

## **Amplifying the Voices of Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Grant Recipients**

Tabitha Temple: Welcome to our webcast. We are so excited that you joined us today. My name is Tabitha Temple. I am Jayden and Tam's Mommy. I am also a former home visitor, family service worker, family service manager, and director of a child care and Head Start programs. I'm currently a social science analyst with the Office of Head Start, where I advise on policies and practices that support services to pregnant women and pregnant people, infants and toddlers, and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership programs. Today, the Office of Head Start is centering programs as we amplify their voices through this spotlight feature.

Prior to hearing from programs, I'd like to invite my Region Three colleague to the virtual stage to give us foundational knowledge about partnership programs. Hi, Irya. How are you?

Irya Smith: Hi, good. How are you?

Tabitha: I am good. We have a number of folk joining us today, and I know that some of our guests, they're unfamiliar with the partnership. Can you give us a little bit of information to help ground us in the discussion today?

Irya: Yes. The partnership grants started – well, I don't know when they, like the planning started – but they were issued in 2014. And the purpose of them was to create a partnership between Early Head Start programs and child care programs in the community. And it was to be a mutually beneficial program where Early Head Start can learn from child care, and child care can learn from Early Head Start. And it was to offer full day, full year services to low-income working families. That was really the priority for the program. And there has been three or four iterations of it since 2014. I think it's been three funding opportunities since the initial one in 2014.

Tabitha: Thank you for that background. Now, I noticed that you have a Zoom background that says Region Three. Can you tell us a little bit about what you do in Region Three?

Irya: Yes. I am a program specialist in Region Three. I was a contract program specialist first, and then I was hired to work specifically with the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grants in November of 2014. I've been working with them for eight years now. And I work with other programs as well, not just Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership programs, but the program specialists here in Region Three, work with all the Head Start and Early Head Start programs in the region, which for Region Three is Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, Delaware, DC, and Maryland.

Tabitha: Thank you for that Irya. I remember you talked about when the partnership programs began. During that time, I was actually working for a monitoring contractor. And I remember when we had partnership specific protocol, and I was blessed to be able to go out to many different states and just to see the uniqueness of the models and just to see the excitement from the child care centers and the Early Head Start programs. It was just a boost to me. I was like, "Yes, we are doing this excellent work together in the community." I'm a little envious of you that you get to work with programs every day.

Irya: Yeah, we have a lot of unique programs, not just in our region, but nationally as well. I mean, there's programs that work with child care centers within prisons. There's programs that work overnight. There's programs that work in homeless shelters and women's centers. We really do have a lot of unique programs, and I don't necessarily know that Early Head Start would be able to do that as effectively had it not been for the partnerships with the child care programs.

Tabitha: Wonderful, thank you. We wanted to ask our registrants, what are their highlights? What do they feel like they're doing well as programs, and where are the areas where they may struggle a little bit? If we could just show that data slide. We asked about challenges. As Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership programs, which areas do you have the most challenges?

And this is what you said. Survey says, staff hiring and retention. We had most of our respondents said that's an area where they're struggling the most. That's really not a surprise based on we are going through right now with the full enrollment initiative. I appreciate you just sharing this is where we're struggling the most. We also see ERSEA there as well. It's interesting because a few registrants selected others. I was very curious, like what does that mean?

You see that there, I listed some of those things ... Again, staffing. Also, in referrals in terms of part C. They're referring children to get evaluated and that process is going really slow. Consulting and onboarding. These are some of the areas that you shared. Irya, are any of these surprising to you?

Irya: No, I think it's interesting to see how some have changed. I think in the beginning, curriculum implementation and family services would've probably been the biggest ones. As we know, staff hiring and retention, that's been a crisis nationwide. But it's affected child care a lot longer than Early Head Start. It's just catching up, and that's a big issue for everyone.

Tabitha: That's interesting because I remember through monitoring safety practices environments, that was also a big one where programs were using funding to try to make their facilities adhere to the Head Start Program Performance Standards. I remember that that was a challenge initially as well.

Can we go to the next slide? And we talk about ... I wanted to end this data tour on a high note. What are programs doing well, and there are many different areas that were selected. And I mentioned family services, which is excellent. It's one of the cornerstones of Head Start, supporting families. I told you that's my jam. That's what I used to do. And I worked in programs. We see some programs are saying ERSEA is a strong suit as well as fiscal operations. And I was happy to see that one program said, "We have a waiting list. "Whoever said that a shout out to you. And then others said monitoring and support are areas of strength. Irya, what do you think about these exemplary practices?

Irya: I love seeing family services up there. Like you, I come from family services as well. When I worked in the Head Start, I was a family service worker. And I know at least in our region, family services was a big struggle in the beginning because you were trying to capture the attention of working family, and that's not always the case in Head Start. The meetings couldn't be at drop off or at 10:00 AM. They had to be later in the day. Getting families to volunteer in centers was

really challenging at first. I'm really glad to see that the majority of programs said they excel in that.

