

## How CCHCs Improve Staff Health and Wellness

Nydia Ntouda: On today's webinar, we have our speakers Mercedes Gutierrez and Kim Clear-Sandor. I believe it's Mercedes that's going to take it away from here. Mercedes.

Mercedes Gutierrez: Thank you so much, Nydia. We are excited to be here with you all today. This is a part of our quarterly webinar series. Today, we are talking about staff health and wellness.

My name is Mercedes Gutierrez. I am a senior training and technical assistance-associate with the National Center for Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety. I've been in the field of early childhood education for over 10 years. I've worked specifically as a health consultant during that time, supporting Early Head Start programs. I'll let my colleague, Kim, introduce herself.

Kim Clear-Sandor: Thanks, Mercedes. Hi, everybody. I join Mercedes in welcoming you all here, and our joy that you're here with us today. I'm Mercedes' colleague. I'm a family nurse practitioner and have worked on health and safety for early childhood programs for many, many, many years.

Working as a health consultant with programs in New York City, New York, and in Connecticut, and working with other health consultants to consider their role and how they can best support early childhood programs to achieve their goals for staff and children. We're excited to be presenting these quarterly webinars with you.

Mercedes: Today, we are going to be using the chat box a lot. We love to have discussions, we love sharing. We really understand that the people that attend our webinar really have their own expertise and knowledge. It's important that we give you all an opportunity to share and discuss.

This is a very important topic, especially in the times that we're in. We appreciate that people took time today to come learn about staff, health, and wellness, and how you can support your programs. Together, we are going to explore approaches. We're going to really give that time to discuss and share. I know there's a lot of people here today — the chat box sometimes goes really fast. But we will do our best to really highlight anything that you share. Please feel free to continue to use the chat box and talk to us.

Today, we will be reviewing what the child care health competencies are revolving around staff, health, and wellness, and we're going to talk about why it's important to address staff health and wellness, and how the social determinants of health impact the barriers to staff physical health and safety, and how that can impact how staff feel when they come to work every day.

Finally, we'll take a look at the eight dimensions of wellness and identify strategies that you can use in your programs that you can adopt and really strengthen to promote staff wellness. First, we'd like to hear from you all. Can you just tell us, what does staff wellness mean to you? When you hear staff wellness or maybe when you signed up for this webinar, what were you thinking of when you thought about staff wellness? Preventative care, love that. Preventing burnout, which is so big right now. Right, Kim?

Kim: Yup, someone who's happy and joyful coming to work. I love that. Feeling present and well enough to be present with children. The workplace environment, emotional health. Balance, a lot of balance.

Mercedes: I saw a culture of care for children, families, and staff. I love that. Yeah, that one spoke to me.

Kim: We might have to use that.

Mercedes: I know.

[Laughter]

We're sharing today.

[Laughter]

Thank you all for sharing. You can keep writing. We're going to continue to look at the chat box, as we move forward. When staff are well, they're really able to be fully present and fully engage with children in a positive, meaningful way. By promoting wellness, you can really have a profound and positive influence on the success of your program.

When staff that feel better and feel well are truly engaged with not just the children, but also their colleagues and their families. We know that in early childhood education, we really are looking for that whole family approach and making sure that everyone is well. That is how we achieve those positive and goal-oriented relationships. We wanted to review what exactly a child care health consultant is. If you've come to this webinar without knowing what a child care health consultant is, thank you for coming and thank you for having the interest in that.

But really a child care health consultant is a professional with education and experience in the child, and in children and community health. They specifically have training in early care and education and child care health consultation. Some states have specific regulations on who can be a child care health consultant. It's really important that you go to your state regs to look for that. Overall, child care health consultants collaborate with directors, collaborate with teachers, collaborate with family child care providers to improve the overall quality of care of health, of safety within your programs.

While this webinar is aimed at child care health consultants, we really appreciate anybody who comes – anyone who addresses health and safety in their programs or in an early childhood education program can really benefit from the resources and the discussions that we have today. Thank you all for joining us. We have these child care health consultant competencies that lay the foundation for the work that child care health consultants do. Overall, a child care health consultant does support the health, safety, and wellness of young children, families, and staff in early child care education settings.

They foster quality care by observing for recommended practices, they help you identify hazards within your programs or within the facility or family child care, home care. In doing this, they must collaborate with directors, teachers, and providers to help them understand and comply with regulations, standards, and really promote best practices.

