Q&A and see what folks are sharing. But for me, when I think about my why, it's really grounded in my early professional experiences at a local, inclusive early learning center. I live in Seattle. And I think about what I learned there. Not only academic knowledge and knowledge about best practices, but what I learned especially from the people, I think has really shaped how I see the world, how I approach not only my work but my personal life as well. And I think, for me, really when it comes down to it, it's all about relationships. And I think inclusive, inclusion especially, provides opportunities for relationships and really for friendships that if it weren't for inclusion, we might not have the opportunity to develop. Whether that's friendships between children, friendships between families, friendships between staff members. But when I think about it, it really comes down to that opportunity and to those relationships and those friendships.

I looking at the Q&A. Thank you to everybody for sharing your why. I see somebody, Julia, is sharing that teachers are who inspire her. But she's also driven as a parent who is learning through her experiences and using those experiences to shape her work with children and families. Alyssa shared that her family inspires her, and the work really of making a better world, helping create a better world for her family, and for other families, the children and families that she works with. And Nancy shared that she's carrying the memory of her mom who struggled to obtain services, it looks like maybe specialized services for her brother and really who should've been receiving those services from birth. That's really important and that advocacy.

And I keep seeing all these comments coming in and all these really important reflections on the why. But I see a lot of similarities around those connections, around helping families and children access services that they're entitled to, and just leaving things better than how we found them. Thank you all for sharing. Please continue to share with us in the Q&A. We see them and it's inspiring me.

Before we get started talking about IDEA and really looking at this law, I want to share a video from a family – from a mom of a child who received specialized services, inclusive services. And she wants to share a little bit with you about what the impact was on her family.

[Video begins]

Mother: Well, we had a wonderful experience. Yeah, we had a wonderful experience. We're lucky, honestly. Generally, like, he's running around, he's making friends, he's talking. And before, like, he was just in the corner. If he could get under my dress, he would get under there. Like, he was so uncomfortable. And from when he was a little baby, took him playground and I was like, "Oh, when is he going to ride slides?" and imagining. We're lucky that how these people every day get up, because I feel like what they do is so much work and a lot of work, and – and dealing with parents, different culture, and language barrier. All I say, just, thank you for everything you do because this is, like – there's no amount of money that you can put a price on it. No. And just thank you and keep up the great work you do.

[Video ends]

Jennifer: I love that video. I'm sure things feel hectic right now as people are back in programs, as you're preparing to be back in programs, or maybe if you're in a program that operates all year, but just that reflection and knowing that the work that you do matters, and it makes a difference. We know that disability services are important. I continue to see in the Q&A, we just heard from that lovely mom who shared her experiences, that these services and inclusion has a huge impact on children and families.

Let's take a look today at the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA. This is the federal law that entitles children with disabilities and their families to access these specialized services. And we know that while IDEA services are overseen by a different system, these

services and the processes related to providing and helping families become eligible for these services are directly related to your work in Head Start.

First let's start off by taking a look at what IDEA is. For some folks this might feel familiar, but for some folks this might feel brand new. Let's take a look and break down IDEA just a little bit and really look at how it relates to our work in Head Start.

As I just mentioned, IDEA is a federal law that ensures that all children with disabilities have access to educational services and to what are called related services. And that they have access to these services that are specifically designed to meet their unique and individual needs to support their development, to support their learning, and that these services and related supports should support the child and the family's participation in the general education curriculum, in the general education setting. That's really important and that's something that will keep coming back too.

IDEA, just a little bit of history, was actually signed into law in 1975, and has been reauthorized, so sort of resigned into law, and some changes have been made with each reauthorization. But since 1975 IDEA has remained in place as that federal law that guarantees that free and appropriate public education for children with disabilities and their families. While it addresses educational services, it really – signing this law into place in 1975 was really a key moment for civil rights for people with disabilities.

I just want to share this quote from the Department of Education, who said that since 1975, we've progressed from excluding nearly 1.8 million children with disabilities from public schools to providing special education and related services that are designed to meet their individual needs to more than 7.5 million children with disabilities in 2018. OK? This isn't just about education and educational rights, this is about civil rights and the rights that children with disabilities who were being excluded from public education have to help them be included and help them access a free and appropriate public education, which is the right of all the citizens, of all the children in the U.S. When we think about IDEA, obviously this is important on many different levels. But when we think about this huge law that many people, administrators, spend their education studying and becoming experts in, and really spending their career knowing this law inside and out.