Tabitha: OK, great. Thank you so much for that. That's great. We know we have a little insight in terms of where programs may need to support based on our registration data. What we're going to do is turn our virtual stage over to the programs, and Irya, I believe that these programs are going to say something today that's going to confirm what some programs are doing, but also inform what other programs are doing. What do you think?

Irya: Absolutely. I think a lot of people can learn a lot of things from the programs that we have today.

Tabitha: OK, perfect. Well, Irya, thank you so much for joining us. Thank you so much for your work in Region Three. I like to bring up my first program to the virtual stage, please. Early Learning Ventures Roll Call. Who do we have with us today from Early Learning Ventures?

Tim Garcia: Thank you, and hello to everyone. I'm Tim Garcia, director of Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships for Early Learning Ventures, or ELV. ELV is located in Inglewood, Colorado, which is in the South Denver metro area. We make Early Head Start services available to 350 infants and toddlers and their families across six Colorado counties through 34 child care partnerships.

Our partners are a mix of center-based programs and family child care homes. I'm joined today by two colleagues, Colleen Rohrig, child care partnership specialist, and Corrine Edwards, child care partner as owner and director of Wishes and Dreams Learning Center. Both work in Mesa County in the Grand Junction, Colorado area, and all three of us have worked with ELV Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships for the past eight years, since 2015. Thank you.

Tabitha: Thank you, and welcome to the webcast. All right, so next. Joining us on our virtual stage. We go to the next slide is DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education. It's a mouthful. If you're from the DC area, we say Ossi. But we welcome our colleagues from DC Office of the State, superintendent of Education to the virtual stage please.

Lysa Torres: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. It's a pleasure to join you in showcasing our program. My name is Lysa Torres, and I'm the program manager for the Quality Improvement Network. We're an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership program, and we're locally known as the QIN. I'm joined today by our Early Head Start Director, Dr. Kathryn Kigera, who is also the director of Quality Initiatives within the Division of Early Learning at Ossi. The QIN is located in Washington, DC and serves 366 Early Head Start children across 14 participating child development centers. In addition to the 366 federally funded slots, we support an additional 200 children and families through local funding beyond those that may qualify under Early Head Start income-based eligibility.

While the QIN does many great things today, you'll hear about our QIN subsidy rate, continuous eligibility, leadership coaching, and monthly community of practices. Thank you.

Tabitha: Thank you for joining us. We traveled from Colorado to DC. While we're out east, we're going to welcome our representative from Garrett County Head Start to the stage.

Tracy Bowman: Good morning, afternoon, wherever you are. My name's Tracy Bowman, director of Garrett County Community Action, Head Start, Early Head Start, and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Program. We're in a very rural area of Maryland, clear Western Maryland. We only have 20 EHSCCP slots, but I know a lot of the things this group shared in our planning, we find in common regardless of the size. Hopefully some things I can share today on our staff and partner retention, rural service area, streamlined state subsidy reimbursement, and partnerships with the LEA will resonate with others from stories across our three partnership sites.

Tabitha: Thank you, Tracy. Thank you so much for joining us. I love that you're like, "We have 20 slots," because some programs they're going to have five slots, 10 slots, 20 slots, 30 slots, and then you have programs that have hundreds of slots. My hope is that everyone joining us today can see themselves represented in the programs that we're featuring. Thank you so much for joining us, Tracy.

Tracy: Thank you.

Tabitha: OK. Last but certainly not least, we'd like to call to our virtual stage. Now we're leaving Maryland, and we're heading out to Arizona. Child-Parent Centers team, please join us.

Maria Bonilla Mooney: Thank you, Tabitha. Hello everybody. I'll Head Start, Early Head Start grantees joining us. It's just an honor to be asked to join today. We're thrilled. And with me today is our CEO Erin Lyons. I think she's got her camera on, but I really can't tell. OK. There she is. And Ekna Zamora Rehm, our family community partnership director and we're thrilled to have our provider that has been working with us, Elsa Minjarez. And that's who's here from Child-Parent Centers, and we probably have participants out there. Hello, Child-Parent Centers.

We serve five counties in southeastern Arizona, including the metro of Tucson as well as communities along our U.S. Mexican border Douglas, Arizona, where I was born and raised. Across the border is a Sora, Mexico, and then Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Mexico. We're really throughout Southeast. Our funded enrollment is 106 family child care partnerships and eight center based. Our total agency enrollment is 2,881. Number of partnership sites are 24. Our unique program features that we are inspired by Reggio-Emilia approaches, something we're very excited to be doing and very proud to be a part of.

Our comprehensive services structure features the teacher and the provider as the holder of the relationship with families. One of the most exciting things is our providers are really engaging in working with families in the new way that we are able to share across the board. The majority of our family child care partners are monolingual Spanish speakers, and that's us. Thank you.

