

First Steps for Integration Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education

Tuesday, May 14, 2013; 2pm ET

Operator: Good day everyone and welcome to the First Steps to Integrating Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Webinar. Today's program is being recorded.

At this time I'd like turn everything over to Rebecca Fairchild with the National Resource Center. Please go ahead ma'am.

Rebecca Fairchild: Thank you so much and hello everyone. I'd like to welcome you to the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families Webinar entitled "First Steps for Integrating Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education."

My name is Rebecca Fairchild and I am part of the Resource Center team. I'd like to thank everyone for joining us today.

Before we get started with the presentation there are a few housekeeping items I'd like to go over. The audio for today's Webinar will be broadcast through your computer speakers. Please make sure that the volume on your speakers is turned on so that you can hear the presentation.

New featured resources that will be discussed in today's Webinar are available for you to download from the pod in the top right corner of your screen designated with the word "Files." Please click the name of the file you wish to view and then the download button to open or save a copy of the resource to your computer.

The resources and the videos shown today will also be available on our Website, healthymarriageandfamilies.org. To visit our Website, click the link in the middle pod on your right designated with the words "Web Links."

We will be taking questions at the end of the presentation but we encourage you to submit any questions that you have throughout the duration of the Webinar. To do this, find the question and answer pod designated by the letters "Q&A" in the bottom right portion of your screen.

Type your question in the open field at the bottom then click Send Question, click the button or press Email. You will receive a reply thanking you for your questions and your question will be forwarded to the moderator.

A recording of this presentation, the slides, a transcript and a question and answer document will be posted to the Past Events Archive on our website, healthymarriageandfamilies.org, under the Training Technical Assistance & Events tab.

Our speakers today will be Robyn Cenizal, the Project Director of the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families, Ted Futris, Training and Technical Assistance with the National Resource Center and our panelists, Geneva Rodriguez, Susan Savage and Takeda LeGrand.

So with that I will go ahead and turn over the call to Robyn Cenizal, Project Director here at the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families. Robyn?

Robyn Cenizal: Thank you Rebecca and thank you all for joining us today. The National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families focuses on connecting healthy marriage education skills and safety net services as an integrated approach to strengthening families. So today you're going to hear some very interesting presentations from diverse stakeholders who have actually started the steps to integration.

Safety-net service providers is kind of a collective term that we use to refer to all of the agencies that we work with, federal, state, tribal and local government agencies such as those reflected in this diagram, including child support, child welfare, Head Start, as well as workforce investment boards and their community partners.

Healthy marriage education skills include interpersonal skills such as communication and conflict resolution skills along with the critical skills such as parenting and financial literacy. We focus on these skills because they are skills - the interpersonal skills transfer from interpersonal relationships within the family to the workplace, in the community and in the schools.

And the critical skills that we talk about, parenting and financial education, are the kind of issues that are most likely to disrupt families, issues with children and parenting or financial issues.

So with that I'm going to turn it over to Ted so he can introduce our presenters. And I'll be back to talk with you more later.

Ted Futris: Thank you Robyn and good afternoon everybody. Thank you for joining us today. We are here to hear from some of our colleagues out in the field across the country who have attempted to integrate healthy marriage and relationship education into the services that they provide for their clients within their state.

They're going to highlight for us some of the planning and development stages and what's gone well and what lessons they've learned. And before we get started, I would like to briefly ask the group a quick poll question.

Have you or someone at your agency attempted to integrate healthy marriage and relationship education into your agency's existing services? Take a moment here to choose the appropriate response, whether you have within the last year or so, within the last 6 to 12 months, within the past 6 months or if you haven't but plan to or are interested in doing so.

All right. And we've got quite a nice mix here of responses. And overall, we've got a variety of folks here that have been involved in this to differing degrees as well as some folks it seems on the call who haven't quite done this but are definitely interested in learning more. And you're in the right place to learn more about how to integrate, what integrating healthy marriage and relationship education involves.

And we're real fortunate and pleased to have with us three stakeholders who have been involved in integrating, Geneva Rodriguez who's with - a Surveillance Officer with Adult Probation in Phoenix, Arizona and Susan Savage, a Deputy Director with the Children's Division in Jefferson City, Missouri and Takeda LeGrand with Family Consumer Science Education Consulting in Raleigh, North Carolina.

And I'll talk - I'll explain a little bit more about our panelists here in a moment. But each of these panelists actually participated in one of our prior Integration Institute trainings that we have offered. We've actually hosted five trainings to date in which safety net service providers have come together to learn about integration of healthy marriage and relationship education.

Importantly, at these Institute trainings, they developed action plans to actually move their - this effort forward in their state, to develop a strategy and steps for taking this back to their agency and finding a way to integrate into the work that they do.

And so we're real happy to have our speakers here, our participants from these prior Institute trainings here with us today to share with us what lessons they've learned, what they've done so that some of you who are on the call and are in the mix of trying to integrate can hear from them and what they've learned.

But also, at the end you'll have an opportunity to ask them questions to - for some additional input. And those of you who are just now getting started, hopefully what they share will give you some insight into - and some ideas on how to do so.