But we don't expect Head Start staff to know IDEA to that degree, but let's talk about, like I said, a few essential components of IDEA that really shape our work in Head Start and Early Head Start. One really important thing to know is that IDEA has two what are called programs that apply to your work, that's Part C and Part B of IDEA. OK? Part C is for children age, zero to 3. And Part C services are often called early intervention or birth to three. And the Part B program, specifically Section 619 of the Part B program, serves children who are older than three. Part B serves children and students ages 3 to 21.

But when we're thinking about the relevance to our work in Head Start than we're talking specifically about Part B, Section 619, which focuses on services for children aged 3 to 5, so those preschool aged children. When we think about why this is important to be aware of and

know the difference between Part C and Part B, Section 619, we know that there are different eligibility criteria, different evaluation procedures, different types of services, different service settings, and different systems of payment between these two programs.

One thing that's also really important to know and keep in mind when it comes to IDEA services is that how these services are administered and overseen can vary, especially when it comes to Part C, but also for Part B, Section 619, can really vary from state to state, and possibly even between district and districts and agencies. One thing that's really important for your role in facilitating disability services in Head Start is to learn about what the specific requirements and criteria and procedures are for your state and for your specific local administration guidelines.

Your Viewer's Guide has links to resources where you can learn about the eligibility criteria, and lead agencies, and some of those specific procedures in your state and your area. We know that IDEA services, while they are governed by a different system, they're integral to our work in Head Start. They're not an add on, but they're really critical to ensuring that these specialized services that children and families are entitled to, and services that really support inclusion, it's our job, and it's our role, and it's reflected throughout the Head Start performance – program performance standards, it's – helping know these different regulations, and know where IDEA services are reflected in the performance standards really help program staff ensure that services are provided in a coordinated and effective way.

That's everyone's responsibility, not just the IDEA service providers or those agencies, but also the program staff in Head Start programs. I often like to say that if there's one child, there's one team. And if we're working across different systems, we're still working as one team to ensure that services that we provide really result in that full and effective participation of children with disabilities and their families.

What you see here on the screen are several different areas in the Head Start program performance standards where IDEA services are integrated, whether that's into the Head Start Act, or into the performance standards. That's from the beginning, so from screening and evaluation, and referral to IDEA agencies for further evaluation if needed, coordination and collaboration on an ongoing basis with IDEA agencies and partners, ongoing assessment for the provision of individualized services, support for family participation and advocacy. Support for transitions, whether that's from Early Head Start to Head Start or Head Start to kindergarten.

All of these different areas of the performance standards involve IDEA services. And really, the – what Head Start program staff's role is in supporting and facilitating those IDEA services in a coordinated way. Your Viewer's Guide actually has much more information about the performance standards and where these different IDEA services are reflected across the performance standards.

Let's get started now on this IDEA 101 or this IDEA essentials. Looking at these components of IDEA, of this federal law, that have a direct impact on your work supporting disability services in Head Start. There are four areas that we're really going to talk about today, those four essential areas.

The first, as you can see here on the screen, is that we'll talk about referral and evaluation, that process which we know is really important, and something that program staff spend a lot of time supporting families, coordinating with their partners. We'll also talk about service delivery settings and service delivery models. We'll talk about individualized plans. And throughout we'll be talking about supporting and partnering with and engaging families as they access and potentially become eligible for IDEA services, and as they – the child and the family receives those services, and their individualized plan is implemented.

As I mentioned, and as everybody knows, the process of becoming eligible for IDEA services is a really important process that our Head Start staff work on and especially support families related to this process. It's really important to understand how children become eligible for IDEA services. And a really important part of this is learning about what we call the Eligibility Criteria. Because there are different ways that children can be determined, or they can become eligible to receive these IDEA services, or be evaluated and maybe not be found eligible for IDEA services.

What we'll talk about here today, these are really broad what we call the Eligibility Criteria. And those specific criteria might be different from state to state. What we'll talk about today is broad and what's outlined in IDEA, but if it's different or there are specific criteria in your state, that's what will be followed for children to be determined eligible or not eligible for IDEA services.