Tabitha: Thank you and welcome. I'm just super excited to have our partners here, our Early Head Start programs here. OK. I hope everybody is ready for a great discussion. Now I have my notepad ready and my pencil so that I don't miss any of these pearls of wisdom. We should all leave here with a necklace. That's how rich the discussion will be. I like to ask that we not share the screen anymore and that all of my wonderful programs come back on the screen so we can start our discussion now.

When we were going through our dress rehearsal of today, I told everybody we're going to make this a comfortable dialogue. It's like we're all sitting in one of our programs around the conference room table. We might have a few things to eat and drink, and we're just sharing our experiences. The first part of our conversation will be centered around planning for success, and then we'll move on and talk about some lessons learned from the programs. If you have any questions, please drop them in the chat or use the Q&A feature.

But we will start with ... Let's start with Tim and Coreen. When we think about planning for success, one thing that is important for all programs is the written agreement. Which elements within the written agreement are most important to include and why? Thank you.

Tim: Well, even the basic elements like defining agreement term length require intentionality. It's probably most typical to have an annual agreement perhaps aligned with your program year. You could do multi-year terms as long as you don't set that expiration for after your funding term at the Office Head Start ends, of course. Other important elements to consider are maximum payment or reimbursement figures for your partners. How is your obligation to comply with other federal laws and regulations as a part of this, such as IDEA or uniform guidance, for example? How is that represented? And even though this is a partnership, there is some level of regulatory responsibility on the grant recipient. How are compliance, non-compliance, and termination represented?

Ultimately, having an attorney available to review your agreement is best for a language that's right for your organization. However, the scope of work as an attachment or exhibit is really where we feel like we can detail what the partnership looks like in practice. In the scope of work, we reiterate long-term program goals, and then the partnership deliverables for both our organization as the grant recipient and for the child care partner with a strong emphasis on Head Start Program Performance Standards. We referenced the standard subsections and numbers for our partners so they can see where the language and intent comes from and in relation to services being delivered through their program. And then later I'll come back to the scope of work and how that plays into our continuous improvement efforts as well.

Tabitha: Thank you. OK, great. And did Coreen have anything to add or was that your final answer?

Coreen Edwards: I was just thinking it, for me as a center owner director, it's important for me to have a confidential clause in there. With my partners, my family, and staff need to know that private conversations are that they're kept private. We live in such a small community that we see our families out and about in at school activities community events, the grocery store. Many of our staff have families and friends that attend our center. In order for us to really be able to serve our families with the resources and the help they need, they need to be able to trust us. And we need to be able to trust our outside partners. One example is early learning ventures Head Start Specialists can get scholarships for families that are much needed these days. That is ...

Tabitha: And I think just ...

Coreen: ... one aspect of being able to trust them. Families don't always like to ask for help. Are you there?

Tabitha: Yes. We heard most of what you said. And you know what, Coreen? And our whole team agrees. You get so excited when you talk about confidentiality, which I appreciate because we're asking programs to provide comprehensive services. And in doing so, we know that you're going to learn a lot about families. We appreciate you elevating the importance of that aspect within the written agreement.

And then Tim, you shared the importance of scope of work. Like programs need to know exactly what's expected of them on a day-to-day basis. Both points that you raised were very important, Coreen and Tim.

I'm going to turn over to Tracy with Garrett County, and I'm curious for you to share how is your program structured to ensure uninterrupted services within the context of subsidies.

Tracy: In the early stages – and we were in the first cohort of EHSCCP programs – we implemented in collaboration with the state of Maryland and the State Department of Education, a direct invoice system from the program for subsidy. The importance of that really lies in the relationship that the families are creating with their family service worker coordinator, whatever your program call them. We are able to collect all of that subsidy scholarship documentation required for eligibility and keep that in-house for review at the state's discretion. Then we invoice directly from the program. It's not the family's responsibility to let them know the children are coming. It's our responsibility. And then payments received in a timely manner so we can get payments out to our partners. Just really emphasizing that collaboration, it took a lot of work for our state to get to that point, but it was very well worth it in the end, and we're able to ensure all families that are eligible are receiving those subsidies back to the program.

Tabitha: OK, Tracy, you said – you dropped some pearls. I hope people got them. You talked about two very strong partnerships. You talked about, first of all, the partnership between your program and the state. And you said that didn't happen overnight. Like that took some relationship building. Then you talked about the relationship between the families and family services staff, about how those two are so important to ensure uninterrupted services within the context of subsidies. Thank you so much for sharing those pearls of wisdom. I think Lysa has something to add from Ossie about their programs approach.

Lysa: Thanks, Tabitha. The QIN uses a layered approach in order to serve as a child care partner. Child care centers must be licensed and participating in the child care subsidy program. Child care partners serving Early Head Start children are reimbursed through our child care subsidy system. Generally, child care subsidy reimbursement rates are determined by a provider's quality designation within Capital Quality, DC's quality rating and improvement system. However, our child care partners receive a special rate for their participation in the QIN, which is not affected by their changes to their quality designation.