We asked each of our panelists here today to discuss, you know, their first steps that they've taken within their agency to integrate healthy marriage and relationship education to their services. Each of them - each of the panelists were asked to discuss specific parts of integration. And what you see on the screen now are topics that we asked each of them to address.

What first steps their agency has taken, supporters and the types of support they received because we know that doing this work requires a lot of internal and external agency support, critical initial steps that they took to move forward and how their plans, their action plans evolved because at this Institute training, they developed an initial action plan.

But as they started implementing their plan, their plan evolved as they - to adapt to the needs of their services and to what needed to be done to continue to move efforts forward.

As well we've asked them to highlight some measures of success. And at the end we'll also share some of the next steps. So, each of our panelists in their presentations will touch on these topics. And again, at the end of the Webinar, after they've all presented, there will be an opportunity for some question and answers so they'll be able to respond to questions that you post.

So before we get started with Geneva, I would like to post a quick poll question. How many individuals are released from prison each year in the United States? Go ahead and select your response there, about 50,000, about 130,000, about 200,000 or about 650,000.

All right, we've got quite a mix and roughly about half of our group it seems - now it looks like about 44%, some folks have changed their minds. But about 44% of the group believes it's about 650,000. And if you chose 650,000, you are correct.

According to a study by Visser and Courtney in 2007, 46% of returning individuals who had been incarcerated lived with a spouse or a partner before incarceration. And national stats show that 2007 - in 2007, approximately 53% of incarcerated individuals had at least one child under the age of 18.

You take those numbers and you take the fact that 650,000 individuals incarcerated, that's a lot of families, a lot of couples, a lot of children impacted by incarceration. And so many individuals released from prison are returning to partners and children. Many families going through the reentry transition are struggling to adjust to new roles and changes in the family system.

Well, we're happy to have with us Geneva Rodriguez who's worked for Maricopa County for 17 years, 7 years with the County Attorney's office in homicide, gang and organized crime and the last 10 years she's worked with adult probation. And she currently works in the Community Reentry Unit interviewing inmates before they're released from prison to identify obstacles that they may face upon release.

So Geneva, thank you for joining us today. And please share with us what have been - what first steps have you taken? What has integrating healthy marriage relationship education been like in your state with the work you've been doing?

Geneva Rodriguez: Hello everybody. Again, my name is Geneva Rodriguez. And as Ted mentioned, I do work with adult probation as a Surveillance Officer here in Arizona, basically the Phoenix area.

And back in 2009, my department was awarded a federal grant basically to help us reduce the amount of recidivism of those incarcerated coming to probation. And in order to do that, we decided that I would do - such as myself would go into the prisons to identify critical needs, i.e., whether they had their birth certificate, housing, clothing, that sort of thing.

And as this program kicked off, we thought we had everything we needed. But further along in the month, we started to notice that our clients were being kicked out of their homes, either by their family, spouse, some intimate partnership that they had. And we learned that while the honeymoon phase was great, the reality wasn't so great.

And so we had to address that problem. And so we decided that it was in our best interests to invest our money and our time to looking into providing some type of support for our clients in regards to healthy marriages and relationships.

Now I was fortunate enough to have that right timing and I attended the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriages and Family Integration Institute in Mesa, Arizona back in September. And I've got to tell you that action plan is a Godsend. If you do ever attend these seminars, that action plan is very important.

One of the things they had us do was to list partnerships, either ones that we had or ones that we could foresee, ones that we wanted to create and identify those agencies or collaborations to help us meet our goal in getting this program for family reentry and reunification.

Now once I had my action plan, this made things a lot easier for me. The first thing was that I got to meet with new partnerships, identify those who I could relate to, those who had those things in common with me and those who were interested in starting the healthy marriage and relationship education.

So how did I engage my partners? Well, the first thing I did was get buy-in from my employer. My supervisor was gung-ho. She was very supportive of me. And with my action plans, she and I went to our higher-ups and they were also very supportive.

They lessened my workload so that I can focus a little more on our partnership - building our partnerships. They also gave me a company car so that I could attend seminars, build relationships, attend meetings, attend groups of counseling, that type of thing. And with the action plan and that support, I began building those partnerships.

And the first thing I did was I began calling those agencies that out - we already had relationships with, so for example, those we had, substance abuse treatment providers, domestic violence providers, that sort of thing.

And for those of them who were not able to help, for example my very first call I remember they said, "You know, what Geneva? This sounds great but we really don't deal with that type of thing. But what we can do is we can provide you a venue. On Thursdays, Thursday nights, between 6:00 and 9:00, we have a venue that - or a classroom that's not being used and you can use that if you do get this kicked off."

And that's when I realized that I didn't necessarily need to have an agency to give it all to me but I could use bits and pieces of different agencies' support to build the program that I needed.

And with that, I began to meet with these partnerships and we began to meet on a regular basis. Right now, we are meeting every three months. And we go over basically what I need as I refer clients, you know, whether it's spousal partnerships, family issues that are going on. And then from them, I get, you know, who they need to refer - properly referred to so I don't refer someone with issues with their spouse to a child adolescent kind of classroom.