As part of this, staff health and wellness is one of the child care health competencies on this list today. You'll see that on the left-hand side, there are general areas of expertise that the child care health competencies outline. Then on the right-hand side of this document, you'll see that there are really subject matter expertise area. And all of these competencies demonstrate how child care health consultants could work in the ECE setting, and apply their knowledge and skills to improve those health and safety and wellness outcomes.

The competencies here really capture the breadth and depth of what a child care health consultant can do for programs. And just as a reminder, every state has different guidance on the role of a child care health consultant. You may see on the right-hand side of the screen and you might be thinking, if you are a child care health consultant, and you're like, "oh, well, I really review charts, or I help with PD and things like that." But there are so many other areas that we can help our programs with. Staff wellness is actually one of the competencies that we're going to be highlighting today. Just so you know, this resource will be on the resource list that we give you for this webinar today.

Mercedes: On that list of competencies, we have competency number 16, which speaks to staff health and wellness. This competency is broken down into two parts. Part A states that a child care health consultant helps early childhood care education programs, implement measures to prevent and manage occupational hazards for staff.

You can help the program develop policies and procedures that really protect staff from injury and illness. These are things that can carry over for our children too. If we speak specifically to illness, these are preventative measures that, policies that we have in place already that also help keep our staff healthy and well. But there are other ways that we can promote staff wellness.

Part B of this competency speaks to child care health consultants helping early child care education programs identify opportunities to promote staff wellness. And for all this CCHCs that are here today, you might not be thinking that that's something that you do. It might not be something that you've done yet with the programs that you work with. We hope today, as we talk and we explore some of these strategies, you think about ways that you can really start

to implement this in some other programs or help promote your programs in thinking about this and thinking about ways to incorporate this in your work.

Kim: Thank you, Mercedes. And all of you thinking about all of the breadth and depth of those competencies and how it is in the wheelhouse of health consultants to – or anyone addressing health and safety to think about staff, staff wellness. We're just going to take a moment to really think about our workforce and their health and wellness, and to just create a little space to think about it. As health consultants, we need to understand the workforce. We need to understand their health and wellness needs. That really starts with thinking about really, what is health? What is the breadth and depth of health?

And when we talk about health, we're really talking not just about the absence of disease, but we are talking about mental health, physical health, emotional health, all the things that you can do to stay healthy. We know that where someone works and how healthy that they feel is linked to child outcomes. If you have a healthy staff member and they're coming feeling physically, mentally, emotionally healthy, they are better able to engage with the children in the program.

Teacher stress is linked to negative interactions with children, greater conflict, and spending less time teaching. There's higher reports of stress, we know that comes along with staff that may not feel totally committed to the work. It may lead to high teacher turnover. When we think about the stress and the work climate, and all the things that contribute to the health of our workforce, we realize the integral or the critical point that addressing staff health and staff wellness supports the staff, but it also supports child outcomes and it supports the whole program.

This really has us think about how well this acts as that counterbalance; to balance the impacts of stress so that you can care best for children. You can see that stress impacts health. Again, we're talking mental health. Stress is a mental health problem. It can make it hard to think and focus, and it can impact our physical health. We know that sometimes when people are stressed, you get a headache or a bellyache. You can just be more your immunity – you can get sick quite easily here. And your emotional health. Think about how irritable you can be if you're feeling stressed. It affects all those impacts of health.

It can affect your functioning, the quality of those relationships, which we talked about in the previous slide. Your personal relationships, and what that stress does to that. When you think about the regular stress people are bringing, the economic hardship, your workplace stress, your everyday stress, and you think about what the pandemic has done to all those areas of stress. You again, realize the critical nature of addressing wellness of our staff.

How are we going to do it? It sounds like a big lofty job to think about to think about wellness. Mercedes and I are going to go over a frame of reference for you to think about different components of a healthy workplace that support overall staff wellness and individual staff wellness. I'm going to go through these three components, and then we'll take some time to think about different examples of what this work might look like.

Overall, there's three components of the healthy workplace. We start at the top with organizational culture, then we think about the physical work environment, and the personal health resources. What do we mean when we're talking about the organizational culture? When we're talking about the organizational culture, we're talking about your early childhood program because that's the workplace that we're talking about.

We're thinking about how does that organization, how does that program convey attitudes, values, and beliefs that demonstrate they are supportive of staff health. What are those pieces. It could be in policies and procedures; it could be in communication and different things like that. The second part is the physical work environment. And that's really looking at the actual physical space. What is the space I occupy and how does that contribute to having a healthy workplace? Are there hazards, are there materials and equipment for me, is it set up for me so that I feel safe there? I have access to fresh water, clean air, and a healthy workspace.