In Part C – that's that zero to 3 – there are three main ways that children can be determined eligible to receive IDEA services. Those are children who have a developmental delay. They're evaluated across the developmental domains, across the developmental areas, and found to have enough of a delay or a level of delay that qualifies them for services.

Children can also become eligible if they have a diagnosed physical or mental condition that is likely to result in a developmental delay or disability. Or the third way broadly that children can become eligible for Part C services is by what's called informed clinical opinion. And that's provided by a specialized service provider or a team of providers who states that, based on their professional judgement and their clinical experience that the child is eligible for services.

Note that these criteria are different from state to state, especially when we think about that developmental delay criteria or that pathway for eligibility, what counts or how developmental delay is defined from state to state is different. That's something that you'll want to be aware of for your state.

And when we think about Part B, Section 619, there are a couple ways. There are fewer pathways for eligibility for IDEA services. What IDEA says is children whose educational performance is adversely affected by a disability, those are children or students who can become eligible for IDEA services. There are 14 federal disability categories, and your Viewer's Guide has information, it has a list of what those disability categories are. That's the main way that students and individuals become eligible for IDEA Part B services. This is, they have a

disability that's on that list and that disability has an adverse impact on their educational performance and their participation.

However, IDEA also states, and this is really relevant to our work, when we're thinking about working with preschool aged children in Head Start, children between the ages of 3 to 9 can become eligible through what's called a demonstrated developmental delay, rather than having a specific diagnosis of one of those disability categories that's outlined in IDEA. That's where the IDEA service providers, the IDEA evaluation team will conduct those standardized assessments to determine the child's level of functioning and to see if they have enough of a delay and they meet the criteria to qualify by demonstrating a developmental delay. What those criteria are for what counts for enough of a developmental delay will vary from state to state and from area to area.

When we're thinking about eligibility and talking about eligibility another thing that's really important to be aware of is those timelines, especially timelines for evaluation, but timelines, from referral to receipt of services for children and families who are found to be eligible for IDEA services. This is important, not only for Head Start program staff to know and to understand, but to help families learn about and understand as well, because this is an important part of families' rights under IDEA.

IDEA states very broadly that families have the right to receive a prompt or a timely evaluation to determine whether or not their child is eligible for services. These timelines are going to vary from state to state, but broadly, when we look at Part C, what IDEA says is, from the time a child or a family is – a referral is made to a Part C agency, an evaluation must take place. And if the child is found to be eligible, that the IFSP, the child's individualized plan, must be developed within 45 days of that referral. OK?

And then, once an IFSP is developed, if a child is found to be eligible, then the services must start within 30 days of that IFSP being signed. And when we look at Part B, Section 619, we know that families have the right to that prompt and that timely referral and that eligibility evaluation process, and that eligibility must occur within 60 days. Once that referral is made, the agency actually has 15 school days to set up a meeting to discuss the referral and what evaluations need to take place. And once families sign that consent form that's needed to do those eligibility evaluations, then the agency has 45 school days to complete the evaluations and hold what's called an eligibility meeting, where they share the results of those evaluations. Basically whether or not the child is eligible for services or not, but to share that information with families. OK?

There's lots more information in your Viewer's Guide on referral, on timelines, on eligibility criteria. But also, as I mentioned, we've got out – we've got our amazing Q&A and support team here to answer some specific questions if you still have questions, or if I didn't cover something that's on your mind.

But I wanted to move on now to thinking about, OK, when we think about this important part of IDEA services, of knowing about the referral process, of knowing about those eligibility

criteria and what the evaluation process looks like. Let's also think about what role do Head Start program staff play during this process in facilitating this important process.

We know that who supports this process, what the specific processes will look like will really vary and really be different from program to program and that'll really be based on your program's approach to coordinated services and disability services. But here are some general, when we think about some really important staff roles during this process.

One, of course, is being prepared to have conversations about developmental concerns with families. Preparing to have those conversations about developmental concerns, but also for families who might be aware of early intervention or early childhood special education services, what those services are and what the benefits of those services can be. We know that that's an area where many families have questions and a big need for support for them is gaining that information in a way that's accessible to them. And having somebody answer those questions and walk side by side along with them through that process.

We also know that a really important part of your role in Head Start is, if families – if you've discussed developmental concerns and recommend a referral for further evaluation, if families decide to move forward with that referral and that eligibility evaluation process, that you need to obtain consent to make that referral to your partner agencies.