So we discuss that. I also attend classes that they - that I send my clients to so that I understand what it is they're being taught and when they come and see me or their other probation officer, I kind of have an idea of where they're at within their counseling and what type of background or what type of homework they should be working on.

Also, we also bring to the table what we can help each other out with. So for example, I'm not a counselor. And I do speak from time to time but the only thing I could offer was a venue as well. We have seven different offices within our county and we are a very large county. So having those different venues for those families to come and get these - this type of resource is helpful.

I also can provide bus tickets. And I can also help out with other resources. They, on the other hand, have things I don't have the ability to get. And for example, some of them can provide food boxes. Some of them have access to low income utilities, that type of thing.

You know, basically what this is is quality control, making sure that our clients get what they need, I get what I need and then the agencies or collaborators get the referrals that they need to show basically their stats as well that their program is needed as much as I need them.

So some examples that I have to share with you on how kind of unique things that I have to deal with on a day-to-day basis when it comes to family conflict, and the first story I'd like to share is of a young man who was sentenced when he was 15 years old. And he started his stay in juvenile prison. And when he turned 18 he was sent to adult.

And due to his youth and his small stature, staff believed that he may have become a victim of a type of crime and they did not want him to be out in general population. So they thought best for him was to put him in isolation. So from the age of 18 to the age of 21, he was in isolation.

Of course when he gets out, the family is absolutely excited. They have his room ready. They have his bed. They have a little party for him. Everything's great. Well, two weeks later we get a call from Mom. And Mom says, "You know what? He needs to go. It's just not working out here."

So we ask her what exactly is going on. And she says, "Well, my son, he sleeps in the closet. He doesn't use his brand-new queen-size bed we just bought him. He prefers to stay in the closet. I don't understand it. We've tried to talk to him. He won't come out. He won't engage with the family. I can't take it anymore. He needs to leave."

So that - at that point we decided to send the family to counseling. We asked if the family was up to it and luckily they were. And what we found was on his end, he obviously had difficulty adjusting to his freedom. And he went in as a 15-year-old, never kissed a girl, never had a job, didn't graduate high school. So he had some issues obviously with that.

And on the family end, they did not understand this. And so the counselor helped them understand each other's point of view. And through that and through, you know, counseling, talking, eventually within a few months, he started sleeping in his bed, so on and so forth. So that's the type of thing that has really helped us out and providing him with a home, a roof over his head and his family staying in touch.

The second story has to do with what we consider to be a legit reason when we have an offender coming out to their spouse and the spouse either suspects or knows that the spouse who was not incarcerated has cheated on them.

And it's how to rebuild that trust, rebuild that relationship. And in some cases, when it's not - when that's not capable of happening and both sides see it, the counseling helps them to dissolve the relationship, the marriage, especially if there's children involved, in a healthy and supportive way so that our clients don't end up relapsing or doing something to put themselves back in prison because of the stress in their lives and coming out to a relationship or family that no longer exists.

So, how did I get started in building these relationships? Well, like I said, I had a list of agencies that I called and kept in touch with. But I also started attending seminars, either job skills seminars, mentoring seminars, any type of seminars where I knew some type of agency that might be able to help me or at least get the word out of what I was trying to do would be present. And I would hand out my cards and give a little spiel about what it is that I needed.

And from that I've been able to build different relationships. And although they might not be able to provide with a venue, I had one agency be able to provide food boxes for every class. For every initial class that we have, they bring in a food box for the families who attend.

Then I share what I've done, what my goals are with them and they share back to me what they can provide. And in some cases, they can provide a lot. And some of them just provide me with whatever they have available within their agency. And that can even be a trainer or a counselor.

So as for my future goals, it's always building relationships, building that partnership. There's no reason it should stay small, get the word out. Oftentimes a lot of these agencies said, "You know, we knew there's problems at home and it really affected, you know, our stats when it came to drug treatment. You know, I tell somebody to not do drugs but they go home and they're fighting with their spouses or with their teenage kids."

"And how do I address that because my counseling agency only addresses the drug problem?" So after awhile we started to learn that, you know, this is a cycle that needs to be addressed because without it you end up getting relapses and that type of thing.

We also hope to provide other clients, like I said, to provide other type of resources, food boxes, help with utilities, rent, clothing. We also have a provider who's actually looking into helping us with tutoring the children and we hope that goes through.

Eventually, we are looking towards getting counseling in the prisons before the inmates are released. So in some cases, we have the ability to go in - or at least I do have the ability to go into these prisons and give them an orientation on what they - what to expect on probation.

But we would like to extend that on what to expect when you get home, especially if when you went to prison your child was five years old and when you walked into the door they ran to you and gave you that hug. Well, now they're, you know, 11 or 12 years old and they'd rather hang out with their Xbox than you, so how to deal with that situation is very important. And it's important to address and have them think about before they are released.

So in conclusion, all I have to say is that building those relationships, if you do go to a seminar, really work on that action plan, really take some time to look into it because not only can you use that to build your program but also to bring it to your employer as a way to build that buy-in for you in the future.