The last component is personal health resource, which is how do you take care of your personal health within the workplace organization. Do you have time to get up and move? Does your workplace value your personal health and help you have time off to go to the doctors or go to your health care provider?

Accessing maybe smoking cessation programs, as something that you could do as part of creating an environment at work that supports your individual health. As we go, we're going to take a little bit of a deeper dive into each of those three areas. When we talk about those organizational culture and the values and beliefs, we're talking about those policies and procedures and practices that really promote self-care.

When we think about the values and attitudes that someone conveys, that show that they care about their staff, consider a program's ability to provide things such as health insurance or sick days, or care of a pregnant staff, or managing. If you have a staff member who was high blood pressure or has a food allergy, how is that being addressed? How is that being managed to convey to your staff that it is something that you care about. The second part of this is really, how does your organization and workplace promote staff self-care? Mercedes, do you have any ideas about ways your organization can promote that staff self-care?

Mercedes: I think that program leaders can really raise awareness about the importance of self-care and that by sharing some of those stress management techniques. Later on in the presentation, we're going to share some resources or posters that you can put throughout your facilities that give examples of how people can just take 30 seconds for themselves to promote self-care.

During those times of reflective supervision, leadership can really talk and see what's going on with that individual and help them promote their self-care in those moments. Lifting up the importance of their actions as a role model for children and family, and demonstrating healthy behaviors, such as handwashing or supporting individual events for training and techniques that promote long term wellness.

This can happen by creating a place for rest and relaxation within your buildings. Staff may benefit from having that quiet time, to relax and recover. Having a break that's actually a break, where you can separate yourself and just take, even if it's just for 10 minutes during the day, take some time to relax and recover from that work-related stress.

Family service, professionals, and home visitors also might not have that easy access to a quiet space. Taking that into consideration, when you work with staff in these roles, to identify either a time or a place while they're out in the field that they can take that time for self-care, and supply some of these relaxation tools.

I know that sometimes we get those little fidget spinners or something that we can have on our desk that really help towards that. There's been times that I've been at conferences and people have gotten those free stress balls. I see people using them during the sessions. It's just like being able to supply that and give them that tool is great if it's possible.

Then, definitely, promote the use of all of these tools. Whether it be a yoga or a meditation app, or just comfortable furniture within their room. It's great to be at the child level and meet the children where they are. But also sometimes, having that adult sized chair to just take a minute and relax can help, can go a very, very long way.

Providing formal and informal opportunities for staff to socialize can also promote that self-care. It could be it could be that family service professionals and home visitors can benefit from opportunities in ways that they socialize. Because they're out in the field, they don't get that much time to socialize with work colleagues. A lot of times, having that time to dialogue and talk about work-related stress is a stress reliever. Organize these regular times and spaces for socializing, and as well as special events to really support them and make them feel needed and make them feel celebrated.

You can also provide tools or activities to support healthy eating and exercise. We know that staff can experience really high levels of stress, especially our frontline staff that are working with children. They can spend a lot of time with children and that can cause high levels of stress for them. And we know that under these conditions, sometimes it's hard to find nourishing foods or time to exercise.

If you provide tools and activities to help promote this, maybe a pedometer, maybe a friendly competition for movement, or setting up regular times where staff can be physically active and socialize, like a walking Wednesday, is a great way to provide those tools and activities that support those healthy times.

Kim: Those are all such awesome examples, Mercedes. Because they really demonstrate things that the program can do. Those actions are conveying to staff that you care about their health and their wellness, and you're providing all these opportunities where they can manage self-care and they can take care of themselves during the day as well. Thank you for sharing all those.

You touched on some of this about the physical work environment and how that plays into that. That's the second bubble in the healthy workplace environment is that physical space. Just designating a space to put your bag, put your coat, that's demonstrating such respect for your staff, knowing that you don't want that stuff in the classroom. People want their stuff to be safe during the day and you're creating that space for them.

How about the physical environment of the classroom. Mercedes talked about having those adult size chairs. They spend a lot of time on the floor, but being able to sit in adult-sized chair with your feet on the floor and not up in your shoulders can go a long way in promoting your physical health. And when your body feels good, it helps you feel good.