Families that are interested in Early Head Start services receive an eligibility determination for their child care subsidy prior to enrollment, and eligibility is either determined by the Department of Human Services or onsite if the child care partner is a level two provider, meaning that they can complete subsidy eligibility onsite directly. Once families are determined to be eligible for child care subsidy and Early Head Start, their eligibility is valid for up to three

years or until the child ages out of the program. This ensures that children and families receive uninterrupted services. And finally, because our program is layered on top of child care subsidy, we offer full-time year-round services to Early Head Start eligible children and their families.

Tabitha: That was a lot. Thank you. And you know, Lysa, I really appreciate you adding in information about DC's Quality Rating System. And I also heard you say child care programs must be licensed. When you think about positioning partnerships for success, I can tell that Ossie was very intentional about how they set this up and who could participate. Thank you for that information.

Now that we talked about the written agreement and subsidies, I want to turn to staffing. You can't run partnerships without people. Ekna, can you talk to us about your program's approach to onboarding partnership staff?

Ekna Zamora Rehm: Yes, thank you Tabitha. We do differentiate between staff and our partners. For our staff, we do have a three-day onboarding process that focuses on who we are as an agency – our vision, our mission, philosophy, and beliefs – because of our relationship-based approach. We also have a 10-day, 30 day, 60, 90 day, and a full year calendar of professional development plan that's specific to the staff member's position and coaching the scaffold. Learning for our partners, it's a little different. And we do begin at the recruitment phase. One of the things that we did early on when we started in 2015 was partner with someone in the community who was informed and aware of family child care because it was new to us.

And then within that recruitment model, we onboard our staff. We begin with an information session. We have current staff that are part of it and partners, and we do a one-on-one question and answer session. We then do an interview to get to know our interested providers, and that's so they can focus on why they are interested in partnering with us. We do include important aspects of that, such as the no expulsion and suspension policy that the Office of Head Start has because that may be different for interested partners who have had the autonomy prior to that. Then we do a home visit. And then once selected, we have a contract session where we go over the contract with components like Tim added, and we have the partner stay with it for a week. When they come in and sign the contract, then we ask them if they have any specific questions. That's when we start the official process with a 10-day onboarding process, and we scaffold monthly with learning communities. We do bring in our partners in a cohort so they have a group that they're learning alongside with. That's what we do. Thank you. OK.

Tabitha: Well, Ekna, wait, wait, wait. OK, so I have a question because Yes. Just remind us. Now you primarily have family child care providers as your partners, is that correct?

Ekna: That's correct. We do have a center-based partner as well.

Tabitha: OK, great. Thank you. I think it was very interesting what you said. You said we onboard our partnership programs in a different way. And the reason why that struck me is because it's like you are customizing your onboarding based on the needs of different groups. You're not just doing the same thing for everybody. And that's what we talk about when we talk

about equity. It's giving people exactly what they need in order to do well. I appreciate you calling out those differences. Thank you.

Ekna: Thank you.

Tabitha: Tracy, we're learning more about Garrett County, and what is your program's approach to providing ongoing support to partnership staff? And how do you know that that ongoing support is effective?

Tracy: Great. Garrett County, we have a designated manager with a knowledge of collaboration, disabilities, mental health, transportation, designated to support all aspects of the partnership from the contract requirements, the ongoing monitoring, invoicing, state licensing, and all other service provisions. Something to remember, we are a small program; only 20. While that staff person has other responsibilities, predominantly disabilities and mental health, they do serve in that role for all three of our partners in 20 slots.

The quality programming we observe and the retention of our partners is kind of how we measure and speak to the effectiveness of that support. We get a lot of feedback and participation from our partners saying that that support and that go-to person within the program and agency, they know who their contact is, they know what kind of support she can provide and makes herself readily available. That feedback and retention of partners speaks to the success of the model.

Tabitha: Thank you, Tracy. Kathryn, I wonder if Ossie does anything different in their approach to supporting partnership staff?

Dr. Kathryn Kigera: We do. It just looks a little bit different, and it probably looks different everywhere, but partnership staff receive support through several means, through Capital Quality, like we mentioned. That's our quality rating and improvement system, and through the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership. Being a state agency we do have different levels of support that some of the partners may not have. But today, we want to focus specifically on how we support leadership because we have made significant improvements in that over time.

Through the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership, partner leadership participate in monthly community of practices focused on an array of topics such as Head Start Program Performance Standards and related items, trauma-informed care, staff wellness, leadership development, and strategic planning through our Shared Services Business Alliance. They also participate in partner-specific meetings held quarterly with each child care facility focused on comprehensive services. The aim of these meetings is fostering a collective learning process and creating an opportunity to share success and address any challenges.