And then if you do plan or wish to start a program in the prison and not as fortunate as I am to have the agency collaboration between departments, government departments, I

would suggest going through the clergy. The clergy is a great way to get your foot in the door to get this type of program started within your Department of Corrections.

So with that, I return it to you, Ted.

Ted Futris: Thank you so much Geneva. I appreciate it. And again, just a reminder to everyone, if you do have questions, do go ahead and post that in the Q&A box and we will take all questions at the end of the Webinar or after all our speakers have presented.

Next what I'd like to do is before I introduce our next speaker, I'd like to pose another poll question to you. Let me get that poll question posted up here? Let me ask you, couples who have high levels of conflict in their romantic relationship are less likely to display unhealthy parenting practices, true or false?

Remember those exam quizzes you took in college? And boy, these true-false questions can be tricky sometimes. So we've got about 89% indicating false. And in fact, it is - or the correct answer is false that couples who have high levels of conflict in their romantic relationships are more likely to display unhealthy or unsafe parenting practices.

Also, couples who are violent toward each other are more likely to be violent toward their children. Healthy marriage and relationship education can be beneficial to all individuals in order to create or maintain a healthy relationship and to create or maintain child safety.

To share with us how the Missouri Children's Division is addressing this specific issue we have Susan Savage, Deputy Director of the Missouri Children's Division. Her agency coordinates foster care and placement for children and older youth and serves foster parents and biological parents.

The Missouri Children's Division also provides individualized services, refers families to classes and therapy, contracts out services to provide independent living services and life skills information to older youth and provides group training for foster parents.

So with that, I'm going to turn it over here to Susan to share with us her experience with the Institute and what she came away with and what she has done since the Institute. Susan?

Susan Savage: Hi, my name is Susan Savage and I am the Deputy Director for the Children's Division here in Missouri. The Children's Division is Missouri's public child welfare agency. And just to kind of give you an idea about the scope of the work we do, at any given time, we have a little over 11,000 children in foster care.

We are both a rural and urban state, urban being in the Kansas City and St. Louis areas of our state are more urban and some of the central part as well. But the rest of the state tends to be rather rural. So that's just kind of a picture of what we look like. Where am I? There we go.

I want to talk about how - and my presentation is going to be more about my journey through learning about healthy marriage and relationship education and how we've integrated that over the years with the Children's Division.

I was initially - became involved in this process because David Schramm from the University of Missouri Cooperative Extension contacted our division and said, "Hey, we want to - we're really interested in providing some training to your staff around healthy marriage and relationship education."

"And to develop this training, we would like to survey your staff and determine kind of what their interest is, what their need is, you know, what would that kind of curriculum look like?" And this was about, I don't know, five years ago, maybe a little bit more.

And so I was involved in the Research Committee that sort of looked at the survey questions that our staff would have at that time. And I'm sort of embarrassed to admit when I look back in those days how I viewed healthy marriage and relationship education.

When he wanted to do those surveys for our staff, I looked at those questions and anywhere it said anything about marriage, I got really sort of skittish about that because we never wanted to - you know, the families that come to us, we serve them as they present themselves so it's all kinds of families, single parent families, families headed by grandparents, LGBTQ sort of families.

So this concept of marriage kind of - I didn't want to ever send a message to our staff that marriage was the only way that, you know, families should sort of look. And that was kind of my first impression. So I gave Dave kind of a hard time. And in fact, the survey that he ended up doing with our staff eliminated many of the questions that were around marriage.

And in looking back, from what I understand now, I just had a misperception about what healthy marriage and relationship education was. I really was thinking they're wanting our staff to become like therapists and things like that. And really our staff are more about, you know, sharing information, making referrals and those kinds of things. So I just didn't have in the beginning a very good understanding about it.

And Dave was - has been very patient in educating me over the years.

So once I sort of had a better grasp of what the goals of that program was, our staff in the front line, our front line workers that do that work every day started receiving curriculum training from the Cooperative Extension that was developed based on that survey information.

And that training has been sort of tweaked and fine-tuned over time but I think up until like today, roughly over about 200 of our front line staff have received the healthy relationship and marriage education training curriculum.

So in September of 2012 - so fast forward a little bit - this training has been going on with our staff and I had heard really good feedback from the field about this training and how great it was and particularly how they really saw value in it in their own lives.

And so we had an Integration Institute here in Jefferson City and I attended along with some of our program staff here in central office as well as leadership from some other agencies, some of our sister agencies in the state. And we really worked on, you know, talking about what we already had done but what we could continue to do as far as integrating this information into the services that we provide to children and families.

We did some strategic planning, you know, what are our goals, what are your next action steps going to be, those kind of things. And it really got me to - you know, initially I was thinking, "Oh well, I'll put pamphlets in lobbies and things like that."

And it really - the Institute really got me to thinking about this is bigger than just training front line staff. There's all this sort of stakeholders that we engage with every day that we depend on every day. And how is it that we could bring this information to them to educate these - this wider kind of stakeholder group about this information and how that could ultimately change the lives of children and families?