You can see even here in this picture; you see the diaper changing table has the steps. We're thinking about the staff's physical health. They're not having to lift and twist children as they get a little bit heavier up onto that diaper changing table but providing materials and equipment to make that easier for staff. That idea of preventing injuries in an organizational culture is really critical. We know that staff can hurt their back and get crampy, and then can pull something just from the repetition of going up and down and lifting and cuddling with kids.

When an organization and early childhood program looks at their organizational culture and their policies, it looks at their physical workspace, they can really focus in on what we put in place to protect your back. Do we need ergonomic chairs? Do we need more adult-sized chairs? Are there little assistive devices that we can put in to help staff? Again, thinking about that physical space and how it impacts health is that second component.

The third component to that healthy workspace is your personal health resources. And we at the National Center for Health, Behavioral Health and Safety like to talk about the eight dimensions of the staff well-being. And that's really the eight dimensions of supporting your own personal health. This was created based off of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, otherwise known as SAMHSA. They have a step-by-step guide to wellness. That link is provided in your resource list. It's a really cool resource. I really encourage folks to check it out. But as we talk about that third bubble in the healthy workplace, we're going to look at these eight dimensions of health and wellness. I'm going to fly through these pretty quick.

[Laughs]

Knowing that you can always read and learn more, and we're going to continue to talk about them as we go. But on the left-hand side, you can see those eight dimensions of wellness. And it starts with occupational wellness. That is talking about, as an individual, how do I feel in my workplace environment? Do I feel supported there? Do I feel nourished there? Am I benefiting from those policies practice and that physical environment that is there to help promote my health? That's really some of that occupational wellness.

Emotional wellness really talks about the ability to express your feelings, your ability to cope with stress, and be adaptable. And programs can really work to support emotional wellness by encouraging folks to identify their feelings, providing time and space to share and express emotions. You have your spiritual component. The spiritual component doesn't have to be something religious, but it's really about those personal values and beliefs. What brings you joy? What's making you feel somebody said it in the chat early on about staff wellness. I'm happy to be here. I'm able to be fully present. So, what are those things that fill your spiritual cup?

The intellectual dimension talks about having an active and curious mind. I think, in so many ways, how can your workplace environment foster that intellectual wellness need. Can programs encourage staff to share, provide professional development opportunities, and even just the opportunity to connect with each other and share different areas of expertise. The physical health piece is probably just what you think. The healthy habits for nutrition, physical activity, and even just going to your health care provider and staying up to date on those immunizations and screenings that adults need. It's not just kids that need those stuff, adults need them as well.

We talked about the environmental health dimension of a healthy workplace, but there's also how that dimension interplays with your own personal health. How about financial health? We know that our early childhood workforce is not being paid a lot of money. Financial health and stress is very, very real. How can a program support connecting providers and staff to information and resources that can help them manage their finances.

The last part is the social dimension of wellness. That's those positive relationships. How can we connect with each other? How can we provide, create opportunities so that staff can connect with each other? You can see within these eight dimensions, there's a lot of overlapping connectedness with that first diagram that talked about the workplace culture, the physical culture, and how that intersects with the individual culture or your individual health.

As you're thinking about that individual health, we just want to remind you about those social determinants of health. We spoke about this on our last session. We spent some time talking about health disparities and the social determinants of health. I encourage you to check that out when it's posted on the ECLKC. But for all of you that this may be new, the social



determinants of health are really those components of personal health that are impacted where people live, play, work, and worship. They actually impact 80% of someone's health, 80%. Programs really need to think about the social determinants of health as they're thinking about addressing the health and wellness of their staff. You can see, there is a link on the page where you can explore more information about the social determinants of health.

There are, in general, five categories that talk about economic stability, educational access and quality, access to health care, a neighborhood and built environment, which is things like where you live, your water, your air, your access to transportation, and then the social and community context. Remembering that big part is also a part of your staff wellness. Those are kind of diving, big picture of those three components that impact the wellness of a program and impact that individual wellness.

Mercedes: I was still in my head, a little bit stuck on the social determinants of health. Just because I think it's important that we realize that our staff are usually part of the community that we're working in. Those social determinants of health that are affecting our families could also be affecting our staff. Thanks for highlighting that and making sure that we discuss that today. Right now, we want to put up a poll.

And this poll is really just a reflection of those eight dimensions of wellness that Kim just mentioned, and how they could be actually implemented in a program. We're asking you, does the program – do the programs that you work for do any of the following things to promote wellness? And so we'll just take some time to allow you to answer that poll. I know sometimes people join from their phones and it's a little bit hard to see. We'll give you a couple seconds here.