And then in addition to that, we also have our Capital Quality Program, which everyone is also engaged in, and that provides partner leadership with additional community of practices with all capital quality leadership, as well as receiving three to six hours of one-on-one coaching and technical assistance through a quality facilitator. One-on-one coaching and technical assistance is focused on the individual partners short and long-term goals, which are based on 10 quality indicators, and those are closely aligned with the program performance standards as well.



Tabitha: Thank you. And I'm curious about the three to six hours of coaching. Is that monthly, weekly? Can you talk to us about how frequently that occurs?

Kathryn: Yep. That's monthly.

Tabitha: That's monthly. OK, great. Thank you.

Kathryn: If they requested more, they could get more.

Tabitha: Wonderful. OK. We've provided great information about planning for success. I see there are a few questions that are coming in through the Q&A function. I think what we'll do is save time towards the end for Q&A.

Before we get to questions, I'd like us to transition to lessons learned from programs. As you've been doing this work for a while now, you've shared with us some of your practices. Tim and Colleen and Coreen, can you talk to us about your program's approach to using data for continuous improvement?

Tim: Sure. Thank you, Tabitha. Well for our program, the annual self-assessment process is significant in terms of using data for continuous improvement. We've typically focused that process on the current monitoring protocol from the Office of Head Start for that year. For data collection, we've used focus groups, interviews, surveys from our partners, our child care partners, community partners, our team, our governance groups. And then combine that with a review of other program data collected throughout the year, including community assessment data. This informs our self-assessment action plan, which is a big part of our continuous improvement effort.

For this current year, however, we're using an equity self-assessment tool with the support of the Region Eight Head Start training and technical assistance team, which is still in progress. For our partners, we basically take that scope of work from our partnership agreements that are referenced earlier, and we reformat those deliverables into a site-specific continuous improvement plan of 22 to 23 objectives that's built into our data management system, ELV Alliance Core. This allows us to utilize the scope of work as a working action plan that's facilitated by our staff with our partners but always accessible to our partners within the Alliance core system. Thanks.

Tabitha: Thank you. And then Colleen and Coreen, do you have anything to add?

Colleen Roahrig: Yes. As Tim mentioned, we have lots of opportunities to collect data for continuous improvement. A couple of examples are we use the data teachers collect from their My Teaching strategies, child's observations to determine each child's overall development, and then to track that progress as children move towards school readiness through the several observations that occurred throughout the year. These results are shared with parents during home visits or parent-teacher conferences. We have a monthly review of health screening reports, making sure that all health screens are being completed within that 45-day timeline and helping sites keep track of that.

And then, as we mentioned with the ELV Alliance Core Data Management system, it's continuous. We meet every month and review that. We identify action steps and goals moving

forward and all are on the same track to good continuous improvement. These are just a couple of examples of our continuous improvement.

Tabitha: Great. Coreen, did you have anything to add?

Coreen: Yeah, I would just add what a time saver has been to be able to access that ELV Alliance Core Management system because our state licensers now can get on there. They can review the child's files, the staff files, our drills, all before they come into the building, so it saves time with them in the building. And for me, it saves my time not having to walk through paper files with our state licensers.

Tabitha: And Coreen, that's excellent because they walk in your door with some knowledge base, right? Like they can ask you targeted questions based on what they learned from the data.

Before we move to the next question, Tim, you know, I have to ask you, you mentioned the equity assessment tool. Can you just tell us just a little bit about the elements that are within the tool?

Tim: Oh, off of memory. That'll be tough. But well ...

Tabitha: Tell me what the purpose of the tool is. Cause I'm just curious.

Tim: Yeah, if you, if you want to look at it, I mean, it was a tool that was produced by the Children's Equity Project to – maybe our friends in Arizona are familiar with that – it was really focused on a number of different priority areas. You're able to look at your program from each of those different priority areas to see how you can re-look at what you're doing with equitable outcomes in mind. Really helpful in that way. As I mentioned, it's still in progress. Should be able to share a lot more in a couple months.

Tabitha: That's perfect, Tim, and thank you. I know I put you on the spot, but you did give us more information about where we could access the tool, how you might be using the tool, and really just to examine your practices to make sure they're equitable. I just really appreciate you just spending a few moments sharing with us more information.

Lysa and Kathryn, Ossie has an approach to using data for continuous improvement. Can you please share those approaches?

Lysa: Yeah. We collect data through a variety of means, including some of which our other programs have just mentioned. But we have a monthly e-workbook that's categorized by our program goals and objectives. And the data that we use is not only used for monitoring, but also to determine program priorities, our funding allocations, the partnerships that we pursue, additional grant funds that we might pursue, improvements to child care partner supports and services offered to families, amongst other activities. And as such, the QIN has made a variety of quality improvements influenced by data. For instance, expanding our monetary incentives, prioritizing staff wellness, developing program goals in the context of the QIN as a community, and adding a shared services hub to provide much needed services, including substitutes, deep cleaning, pest control, and back office supports.