So a couple of the things that I thought about at the Institute were okay, our judiciary system, we work every day, our staff do, with judges. And so what is their role as they're making decisions about taking kids into custody or child placement or services for family? What is their role in - or their understanding of relationship information and marriage education?

I also thought during this Institute I was like "Oh, my gosh. You know, our older youth that are in foster care that are going to be transitioning out in the world are going to be having relationships. They might not be married yet but they're starting relationships or they're already in relationships. And they don't necessarily have always had the greatest modeling for relationships in their lives."

And so what is the possibility about getting some of this information to our program people as well as out to the youths themselves? So I started thinking about that. And then I started thinking about "Oh my gosh, this applies to foster parents and their relationships and how they provide care for our children that are in foster care. So how could - what would that look like in a foster care program?"

And then I really started looking at - I really started thinking about okay, as staff started talking about who had gone through the training, "Oh my gosh, I'm going to go home and I'm going to talk to my husband or I'm going to talk to my partner about what I learned today about our personal relationships."

I started thinking about - and I'm very interested in recruitment and retention of staff. And so I started thinking about how would this play in our agency if it was embedded in maybe a larger sort of HR piece?

So Dave Schramm with the Cooperative Extension, a very patient man, came to Jefferson City a number of times and I set up some meetings with all of these different entities that I thought we could really sort of expand - broaden our horizons, if you will, about the - our stakeholder community who we share this information with.

And so one of the first things we did was he came and met with our HR people. And I don't - that didn't actually go really, really great. But Dave did a really nice job of

targeting his message to our HR people and we're just sort of limited what we can do in HR because it's more at sort of a department level.

But he really - you know, we needed HR to know "Did you know that if people have really good relationships and they're happy in their marriages that, you know, they have reduced use of sick leave and their productivity at work is better and all those kinds of implications?" to have HR - you know, planting that seed for HR that those things are really important in the lives of our employees.

Then Dave also came and met with our Office of State Courts Administrator. They are the ones that oversee all the courts and court education activities in the state. And I had some connections because I'm on a group with some of these folks and they came and met with them.

And Dave really targeted the message about healthy relationships and marriage education to, you know, what would the - what would the need for the judiciary be? Why is it important that they understand this? And really talking in terms of child safety and child permanency and importance of healthy parental relationships to make those kind of things happen.

And I'll talk a little bit more about next steps, like what the result of that meeting is but really starting to talk about how can we educate judges who - sometimes that's probably a pretty difficult audience to educate but how could we start to infiltrate and educate them?

He also came and met with our foster care program people here in central office as well as our program people for our older youth. And during that meeting it was really targeted towards okay, how can this information help older youth gain sort of the personal relationship life skills that they really need? How could that possibly look in your program?

And I have to say - and the same with the foster care program - how could this be embedded with the work with foster parents? How could we get this information to them? And I have to say all of the groups that Dave came and met with really very open to - I mean, it's - who's going to say that no, those relationships aren't important and that kind of education isn't important and it doesn't impact the lives of children? It's a pretty easy case to make.

And it was just a matter of sort of targeting the message a little bit differently to all these stakeholder groups using language sort of that they're familiar with. And they were all very open and receptive to hearing that information.

Additionally, I had not gone through the entire training that our front line staff had been going through. But I really wanted our central office staff that are over programs as well as some of our leadership here to understand what our staff were being trained out in the field. And so the Cooperative Extension set up a training here in Jefferson City and front line staff that are in the field went to this training as well but a lot of central office staff were able to participate.

And I have to say it was as good as everybody had told me it was and maybe even better than what I had anticipated. And I really watched the front line staff that were in

that training, you know, and people just don't really like to go to trainings. That's kind of, you know, they have a lot of stuff to do and taking a day out for training is kind of a big deal.

And it's been a long time since I have seen front line staff so engaged in the training and information that they were receiving and saying things like "Oh my gosh. I can - these are tools that I could use with families every day." And that was really pretty refreshing to me.

So some of our future steps, when we were talking with the Office of State Courts Administrators, we have something called an alternative care summit or a foster care conference that the Children's Division and the Office of State Courts Administrators puts on in the summer.

And it's attended by judges and juvenile officers and foster parents and front line child welfare staff. And we thought what a great opportunity if Dave could come and present a workshop on healthy marriage and education. And I think it might be like an hour-and-a-half workshop. I'm - I don't know the detail to it. But anyway, he's going to be presenting as a result of those conversations with OSCA at the alternative care summit. I think it's in August.

Also when Dave came and met with our older youth program people. Sally, our program person, got really interested in - we have an older youth summit that the older youths themselves put together every summer. And he will be presenting at that older youth conference and doing a workshop. And I'm not just impacting things at sort of a program level but really disseminating information directly to youth and that's pretty exciting to me.

And then additionally Dave has applied for a grant to provide healthy marriage and relationship education to older youth through life skills classes. Here in Missouri, we don't - we have older youth staff but we contract out much of our older youth services so we have contracted providers that provide life skills classes to our older youth to help them transition out of foster care or get ready for when they do.