Kim: And the options are really, as Mercedes said, they're examples of things that could be done in a program to hit some of those dimensions of health. Sometimes we're addressing staff health and we don't even realize it. You may have ideas that are well beyond what we're putting on the slide here. You can share those in the chat as well.

Mercedes: Yes, please share in the chat. And, if you have any commentary on some of these things that have worked well for you. Maybe you help to create a flu shot clinic within your program and that's working well, the staff appreciate it. Just let us know what's working for you all. And I can't see the percentage.

Kim: I think Olivia or Kate might be able to share the results.

Mercedes: Great, thank you.

Kim: Excellent.

Mercedes: I'm trying to see what the highest one. Supporting access to ongoing professional development looks like the highest one. Really that speaks to that intellectual wellness. Director has an open-door policy. We love to hear it because that's where those reflective supervision

sessions happen. And you can really get to know what's affecting the person as an individual and how you can help them with strategies to fix that. And then sharing a flu and immunization clinic information, it seems like our third top one, as well as that separate staff break room.

Great. I see there's 10% doing walking meetings, which is really cool and fun. I used to be part of one in my previous role. And I think that having that time to talk to colleagues is really, really great. Was there anything in the chat, Kim, that we missed?

Kim: Somebody just posted in there that they have a mental health consultant that comes in and does sessions with staff. That's really cool. Some people are excited about the walking meetings too. Lisa shared they have a wellness committee that plans activities and events every single month.

And folks are even talking about that social connectedness going beyond just themselves but bringing their families and significant others to events outside of just work. So great stuff in the chat, folks. I encourage all of you to read that chat because all of you are working on this together. The amount of wisdom on this session today is huge. You have great ideas being shared that may spark some ideas for you.

Mercedes: I like the utilizing the mental health consultant for staff. I just want to highlight that one. Because a lot of times, we feel like the mental health consultant is just there for the children, but definitely use that. This is a great way of utilizing that resource. Having those meetings or consultations with the mental health consultant can be really great, and a great strategy for staff as well.

Kim: The idea of having a heated bidet is getting a lot of play in the chat.

[Laughs]

Mercedes: A heated bidet? You guys think of everything. Somebody has a really nice facilities. Great. We're going to take a deeper dive into this wellness flower and the eight dimensions of wellness. If we take a look here on the slide, we have occupational wellness and social wellness.

You can see that some areas overlap and work together. I think of occupational wellness as liking your job, overall. How do you get to that point? As a leader, how do you make it a place that somebody likes to come to work? Then you as an individual, what are those relationships that you're building in that work-life balance that you're achieving to really make you feel like you like your job and have that sense of accomplishment working there.

In addition to that, we have the social wellness on this slide. That really speaks to having those positive social relationships and feeling connected, feeling supported, feeling heard by leadership and by colleagues, and being able to have those positive interactions with other and that sense of community. Those walking meetings really start to build that sense of community and connection. I like those, that suggestion.

As a child care health consultant, you can work with staff and directors to consider ways that you can support these dimensions of health, and consider the occupational wellness dimension. This dimension involves participating in activities that provide meaning and purpose, and reflect personal values, interests, and beliefs. You have to get to know your staff in order to achieve this area of wellness. The social wellness dimension involves having relationships with friends, family, and community.

Kim: When you're thinking about the organizational practices that support the social and occupation, I think a lot of people are sharing a lot of those in the chat, that open-door policy. But just knowing that if you're having a bad day, it's okay to talk to a coworker or a leader in the program. And be able to share that can go such can go such a long way.

Thinking about different practices that made people feel welcome, maybe sharing things in a break room, or just making sure folks say, good morning, how are you today. I think as early childhood folks, we embrace that connectedness and welcome this. We shouldn't only do it with children and families, we need to do it with each other. We need it just as much as everybody else. Those practices can really elevate and permeate everything that goes on there.

Thinking about other ways, you can promote other connections between staff to build community, as well as a venue to share their talent. I think about that, especially paired with the occupational stuff. Some people are really artsy and have great talent for making fun arts and crafts activities that they might be able to share with other teachers in the program. That's giving them – filling their cup on what they're doing at work, as well as making a connection with their teachers, other teachers and staff in the program. That idea of doing things that can hit multiple areas at once – there's a lot of opportunity for that.