Tabitha: Hold on, Lysa. I got excited. Oh, let me calm down. OK, I love what you shared towards the end. You said, OK, "Yes, we have data, and yes, we look at it, but then based on what we've learned, these are some of the things that we've done." Love that. You talked about the monetary incentives, the incentives. You talked about the wellness initiatives. You talked about even deep cleaning. I guess you have providers saying, "We need help with this. We're spending too much time doing this. What can you do to support us?" Really appreciated that you used that data to be intentional about how you support programs. Thank you for those key outcomes.

And then did Kathryn have anything else to add. Or Lysa, you pretty much summarized everything.

Lysa: I covered it.

Tabitha: OK, perfect. Thank you so much. Tracy, did have a few registrants talk about they really need support in terms of workforce strategies. What is your program's approach to recruiting and retaining teachers and family child care providers?

Tracy: Yeah. We kind of approach that in both ways, starting with teachers. We have a unique service model that actually puts program hired, grant paid teaching staff in our partnerships. As our agency isn't experiencing the staffing struggles that some of private providers in our community are. Our staff help provide stability and direct communication and collaboration with the partnerships. From a standpoint of recruiting those teaching staff, we utilize a partnership with our local college that supports individuals in obtaining the required degrees and/or infant-toddler CDA, along with supporting parents and building parents as our workforce of currently and past enrolled children. We help them through that process to qualify for and be hired as eligible into open positions.

From a standpoint of recruiting providers, we've collaboratively recruited with our LEA. In our community, the LEA saw the importance of before, after, and summer child care for families. That gave us the opportunity to support that effort. As I said, we're a small rural community, so it's hard for different entities to be looking for the same thing and have success. If you find who else needs what you need and work together, we found ourselves more successful. When we were able to locate those providers, and the LEA provided space. Our providers all are small center-based providers, and the LEA has provided space for them. Whether it was a provider who already had a family child care in their home and then wanted to expand on that, we were able to provide in collaboration with them space and staff to support that.

Tabitha: Tracy. OK. I don't know if you planned your speaking points in this way, but every time you share, you emphasize, highlight, underline, partnerships. I really appreciate you calling out your partnership with the LEA. And you talked about the benefits of having that partnership specifically in the area of space, and you also said, "Hey, we have a very small service area. Everybody's trying to do the same thing. Instead of being in competition, we're working to together."

Tracy: Yes.

Tabitha: Very powerful. Thank you, Tracy, for sharing the wonderful partnership with us. Ekna, we're going to turn to you, and we're interested to hear about your program's approach to ensuring the effective implementation of comprehensive services.

Ekna: Yeah. Thank you, Tabitha. I thought for this question, who better than our family child care partner provider to answer from her perspective what she has done to ensure effective implementation through our partnership. Elsa.

Elsa Minjarez: Thank you. Thank you so much. The primary focus begin with the families unwielding strong relationships because it support the child success. This begin with home visits for every child enrolled. We attend with the education and family services coaches to know more about the family and their environment to learn how they are and how they support them to meet their needs. Then on education services to meet for each child by the Zoom plannings.

We focus each on each child and strength and opportunities for them to grow. With mixed age groups, this is critical. We are meeting the needs to each child enroll in my care. Going with assessments, we use teaching strategies goal. This focus on the child's development, and help inform individual ideas to use on the lesson plans. Observation that children's are important too. Coaching support from both education and family services specialists, of course, weekly. Coaches offer opportunities to think together and listen deeply to help me as a provider to access my thought and frame my words and ideas. They guide me in understanding and implementing the program requirements. Feedback is a specific and guides me to know the areas of growth for myself and my business. Health and safety [Inaudible] coaching visit to monitor health and safety aspect of the program. We have an active supervision plan that I develop annually and review with my staff to ensure the safety of all the children. Coaches monitor during visits. Involve children with a safety agreements, using books to engage children in safety discussions. And once a month, we practice fire drill.

Ekna: Thank you so much, Elsa. What? I will wait ...

Tabitha: Wait a minute. Ekna, wait a minute. We got to stay with Elsa for a minute. Elsa, you can be on a commercial for EHSCCP. I mean, you really ...

Elsa: Thank you so much.

Tabitha: That was good. That was good, Elsa. Thank you. Elsa, I just wanted to know this. I'm sorry, Ekna. I just have to ask Elsa, when you think about the partnership program, tell me the greatest value that is added to your center. What's the greatest value, the greatest benefit?

Elsa: I think everything involves with my children that I have right here. We have those coaches that they always are for me. Anytime and any hours. If I have something to ask, like we are doing that lesson planning. We always, "OK, I think this is like. That's the way I want to do it." But what if I ask one of my coaches, they going to tell me, "What if we change this or this?" We've been talking the other day, we were talking about, I always say the big words because I always say, "Oh, that's a good job. Oh, I like it. That's enough." But I know there are another words that I can taught the kids to get more excited or they want to try more and more and

more. Thanks to my coaches, when they come right here, they observe me, and they told me what we can do. I think that's the part most important for me.