And I think a really great component of that is those sort of interpersonal and relationship skills that maybe they haven't necessarily developed over time that they're really going to need as they move into adulthood.

And so this grant is really around helping those contractors sort of develop a curriculum for those interpersonal life skills sort of courses. We don't know the result of the grant yet but that's pretty exciting to think about this information being integrated into a curriculum that's going to go directly to the older youth and - that we serve.

Lessons learned, I would say the biggest lesson that I have learned is I needed to get educated early on and I did not take the time to do that. And I would encourage anybody that is really wanting to kind of go down this road to do that.

I did not understand the - what was really trying to be achieved, what was really trying to be accomplished. That's really important and how that information really does apply to those that you serve.

Also really important to gain buy-in within our agency. I have been very fortunate. Anybody that I've gone to within our agency, "Foster care people, you should be really interested in that. Let's have Dave come and talk to you." You know, all - even outside agencies really important to have that support. I've been fortunate that my - our staff in the central office are really on board and my director has been very supportive of this initiative.

I, of course - I know I've talked about Dave a lot - but I would encourage anybody that has a university partner to consider partnering with Cooperative Extension in their state, been very supportive of this initiative and very beneficial to me personally in educating me about this information.

And then just kind of not be afraid to share this information with everyone that I work with. Early on, we were only training our own staff and I realized we have - we contract out some of our foster care services and we need to bring our contractors in.

We needed to be talking about that with contractors, with other agencies, with families that we serve to always be sharing that kind of information. And I don't know that I necessarily always did that along my journey in a way that, you know, I wish I had.

So that's all I have about our program. And I'm going to turn it back over to Ted.

Ted Futris: Thank you so much Susan. It's clearly evident how passionate and excited you are about this and how we've converted you over to the marriage and relationship education side. And - but I hope everyone listening is really picking up on that passion.

And, you know, you may be asking yourself "Wow, I wish I knew more about how this related and connected to the work I do." And I encourage you, you know, look into the resources that the National Resource Center has to offer.

In fact, those files that Rebecca mentioned earlier, the - that are available on the right of your screen have some of this information, especially the "Why Marriage and Relationship Education Matters" could be a really good starting point if this is a new area for you.

If you have some of those - if you can relate with Susan who had those initial reservations and concerns and how it just took some information and learning more about it to kind of see that connection, taking those first steps, real critical.

And then it's clear how important finding some local support and resources can be. In addition to this wonderful National Resource Center, you know, reaching out to some local resources, including your Cooperative Extension system. So thank you again, Susan, for all that wonderful information about your experience and how you have grown through this process.

Next I'd like to transition on to our next speaker. And before introducing Takeda, I'd like to ask you another poll question. And so we'll put that poll question up. Let me ask, by age of 18, what percentage of adolescents have ever dated? By the age of 18, what percent of adolescents do you think have ever dated? Go ahead and choose your response now.

All right, it looks like we got a real good mix. We got about 40% who kind of think - or roughly 40% who think between 80% to 89% and about 45% who are between 90% to 99%. And if you chose 90% to 99% you're correct. In fact, by the age of 18, 94% of adolescents report that they've ever dated.

In fact, research shows that by the adolescent, romantic relationships have a developmental purpose and can foster positive adolescent development. However, unhealthy relationships can lead to at-risk behaviors such as sex and dating violence. So knowing that adolescents are going to be dating, a majority of them by the age of 18 are going to have dated, we want to make sure they understand what healthy relationships look like.

Youth-focused relationship education has been shown to help our adolescents better understand how to develop healthy relationships. Our next speaker will share with us how she has initiated efforts to integrate relationship education into middle and high school programming.

Now Takeda LeGrand is in North Carolina - with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. And she is a Family Consumer Science Education Consultant with the Department of Public Instruction.

Her primary duties involve assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating and coordinating resources - curriculum, resource curriculum, instruction and assessment development at the state level for career and technical education courses, mostly in the family consumer sciences area. Her target audience for services are middle and high school students, educators and administrators.

Takeda attended the National Resource Center Integration Institute in North Carolina on September 6 and we're happy to have her here with us today to share with us her experience. Takeda?

Takeda LeGrand: Thank you Ted. Hello, my name is Takeda LeGrand and as Ted stated, I currently serve the State of North Carolina as a Family Consumer Sciences Education Consultant for the Department of Public Instruction.

My target audiences are middle and high school students. Therefore, due to age appropriateness, policy in North Carolina and our national standards for family consumer sciences education, you will notice that we have slightly adapted the phrase "Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education" to reflect healthy family and relationship education.

We began with Phase 1 during a business and industry and post-secondary input meeting regarding a middle school course revision. Relationship education was defined as an area of need for teaching and learning.

Stakeholders include university professors of family consumer sciences, family consumer sciences extension agents, restaurant and food service management professionals, a financial literacy consultant, a former family consumer sciences classroom teacher and an international apparel and business etiquette owner.

The data collected from the business industry and post-secondary input meeting was triangulated with survey data from family consumer sciences educators, national standards for family consumer sciences education and labor market data.