Another really important role that staff can play during this process is to make sure that families are informed of and know their rights under IDEA. And a couple important parts – your Viewer's Guide has more information about family rights. But a couple important rights related to this process specifically, the referral and evaluation process, one thing that's really important for families to know and understand is that before any evaluation the IDEA agency needs to provide what's called prior written notice. This is a document – or PWN, you might hear or see it referred to as. This is a document that the IDEA agency needs to provide to the family, not only at that referral and eligibility process, but actually before any change that the IDEA agency wants to make or refuses to make in a child's individualized plan. This might be at eligibility, at evaluation or reevaluation. This might be changes in placement or changes in services. OK?

Another important right that families have under IDEA and that public agencies must do is share what's called the procedural safeguards with families. The procedural safeguards are really important because those are all about family rights. This is a section in IDEA that's really designed to protect the rights of children who are eligible for IDEA services and their families, and to provide – to outline and document and provide processes that can be used if there are disputes or disagreements between the family and that agency providing IDEA services.

And then another thing that's really important for families to understand and to know that the IDEA agency needs to do is that they need to – families need to provide what's called informed consent to move forward with that eligibility evaluation process. And we also know that during the evaluation process, in addition to helping families learn about and understand their rights and really become advocates for their child and for their family, we know that it's important for program staff to work with the family and with others who interact with the child on a regular

basis to share information with your IDEA partners, with the specialists who will be conducting those eligibility evaluations, to share developmental information, information about how the child participates in their different learning environments, because this is really important. This is a family's right to share that information and have that information known and heard about their child throughout their process becoming eligible and receiving IDEA services.

And then another important role that program staff can make – or play during this process is after the evaluation, after the eligibility has been determined, to make sure that families understand what those evaluation results say, what that means for their child and whether it's because, yes, they're eligible, what will happen next, what are your choices next, or no, your child wasn't found eligible and what might your next steps be. Let's take a look at a video where program staff share their perspectives on the referral and evaluation process and specifically on the role that they play supporting this process.

[Video begins]

Woman 1: Or maybe it's just they need to do Child Find because there's something further that needs to be looked into. Us as a center, we can't really diagnose and that kind of thing. If we can see a discrepancy and think, I think that this merits further attention, it helps us to have that data to back up and say, listen, this is what we've noticed, this is what we've observed, and we'd really like you to move forward and get all the help you can and support them. And be with them every step of the way as partners with them and do what's best for the child.

Woman 2: And then we'll talk through what's the family situation, who's the child living with, are there any family issues going on, are there health concerns, are there social and emotional concerns, what strategies have – has the teacher already tried and did those strategies work or not work. And most importantly, what are the child's strengths? What are the things that are going well for this child that we can build on. Looking at – looking at that whole big picture. I do use a tool – and anybody on our team can start with that information gathering process, and just pull all the information together so we really have a feel for who is this child and what is their story so that we can see their strengths and begin to individualize for that child.

[Video ends]

Jennifer: In this video, what you'll see are families sharing their perspectives on why there might be a resistance to acting on developmental concern and, specifically, following through with the recommendation for a referral. As you're watching this video reflect on how you support program – I'm sorry, how you support and partner with families during their referral process, especially if there are questions or maybe some hesitancy.

And if you're a family member, I see that we have lots of parents of children with disabilities, lots of siblings, lots of folks who are reflecting on their own personal experiences. If you're a family member of a child with a disability, what else do you want program staff and your colleagues who are on this webinar today, what else do you want us to know about this process, this referral and evaluation process?

[Video begins]

Woman 3: When the parents flatly refuse, I get that look from the educators, like, what just happened, and I normally, after the parents leave, I tell them, "There's a stigma around it, and people do not like IEP, they think there's something wrong with their child, they didn't produce the perfect child." I try to educate them the stigma around it and that I try to share with them, even myself, I was very scared when I first came across, and they're like, "This is helping them. This is not something that the general – a general teacher could not do." And I'm like, "You have to understand the stigma around it." And then try to – I try to navigate between the two.

And then the parents when they ask me, "What's your experience?" I try to tell them, "I came across this as a teen mom, and I really do know what you're feeling." And a lot of parents actually end up signing after I tell them my story and how my son – how much it helped him speak and how much it helped him with the education system.