Mercedes: I love that example. I think it really takes us into our next chat box discussion. Because yes, we did pair social with occupational, but our staff are people too. And outside of work, we are individuals. We need to work on our own social wellness individually. What do you all do outside of work, what is an activity that you do that helps you promote your social wellness, helps you just feel happy, and it's something that you enjoy to do outside of work. Right now, we're disconnecting social wellness from occupational wellness. What do you do to make you happy?

Kim: Oh, lots of good stuff. Art and music, dancing, yoga, spending time with families, walking, riding bikes, crafting. I'm a casino fanatic, all right. Hiking, karaoke. We got singers, we got writers, we have exercisers.

Mercedes: I love all of these examples. It makes me wonder, do your colleagues know that about you? We're in the virtual world here, and we shared these through a chat box. There's also something that you can do, called a story quilt. You can really make a visual representation of this activity on your staff break room wall. Whether it be just with post-it notes or maybe it's pictures. I know a lot of those activities that you all discussed, I'm sure you have pictures of you dancing.

I'm sure you have pictures of the things that you've made, whether it be arts and crafts, or things like that. Sharing those interests and sharing the ways that you promote your own social wellness outside of work. But maybe bringing it into the break room and having that visual representative is a nice activity to do at your programs. It helps people know that you acknowledge their personal lives too, and that you care about their social wellness outside of work.

Kim: You might find a new hiking buddy or a new Zumba buddy to try some new place with you.

Mercedes: We'll continue to explore the different areas of wellness on the flower that we showed you. Intellectual one, this really speaks to how do we keep our brains active and how do we keep our intellect expanding. This connects well to occupational wellness dimension as well. In a broad sense, this dimension can involve looking at different perspectives of an issue and really taking them into consideration.

You have a wealth of knowledge among your staff, and acknowledge that knowledge, and make sure that people feel heard. You can also do a number of activities from learning about current events, maybe reading books together, or organizing a game night in your own home for your personal, intellectual wellness. Or, doing things at a community center, and broaden your perspective and understanding of diverse points of view. Kim, do you have anything else you want to add for organizational wellness and how this can be promoted and programs? I mean, intellectual wellness, I'm sorry.

Kim: Yeah, I even think about maybe doing a book club. Maybe you have a book club that, there's a story that can broaden your thinking about and talk to others about what they're reading in the book club, and partner with your library to get those. There might be opportunities. I know folks that put in the chat before the professional development, that was one of the things in the poll. That folks really looking for professional development that you can expand your learning about your profession and think about and get new ideas to bring back to your workplace.

Maybe someone that has a real passion about children and math, and maybe providing them an opportunity to share what they know and what they've learned about it at a staff meeting will contribute to a staff's personal wellness. You can see these things don't have to cost a lot of money. It's just a matter of being intentional. As Mercedes said, knowing your staff and getting to know your staff so that you can feed these dimensions of wellness.

Mercedes: On this slide, we're taking a look at the emotional wellness and spiritual wellness dimensions. For emotional wellness, that involves the ability to express your feelings, adjust to emotional changes, cope with life stressors, and enjoy life. I think this is a big one. I think it's a hard one, not as easily attained. How do we help our staff promote it?

Well, this can be just small actions. Because this includes knowing our strengths, as well as what we want to get better at. Living and working on our own but letting others help us from time to time. You can do things like a gratitude tree, where you have sticky notes and you add what you're grateful for about maybe your colleague or something that happened at work that was something good, something that you're grateful for.

Then in action, sticky wall that acknowledges nice things that folks have done for their students, or maybe you catch them in action, take a picture of this happening, that you can really promote that emotional wellness.

Kim: In promoting the emotional wellness really does tap into that spiritual wellness as well. The gratitude tree, giving gratitude and receiving gratitude, it's a two-way street. You get a double benefit there. Those might be things to read wonderful things that people have noticed about you or they're grateful for. Then the individual, may feel good about complimenting and noticing someone else's contributions or skills to something.

That spiritual wellness, again, it's big. It's about what fills your cup. It's not necessarily something religious, but really those personal values and beliefs that have a lot of meaning to you and bring you that balance and peace. Developing an appreciation for life and natural things occurring in the world. Noticing, taking the time to notice, what is bringing me joy? What fills my cup, and how can I support others in filling theirs.

Mercedes: Our next couple of slides, we want to give you some resources and examples for where you can promote personal and organizational wellness. These posters are available to you on the resource list, as well as on e-click. There, you can use them directly like this or you can create your own with the staff and your programs. They're really just a reminder that our staff make a difference.