Accordingly, enduring interest around interpersonal relationships, career-ready practices, collaboration, careers in 21st century skills emerged. As a result of this standard being identified, I participated in the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Family Integration Institute in North Carolina.

Consequently, my theoretical and practical knowledge about healthy relationships in families increased. The Institute training equipped me with understanding the interconnectiveness of safety net providers, the online and digital resources available through the Resource Center and its employees, introduced me to many career opportunities that involve interpersonal relationships at the local, state and national levels.

Most importantly, I was able to collaborate with a diverse team of professionals to devise a plan of action on how to incorporate the training into my professional practice via our curriculum development, curriculum resources, career opportunities and research. Professionals in social work, clinical psychology, extension, the Department of Health and Human Services, juvenile justice and teacher education all contributed to my plan of action.

I considered time, scope and resources while developing my plan. The most challenging item identified by the planning team was time because I had less than one year to develop a curriculum product.

However, the information gained at the Institute addressed my time challenge by providing resources clearly aligned with the scope of work which was developing a quality curriculum inclusive of interpersonal relationships which allowed me to move expeditiously.

Through a selective process that consisted of an application, resume, administrative recommendation and previous performance, we were able to identify a five-member team of teachers to assist with the middle school course revision. The selection of team members was important because teachers instruct on curriculum.

Therefore having quality teachers to assist with development of curriculum product they would use and share with their peers in the field with implementation provided support from teachers in the field. And we assured teachers that a product was being developed with them and their students in mind.

Additional support in the form of curriculum resource materials were provided by North Carolina State University's professor and extension agent Dr. Kimberly Allen. She provided access to an online babysitting program.

Dr. Anne Jones from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill provided a graduate social work student to assist with implementation. Both connections occurred during the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriages and Families Integration Institute.

In addition, I was able to later connect with Dr. Deborah Tippett, a family consumer sciences teacher educator who provided us - our team with needed space and curriculum resources.

You will also notice that while we focus on module - Module 1 is interpersonal relationships, there are actually seven modules, financial literacy, nutrition and wellness, food service and restaurant management, babysitting, apparel design and interior design.

Each module is 15 to 20 hours in length. The decision to make interpersonal relationship the first module in the sequence was justified based on the impact relationships have on all aspects of the other modules such as the constant, the career component as well as the collaboration and working with others.

The interpersonal relationship module utilizes resources from the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families for both curriculum and instructional support.

As a result of integrating healthy marriage and relationship education into our statewide family consumer sciences education program, we are in the final stages of developing a course that dedicates a full learning module to healthy relationships and families and plan to either pilot or field test the course this summer, pending a curriculum review that is currently in progress.

If we pilot, we will offer the curriculum to a few number of schools representative of a diverse sampling the state. However if we enter field test status, the curriculum will be available to all one 115 school districts in North Carolina, reaching 486 middle schools and more than 30,000 students.

A ten-hour pre-conference training will be held in July to train teachers on how to implement the modules of support resources. All family consumer sciences teachers will receive an update about the course during the general conference session as well as have the opportunity to attend a 90-minute conference session that will provide an overview of all the modules.

During the 2013-2014 school year, we will collect feedback via surveys, focus groups and student performance on statewide measures of student learning assessments.

I encourage anyone seeking to integrate healthy marriage and relationship education into their work to utilize existing resources, partner where applicable, share their ideas with others to gain multiple viewpoints to triangulate data and test ideas beforehand.

I do know that I would not have been able to effectively expedite this curriculum development task without sharing my ideas at the Institute, networking with participants in the training for curriculum and assessment materials as well as being able to present the Institute's research as a rationale for inclusion of interpersonal relationships to select decision-makers about curriculum.

Lastly, start early to maximize your opportunities for support.

Ted Futris: Wonderful, thank you so much Takeda. And before we move on, I just want to remind folks that if you have questions, please post those in the Q&A and we'll come to those here in a moment.

And before we get to those questions, I want to ask all of our panelists one final question, ask for them to share a final piece of advice for us. Specifically, what is the most important piece of advice you would give to those on this call to others who are trying to take their first steps in integrating healthy marriage and relationship education?
Let's start with Geneva.

Geneva Rodriguez: Well, the first thing I would say is to understand and accept your own limitations as well as your agency's limitations. For example, although I told you I had - I was given a car and a light workload, I was given a staff of me, myself and I. And it's hard to build a program just by yourself. And understanding that and understanding that building collaborations and partnerships to fill in those gaps not only helps your stress but it also builds a better program.

Also I would have to say is don't hold back your enthusiasm about healthy marriages and relationship education. Like I said before, other agencies, other partnerships know stuff is going on at home but they don't know how to address it. I think we live in a culture where, you know, stuff at home, behind a family's door, stays behind a family door.

But when you're dealing with substance abuse, you're dealing with adolescents who are acting out, you've got to understand that there's something going on in the home and if education and any type of resource can help that family, don't hold back, and grow that relationship and partnership and get the program started in your neighborhood.