Mother: I know. We immigrated here to the United States, and culturally, it's just – for people, it's not easy for them to talk about it. Everybody – I assume everybody has their perfect kid, and if someone has some – and a sick kid, they don't talk about it. And you feel sorry for them. You will see very, very few people that will be OK with the situation. And no – and they will call names later because of the – whatever disease or whatever they have or diagnosed or whatever, that kid will be teased about it.

And – and as a parent it just takes you, like, I'm already picturing that my kid might never really play with the kids and be part of them, and he would not be accepted. I feel like there's just something – you must have did something wrong, or something's wrong with you and your kid. You just have that feeling that you just want to hide and covered because some reason, I don't know how we got that, but it's just not OK.

Woman 3: Yeah, just when you get a kid that you're doing the evaluation for IEP, know that the parent is under a lot of pressure by the community that they didn't produce the perfect child. They're under a lot of other stress, and then those meetings are very intimidating. Just develop a positive contact person.

[Video ends]

Jennifer: We saw in that great video, which, those perspectives from families could be a whole webinar, and actually we will be doing two webinars on partnerships with families later on in 2023.

But some really, really important things that we heard there from families about resistance or hesitation that might be focused on cultural perspectives, families feeling overwhelmed. Families' experiences themselves with the education system in their prior history. There are many reasons why families might be hesitant to move forward with those services. I'm seeing folks share in the – in the – in the Q&A, and we'll continue to push out those perspectives and experiences and thoughts from your colleagues.

But let's move on and focus on the next section, or our IDEA essentials, service delivery models and service delivery settings. We know that IDEA has some very specific regulations about where specialized services that children become eligible for, where those services should be provided. And IDEA is really clear that as much as possible, and as often as possible children with disabilities should receive those specialized services in settings and environments where children without disabilities participate. OK?

We'll often say that special education is a service, it's not a place. And this is really, really important. And I know, and we hear often, that this placement and making these placement decisions and working with teams and IDEA partners to facilitate those placement decisions, this is another area where program staff often face some challenges and some barriers. And having this information to help program staff advocate for families might be really helpful.

When we think about the specific information and what IDEA states, we know that for Part C, those birth to three, those zero to three services, that IDEA states that services should be provided in the natural environment. Those might be home settings or community settings where children without disabilities participate. OK?

And for Part B, Section 619, the language that's used there is called least restrictive environment, or LRE, or sometimes you'll see or hear it referred to as a regular early childhood program. These are settings where children who don't have disabilities, whether those are publicly funded settings like Head Start, or a private preschool, or child care programs. Right?

We know that while special education is the service, the setting is the environment where the services take place. That special education is not a place. And I think it's really important to acknowledge, and this is something that you all know, but something to really, to strengthen our knowledge of so we can help families advocate for – for placements in inclusive environments, if that's what the family prefers.

Head Start programs and Early Head Start programs absolutely meet the requirements, the IDEA requirements, for LRE, least restrictive environments, and natural environments. It's really exciting, actually, there are some new guidance that should be coming out really soon that's a joint statement between Health and Human Services, HHS, and the U.S. Department of Education, about services in least restrictive environments, specifically Head Start as least restrictive environments, and the importance of collaboration between IDEA service providers and their Head Start programs. That should be coming out at any minute. And as soon as we have that guidance and that information, we'll be sure to share it broadly, especially on MyPeers.

Your Viewer's Guide has more information on natural environments, on least restrictive environments, and some tools and some questions and some considerations that teams can think about and question as teams are making these placement decisions.

When we're thinking about service delivery and what Head Start staff's role can be, or is, in facilitating these placement options and thinking about how these specialized services are

provided, we know that who's involved in this process within your program. What their role is in the process will really vary from program to program depending on what your disability services plan looks like, who's involved.

But some important parts of facilitating this process really involves partnering with families. One, to help families learn about what their service delivery options are. And explore with them what their preferences are for where they'd like their child to receive those specialized services. And then, of course, to collaborate with the team, the child's team, with the family and with the IDEA partners, and whoever else is involved in the child's team, collaborate during discussions about placement and discussions about service delivery option. And really, coming back to this idea of ensuring that families know what their rights are, what IDEA says about where services should be provided.