Maybe you catch your staff in action doing something great. It's a great way to highlight them and make them feel appreciated and feel like they're part of the team. Perhaps you can share it at a morning huddle or at a staff meeting or before a training, before PowerPoint presentation. Just those pictures of our staff in action.

The next slide is a series of 12 posters that can be hung in break rooms, they can be hung in bathrooms, or bulletin boards. They're really just ways to remind our staff how important it is to address stress, how to do some breathing techniques that can help us address stress. Just really simple reminders that can be used throughout your facilities that help our staff to remember that personal and physical wellness really will help them get through the day.

The taking care of ourselves toolkit is something that you can use during parent workshops. It's something that you can also do with your staff. It is a toolkit that just helps you know your stressors and helps you identify the signs of stress. It helps you work through an action plan on how to address that stress. It's just another resource that we've included in your resource list today as an activity that can be done in a group setting.

Kim: I just want to elevate a comment in the chat. One person had a kindness box, where people could drop nice notes from each other. Harmony shared that, oftentimes, early childhood folks, they are expected to be great at everything and cover up all your weaknesses. She had an employer who chose to celebrate weaknesses as a way to encourage growth. It changed them from a negative to a positive, and that was a very nice reflection. Thank you for sharing that, Harmony.

Mercedes: That is nice. Thank you for sharing.

Kim: We're going to move into the physical wellness dimension. Healthy body, good physical health, good healthy habits, nutrition, exercise. A healthy body, it's easier to have a healthy mind. But the healthy body is so much more than just going to the doctors. It's about, what do you eat every day, it's about your sleep, it's about those personal behaviors that you do that promote your own good health. Those good routines, and how can you work that into your day.

Early childhood folks work long days. You are working, watching other children's kids so that these other businesses in the world can work. The doctors might not be open when you're around. How can you make sure you can take the time to get those things done. Programs can do lots of different things to support physical health. Perhaps giving a healthy day off to go and get all your wellness exams done. Maybe promoting different things every month, like October is Breast Health month and there's often discounted and free mammograms. Can you share that information and make sure folks have it.

If health care insurance and stuff is not something being provided by the program, can you connect staff to your state health insurance exchange program so they can get connected and have their health insurance needs met. There's lots of different ways to be able to address the healthy eating and health care and things like that. I know a lot of you have talked about just the movement. We know IMIL is I am Moving, I am Learning. It gets the kids moving but are we encouraging our staff to at least move their bodies and are we taking advantage of that time to move our bodies as well.

You guys talked about the walking meetings, which I think is great. Anything you can post and share, and health consultants are really good at pulling these things together from the community and looking at the calendar to think about what different pieces of health maybe to elevate every month in a newsletter or on a bulletin board. I know that was physical health really fast, but I wanted to be able to share with you this study that came out of the Yale Child Study Center that they did on 81,000 child care professionals during the pandemic.

The child care professionals had an increased rate of potentially diagnosable depression, stress, and moderate to severe asthma following the onset of the pandemic. That's diagnosable depression, stress, and moderate to severe asthma. there were disparities across race, ethnicity, sex, and gender of the child care providers. According to these researchers, 46% of the providers screened positive for diagnosable levels of major depression two to three months

into the pandemic. 46%, they found that a year later, that rose to 56%. Those same staff were noting 67% of moderate to high stress.

If this is what our staff are bringing with them and this is what they're recovering from, we need to keep that in mind as we're thinking about how we can best support them coming – I won't even say coming out of the pandemic – but on the other side of all of this. Efforts really need to be directed towards developing interventions that can be broadly applied to support that staff health.

Just a pulling it together activity, where if you had this situation, you knew one of your staff members was 30 years old. She lived in a single-family household. She had a young child. And she suffers from migraines. If this was one of your staff members, what might be some of the ways your program may be able to support her health?

If anyone have ideas, go ahead, and pop them in the chat. You know that getting to know your staff helps us better be able to support them. Staff may be open to sharing some of these things, and other staff may be more private, and that's totally fine. But it's all about getting an opportunity to be able to support them. When they know that you're open to that, it creates a safe space for those discussions. Folks are talking about, what kind of lights do you have in the room? Are the lights contributing to this? Does she have access to water? So she can be drinking and hydrating a lot during the day.

Mercedes: Don't let her skip meals, time for rest.

Kim: Stretching, have a quiet place designated for staff, in case she needs. Understanding her triggers and making sure that others understand those triggers.