Tabitha: See Ekna, I knew it. See, I knew Elsa was going to give us something else, and that is exactly what I was looking for. Thank you so much, Elsa. OK, Ekna, I'm turning it over to you.

Ekna: Thank you, Tabitha. Thank you so much, Elsa. She has 24 years of family child care experience. Child-Parent Centers has eight years. When we started this partnership, the most important thing to us was relationships. We had respect who they are, align our practices, our Head Start practices and their business practices and build from there. Just remember, your partners have tons of knowledge, several years of experience in child care, and I think that that's what this partnership was about, to respect, align, and build. And that's what we've done.

Tabitha: It's very interesting, Ekna, that you said that, because sometimes people think, "Oh, Early Head Start is coming in, and we're making child care programs better," but based on this conversation you say, "Oh, wait a minute. Elsa has over 20 years of experience. We've only been in the game for eight years. Just eight years. Elsa is our rockstar. She's our superstar. We're learning from her." That is such a strength-based approach to doing this work. I appreciate you calling out the knowledge and the wisdom that Elsa brings as a provider. Thank you for that, Ekna.

Ekna: You're welcome. Thank you.

Tabitha: OK. We are moving through our conversation. I know we only have 12 minutes left, but in thinking about if any of you participated in the webcast and you heard our new director, Mr. Kari Garvin, talk about OHS priorities. You know that he talked about reaching the children and families with the highest level of need. I like just everyone to just join us on the stage, all of our panelists and just share with us how do you do that? How do you find the families with the highest level of need?

Colleen: If I could just comment. With early learning ventures, we have a selection criteria that we're using that really helps us determine which family could benefit the most from our program. Although we don't have unlimited slots, but we are looking at certain things like child's development, if there's parent mental health, if a child's been exposed to drugs and alcohol, or secondhand smoke or domestic violence. These are just a few, and if the family has less than a high school diploma, but we also look at, is the family income eligible? What is their housing situation? Are they on SNAP? We're able to give additional weight or points to those families that really helps elevate those families that could clearly benefit most from our program.

Tabitha: Thank you. Colleen, you know what's interesting about what you said is it seems like you really are being responsive based on the changing times that you're not saying, "Well, this is what we had 10 years ago. This is what we have five years ago." But what I heard, I heard a lot of what's happening right now in the world and what may be happening in your community and how you're using that information to inform your selection of the families with the most needs. Thank you for sharing that with us.

Colleen: Can I also just add, just to speak to what you've just said, we also added another criteria about, has your family been impacted by Covid, which is very new. That is in addition to several others. Thank you for that.

Tabitha: You're welcome, Colleen. Does anybody else want to add anything about ... Yes, go ahead.

Lysa: Oh, I'll jump in. We actually just engaged our policy council on a review of our priority selection criteria. And some of their feedback included revisiting the language that we use and whether the language actually motivates families not to participate. Considering mental health and whether we should revisit it to brain health and whether we should give examples, like postpartum depression as being something that families might consider saying they need services for. Also the type of neighborhoods that they reside in, whether they reside in neighborhoods that are considered food deserts. We do have neighborhoods in our community like that. And then expanding to community violence. We have an increase in gun violence in our neighborhood's, vehicle thefts, and thefts of other kinds. Just engaging them and thinking about what would make it easier for them to access services that they need and having family input or policy council input in making revisions to the priority selection criteria is key for us.

Tabitha: OK, Lysa took the conversation a step further. She said, "Yes, we're looking at our criteria, but we've also engaged our policy council." She's engaging persons with lived experiences to say like, "Hey, listen, y'all need to change your wording a little bit cuz that could be a deterrent to a family actually wanting to enroll in the program." Things that I'm sure, Lysa, you didn't even think of. They're bringing up based on what's happening in the community. That is great.

OK. I also want to ... I had another question, but you know what, let's get to participant questions. I think that all of the panelists, you should be able to see the questions. We'll get to as many as we can. I'll start with ... Let's see. OK. Are any programs having trouble finding families who still qualify for Early Head Start since the minimum wage has been on the rise in many states? How is the minimum wage currently impacting your ability to recruit eligible families?

Tracy: This is Tracy with Garrett County, and Maryland is going through this, going from a national average minimum wage to \$15 an hour, which will be in full swing January 1, 24. That has been an issue. Looking at the selection criteria and priorities that folks talked about with the last question in expanding the CCP mission to also serve families who are in training or degree programs. While we may not have as many working families still being eligible, given the current parameters for enrollment, we can look our local community college, other places where young students with children are attending and prioritizing their enrollment also in CCP.