Thinking about that – the requirement for services to be provided as much as possible in the natural environment, in the least restrictive environment. And really help families understand and know what those rights are and help families and support families in advocacy for the placement options that meet their families' preferences. Let's take a look at another video, thinking about families. Thinking about what questions a family might have, what information or needs for support a family might have as their learning about and understanding placement options, and participating in placement decisions, and helping really inform those decisions about where and how services are provided. In this family you'll see – or I'm sorry. In this video you'll see a family share their perspectives on what their experience was when they were learning about these specialized services.

[Video begins]

Mother: Finally we were able to get the speech, and she was amazing help in showing us speech. We thought that she was going to come in, fix our son, and he suddenly was – I don't know, use some kind of magic, and he'd start talking. And she was like, "Uh, no, that's not how it works." It was more like treating us. Oh! Oh, my God. It was just the first window opened, you know? And then anything we do in our home, it was just education because, like, time to do bath and this is what we do, tell him, "You want to splash, but today, just wash off. You want to play in the bathtub and swim in there, then" – and he will start choosing, and that didn't exist. Even if it exists for me. And he loved to play in the bathtub. And she said, "Don't just say toy, this is different kind of toy. And tell him what kind of toy. 'This is a duck, and it makes noise, and what the duck noise is.'" And it was just – started slowly and before we know, we know duck, we know doggie, cat. We know blocks and we were using a ship and puzzles. And, whew, in like short time, we just knew so much stuff.

[Video ends]

Jennifer: I love that video because it's a very clear example about some of the questions that families might have about those specialized services. This mom clearly had an idea in mind of how and where the specialized would be provided, and then when it came time to receive those services it looked much different than what she thought it would look like. It ended up

being really beneficial, you could hear from her that she loved those services that she felt really supported, that her family learned a lot and became really confident in their ability to support their child's development. But it was a mismatch with what she thought those services might look like.

Just having that perspective around what questions families might have, what information they might need. But for those of you who are family members, share with us in the Q&A what else do you want – program staff, what else do you want folks who are supporting and facilitating those disability services and these IDEA processes, what else do you want us to know about those processes and about making those decisions about how and where services are provided.

Let's wrap up this episode. This is the first in a three-part series around IDEA and around those partnerships with IDEA providers. But let's wrap up by looking at another really important part of IDEA services, those individualized plans.

We know that if a child is evaluated and found to be eligible for IDEA services, and if the family decides to move forward with receiving those services, then the IDEA agency and the child's team will work together to create an individualized plan for the child and for the family. For Part C, for those zero to three services, that is called an Individualized Family Service Plan, or an IFSP. And it's really focused on child and family outcomes. And they're really – the services that are provided are really focused on the family, and to help enhance family functioning, family members' confidence and feelings competence to support their child's development, as you heard the mom explain in the video. But those are really focused on the family and the child, as the recipient of the services.

And then when we look at individualized plans for Part B, Section 619, that's the individualized education program, or the IEP. And those are really focused on child outcomes. And the services that are provided to help the child achieve those outcomes are really focused on the child and the child's educational and developmental needs. Now while these plans are different in nature, one thing that's really important, and one thing that's very clear under IDEA, is that the development of these plans and the implementation of these plans, the delivery of the services, evaluating whether or not the services are effective in helping the child reach the goals and outcomes, talking about whether or not the goals and outcomes are still appropriate, that is a team decision.

And when we talk about family rights under IDEA, families have the absolute right to attend and participate in meetings related to their child's IFSP or IEP. And they also have the right to invite others to the meetings. They have a right to inform the goals and objectives, the services. And the placement, where and how those services are provided. When we're thinking about Head Start program staff and how these – how they can facilitate the process of developing the individualized plan, whether that's the IFSP or the IEP, and implementing the services on those plans. What that's going to look like from program to program and from child and family to child and family and who your IDEA partners are, that can look really different. But an important part that – an important role that program staff play in developing and facilitating the – the implementation of those plans really involves partnering with and supporting families.

And especially helping families understand what their rights are related to participation in the IFSP or the IEP. And that's including scheduling meetings. IDEA agencies need to schedule the meetings with enough notice, in a convenient time and place, that an interpreter should be provided as needed. And that other accommodations that the family might need to help them fully participate in the meeting, those are also required to be provided by the IDEA agency.