Mercedes: That's so important. Because, yes, I think a lot of us assume that it's the lighting because that's what we know, that's what we hear about the migraines. But also understanding her own individual triggers and making sure that we can help her find a way to address them while she's at the workplace.

Kim: Someone's even bringing up the staffing plan and the flexibility, and that how flexible is the staffing plan if something like this happens in the day. Does she need extra breaks? Do we have a sub or a float that can move in there? And really planning for that. What a wonderful thing for a program to convey caring about the health of a staff member if they are able to try and address that, especially if it affects her ability to be there on a regular basis. Continue to share in the chat. I appreciate all of you thinking about this. It's just wonderful to hear what great things you're already doing.

Mercedes: We wanted to highlight this resource for you that is available on your resource list today. If you're still trying to figure out where to start, how to create a staff wellness action plan. One thing we want you to get out of today is that even if you take one of the things that

you learned today or one of the things that your colleagues have shared in the chat and implement that, that you are well on your way to creating a wellness plan for your staff. Just these small efforts make a big make a big deal.

But if you still need guidance, if you need support in creating a wellness plan for the programs that you work for, please take a look at this staff wellness action plan that we're giving you today. It helps you to figure out how to identify a team, what type of data you need to collect, how to create goals for wellness within your program, and then helps you think of strategies and how you can implement those strategies within the programs.

We hope today that you've gained something from this webinar. All early childhood programs provide many opportunities to cultivate staff wellness. Staff face daily work demands along with personal challenges. Thinking of ways that you can support them is really, really critical during these times. We hope that you can take away, consider that organizational culture, physical environment, and personal health resources all contribute to that healthy workplace.

We hope that when you think about your wellness plans, you consider the social determinants of health that could be impacting the teachers and staff within your programs. Collaborate with directors and staff to identify what the priority areas of wellness is. Maybe walking is not the priority for your program, maybe there is another way that your staff will feel that you're promoting wellness. It could be just having that quiet space. You need to identify them by talking to them and collaborating with them, and figuring out what their needs are. Finally, just begin anywhere. Anywhere is really making an impact.

Kim: Thank you, Mercedes. Thank all of you for going through this session with us today and sharing all your great ideas. It sounds like you are all well on your way. I know you got a treasure trove of more ideas to move forward with. We open this session today talking about health consultants and the competencies. We just like to point those of you that, maybe you're a director or leadership that works with a health consultant, share this information with them. Invite them to come to these sessions with you. If you're a health consultant, check out some of these resources.

We do have a special page online with resources that have been developed just for you. There's skill building modules, there's nice little handouts. That button on the right-hand corner, that red one that looks like a present, is full of all the webinars that we have been doing and will continue to do with you. We also have an online group. It's like a social networking group, where you can share and ask ideas of other consultants. It can be lonely working out there, and finding this social space to come together may provide you with a connection to other folks doing a lot of the same work. You can share some great ideas there.

Our next session will be coming up in February. Stay on the lookout for that. We do have our mailing list that you can join if you want to make sure you're getting notification of those events. With that, I'll turn it over to you, Anydia.



Nydia: Thank you. I guess you pretty much answered the questions. We did have one quick question. If you can do in about 30 to 45 seconds regarding walking that fine line between doing activities with your staff outside of work. And for directors, directors doing activities with employees out with staff. How do you walk that fine line?

Mercedes: I think it's a great question. I think as leaders, we would have to know what is appropriate, what's not appropriate. Promoting maybe like 5K that's outside of work seems very appropriate to me, as a leader, to do with the staff. I'm sure there are other things that could promote wellness that you can encourage your staff to do as a group, but you always have to make sure that you stay professional within your leadership role. Kim, anything else?

Kim: Well said, Mercedes.

Nydia: Well, thank you for squeezing that question in to our participants. If you have more questions, you can go to MyPeers, or you can write to [health@ecetta.info](mailto:health@ecetta.info). We want to say thank you so much to our presenters. Kim Clear-Sandor and Mercedes Gutierrez.

The evaluation you URL, it will appear when the webinar ends. Do not close the Zoom platform or you won't be able to see that evaluation pop up. And remember that after submitting the evaluation, you will see a new URL. And this link will allow you to access, download, save, and print your certificate.

As Kim mentioned, you can subscribe to the monthly list of resources using that URL. And you can find the resources in the health section of ECLKC or write us again at [health@ecetta.info](mailto:health@ecetta.info). Thank you all so much for your participation today. And you can close out the Zoom platform. Thank you all.