Tabitha: Thank you, Tracy. There's another question related to ERSEA, and I know that several programs touched on this a little bit, but the question is around if children need to be approved in the provider's home first before they can be considered for EHS, or is there one eligibility verification process to enroll children in your programs?

Ekna: Oh, I can answer that one, Tabitha. Thank you. And it goes back to what's written in the contract. We do let our partners know that we have an ERSEA process along with the selection

criteria. We partner with our providers to let them know that they'll go through one process to then enroll within their home. We don't have a two-step process. They're Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership eligible. Then they come in and the family chooses the home that's closest to them or their work, whichever is most convenient. We partner with our providers to ask them if they have a waiting list, and then we work off their waiting list too. But it's just one system to meet both needs.

Tabitha: Thank you, Ekna. We have someone actually placed in the chat. It really wasn't a question, but it was more of, it's helpful to use your board members and other community networks to help grow EHSCCP. I think that also goes into recruiting. Thank you so much for that comment. There's a question about equity. Tim mentioned this a little bit. He said his program is using an equity assessment to ensure the program is executing equitable practices. Wondering about other programs. How does your program ensure just implement equity throughout comprehensive services, including what's happening in the classroom?

Lysa: I can jump in. As we know, Early Head Start comprehensive services, they're aimed at equity by working with families to identify their goals and supporting them with resources to attain them. In addition to that, our program supports families and children across the program based on individual needs. We intentionally pursue partnerships with organizations that have the capacity to support children and families and the broader community in areas like employment and job training. For example, anecdotally, we've heard from several families that they have participated in job training through our partner hub, the United Planning Organization, in the fields of information technology and early childhood education, and they have been successfully hired following their training. If there are employment gaps or there's income gaps, we're supporting families in achieving that.

In addition, our program delivers equitable services within child care partners by investing local funding to allocate Early Head Start slots and provide Early Head Start services to families with children, ages zero to 3, who are eligible for child care but may not be categorically or income-based eligible through Early Head Start, which is a critical piece for us in terms of equity. And then finally, one of the things that we do want to highlight is in terms of advocacy, how the United Planning Organization provides training and tools for families to be able to advocate for themselves and their children. In addition to that, they prepare families to testify in front of DC Council on matters that affect their children and their communities, which we think is a key piece to ensuring that not only do we provide equitable services, but that our families can also advocate for them as well.

Tabitha: Thank you so much, Lysa, for that information and insight. OK, we have three minutes remaining. I want to make sure we drop the resource link in the chat, but as we're doing that, I would like everyone to think about, and this is a question from one of our participants, and I think it's a really good question. What is your biggest lesson learned? If you can think about a response to that, maybe 30 seconds. I would love for you to share your biggest lesson learned with the Head Start community.

While you're thinking about that, we did have Hayley drop in the chat a link to what I call our information station, where you can get a lot of really good EHSCCP resources. OK. Who wants to chime in with lessons learned? Yes, Ekna.

Ekna: I can jump in. It went back to my onboarding discussion. Let your interested partners know what Head Start requires because they are requirements. They're not recommendations. And allow the partners to make an informed decision on whether or not this partnership is for them. You share the information, and you let them decide.

Tabitha: Love that. Love transparency when entering into relationships. You want to know exactly what's required. Thank you. Anyone else? Leslie?

Colleen: I'm sorry. I was just going to say I think it's also important for not only directors, but that they're communicating with their teachers because a lot of the requirements will cause teachers to need to participate as well, so that they understand as a program what they're signing up for and that everybody understands their responsibilities.

Tabitha: Thank you. Anyone else? Lessons learned.

Coreen: Tabitha, this is Coreen. I think my biggest lesson learned, I've been in this business for over 40 years, and once I partnered with Head Start, I realized that there's lots of community partners that you can build and help your families. You don't have to stand alone. As a center, you have lots of options and lots of opportunity to partner with different people in your community.

Tabitha: Thank you. That key word, partnerships. It's coming up again. OK. Anyone else? Lessons learned? Well, I would ... Oh, go ahead.

Elsa: I think that on my experience, that's like you saying, we had to have our relationships with the parents. Most of the parents doesn't know they are from DS and that's the only thing, they stay right there. But when we know that we have all those opportunities for them. It is so good to just let them know we have this and this and this, and that way they can think about it or they can decide what they want to do.

Tabitha: Thank you, Elsa, and we'll definitely let that last word go to one of our partners. I'd just like to thank all of our programs for joining us today. When we had our initial planning call, I asked them, what is it that you wanted to know when you walked into this EHSCCP adventure? Most of what you heard today, it is what has helped these programs be successful.

I'd like to thank you so much, programs, for joining us and sharing your expertise and your time with us today. We'd also like to thank all of our webcast participants. This feature will be available on ECLKC in upcoming weeks. You can go back, you can share this with your teams, but we hope that you receive so many pearls that you have necklace and earrings and a bracelet. Thank you so much for joining us, and we'll see you soon. Have a great day everyone.