Another important role that program staff can make is really helping families understand the process of developing the plan, who might be there, what's going to happen. And then also to collaborate with your colleagues, with other education staff, who interact regularly with the family, who interact regularly with the child, to gather and share information with the team and with your partners. And then, of course, to participate in implementing the plan, whether that's collaboration with your service providers, helping understand and navigate what those service delivery options are. And in many cases providing those individualized supports and individualized instruction to help the child meet the goals that are outlined on their IEP or IFSP.

When we think about the program staff role let's wrap up by looking at one more video where we'll hear from program staff about – it's specifically a disability services coordinator about how she partners with her education staff and her colleagues within Head Start to understand the child's individualized plan and begin to provide those individualized supports and services.

[Video begins]

Woman 2: Generally speaking, what we'll do is create first a plan and some strategies around that child who's needing a higher level of support. We'll create a plan for them and then we'll figure out what are the tangibles, what are the tasks that need to be completed in order to put that plan in place. For example, we might need to make some visuals, we might decide that we want to rearrange the room, things like that. The second step is whatever training might need to take place.

Once those tangibles are completed, making sure that everyone who works with this child knows how to use those things or understands what the process is, understands what strategies we're using, what the plan is for this child. We make a plan; we complete the tasks that need to happen in order for that plan to be implemented. We do a training piece. And then the implementation is ongoing. I'll be working with the teacher and their class on how to implement that.

I also might come back a month later and do some troubleshooting on how do you do these strategies in the context of circle time with 17, 18, 19 kids in my classroom? How do I make this work in the context of the bigger picture. That's our process is to go through those steps and then follow through as needed. We might make a plan that same day, if we do an observation, get the visuals up within a week or so, and then do some follow through in the following weeks as we see how that's going to work and what tweaks need to be made, and what troubleshooting we need to do.

[Video ends]

Jennifer: OK. We know – and we're coming close to time here. I just want to share one more video and wrap up with a request of all of you have joined us on the webinar today. That video that we just saw from a DSC sharing her perspectives and her experiences on how she helps facilitate those services and supports on a child's individualized plans. And that's leading into our next two webinars, that we know how important collaboration with our IDEA partners is when we are creating these plans and especially when we're implementing these plans. Our next two webinars, our October 2022 and our February 2023 webinar, will be focused on partnerships with IDEA partners. And then our May 2023 and our August 2023 webinars will be focused on partnerships with families.

Before we sign off today, I want to leave us with one more video, one perspective from families about what's important and how program staff can support families during these – especially during these initial processes of navigating referral and navigating evaluation.

[Video begins]

Mother: We just need both side to have patience. It's OK to have concern, ask questions, and give them chance. Go back another week, ask again. Go back again. Answer the questions or – like me, I didn't know – I knew I had a question, but I didn't know what to ask. It would help that. Also I know that a lot of people they don't feel comfortable writing, a lot of parents, in English, so even – so it helps that if you have someone ask them and help them answer those questions. But if you just hand it to them forms, you're not going to get what you're ask for. There's a lot of progress needs to be made there. And just don't give up on them.

Keep approaching, keep approaching, keep asking. A lot of time, the way you would get a mom like me, my attention, "We're concerned your kid has those deficit or needs those help with this areas, and – and we think, me and you together, we can help." And – And you get the attention, I feel like. Parents, just don't give up them. Just show them there's a problem and we think this could be the solution, and we think this could be how you need to do and we're here to help you. We're here for you. And just don't give up on them. And as long as they feel like they're not alone, I think they will talk to you.

[Video ends]

Jennifer: Perfect. I feel like that's a great place to wrap us up. I know that this has been a busy webinar. The Q&A has been so active. I'm loving hearing and seeing all these thoughts and perspectives, and also all of your questions that have been coming in. Thank you for hanging in there a couple extra minutes with us. Thank you to Krista and Brittany for answering questions. A reminder, if we didn't get to your questions, or if you still have specific questions, please join us on the Disabilities and Inclusion community on MyPeers. We have so many knowledgeable and experienced disability services coordinators, as well as new disability services coordinators and folks who are supporting these disability services who share resources, answer questions for one another, so please join us there if we didn't get to your questions.

And please let us know what other questions do you have, especially thinking about these next two webinars around partnerships, and partnership agreements, and collaborative activities with your IDEA partners? What questions do you have, what do you want us to address in these next two webinars? Thank you for joining us today. Hopefully, see you on MyPeers. And we'll see you again in October. Thank you.