Ted Futris: Thank you Geneva. And how about you, Susan? What final advice would you give to our audience here?

Susan Savage: Well, I probably just want to restate something I said about three times in my presentation is to start out, to truly understand the meaning of healthy marriage and education - or relationship education.

And I would agree with Geneva as well, don't hold back on your enthusiasm. It's great information. Once you make that case, I - and especially target it to your specific audience, it's a pretty, I think, easy case to make and never underestimate your stakeholders' sort of ability to kind of pick up the ball and go with that sort of next step.

I think those are probably my biggest pieces of advice.

Ted Futris: Thank you. And last, Takeda?

Takeda LeGrand: Present information about healthy marriage and relationship education and man...

Ted Futris: Takeda, I think we lost you there. Are you there?

Operator: Takeda's phone has disconnected. We'll try reconnecting her now.

Ted Futris: All right, we're just going to wait a moment here for Takeda to reconnect. And as we wait for her, I just wanted to say again, you know, as we hear from our speakers, from all three of them, it's very clear how these were not smooth processes. There were clearly challenges, both internally in terms of their own beliefs, their agency's goals and efforts.

And it's clear that each of them have found ways to find a connection in terms of the work that they do and how it fits into their agency's goals and missions and also have been very creative and not creating more work but finding ways to build this into the work they're already doing and finding that connection.

And I think what we'll do here is just, again, a reminder that we do have questions that you can post. And why don't we go ahead and while we wait for Takeda to join us back here, go ahead and go with our next poll question?

I want to kind of ask everyone are you likely - based on what you heard today, are you likely to go back and talk with others at your organization, your agency about integration of relationship education into your current services or role at work?

Operator: And sir, Takeda's back with us.

Ted Futris: Wonderful. Well, let's finish - we'll finish up this poll question and then we'll turn it back to Takeda.

All right. Great, thank you. Thank you for your responses everyone. And let's turn this back over to Takeda. Takeda, I'm glad you were able to get back with us. So let me turn it back to you, your final advice for the group here.

Takeda LeGrand: Okay, great. I would just encourage you to present the information as a potential solution rather than a problem. I find that many people agree that young adults face challenges directly related to interpersonal relationship skills. However, very few approach the situation proactively and offer research-based service or solutions.

Ted Futris: Well, great. Thank you, Takeda, I appreciate that. And so with that, I'm going to turn it over here to Robyn to share with us a little bit more about the National Resource Center and how you can utilize these same resources that our speakers here have utilized. Robyn?

Robyn Cenizal: Thanks Ted. And thank you to our great presenters. It's very encouraging to hear the wonderful stories of success that we're hearing from these three different states. It's very interesting to hear how different their perspectives are and how different their programs are which I think is very interesting.

I particularly was interested in hearing the story from Missouri about how they actually brought the information to the HR office to talk about serving staff. So I think it's also an important reminder to think outside the box when we think about how we're going to do these types of programs.

So to Ted's comment about resources, as we mentioned before, we have these resources in your downloadable box. They are also on the Resource Center Website. And we're going to transition to show a brief video that gives you a really good overview of the Resource Center.

So as you see in the video, there are a lot of great things that the Resource Center offers. And that video is actually available on the Resource Center Website in our media gallery. So I would encourage you as you're sharing information with your colleagues and friends about the Resource Center to send the link to that video. It's a nice, concise way to cover a lot.

(Video) Narrator: Strong families are the foundation of strong communities. Yet many families you serve struggle to achieve self-sufficiency and as service-providers you struggle to provide services to them within traditional safety-net service delivery systems.

The National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families works with Federal, State, Tribal, and local government agencies to promote the value of healthy marriage and relationship education skills. We encourage their integration into safety-net service delivery systems as a holistic approach to strengthening the families you serve.

We offer a virtual resource center available 24 hours a day that is user-friendly and easy to navigate. The website also includes success stories and a calendar of upcoming events. Our searchable library has over 300 resources, including research on promising practices that supports the need for and benefits of healthy marriage education skills.

The library also includes stakeholder specific products developed by experts in the field, like tip sheets, fact sheets, and research-to-practice briefs. Visit our virtual training center to learn more about free training and technical assistance, including webinars and in-person and online training opportunities.

If you can't find what you are looking for, we have a call center that is staffed Monday through Friday so you can speak to a live person. Healthy marriage and relationship education include interpersonal skills like communication and conflict resolution, as well as critical skills like parenting and financial literacy. These skills serve as the cornerstone of strong families.

For more information on healthy marriage education skills visit www.HealthyMarriageandFamilies.org, info@HealthyMarriageandFamilies.org, 1-866-916-4672.

Robyn Cenizal: The other thing that's mentioned in the video is the training and technical assistance portion of what the Resource Center provides. So thinking big picture about the Resource Center, it's not just about a virtual website. It's about a strategy to promote integration across safety net services, all of the services that we just heard about today.

And in addition to the one-day Integration Institute that we've heard part of the presenters talk about, we also offer a virtual training center.

So online, in our virtual training center, we have the Strong Relationships, Strong Families module. Module 1 is live now. Module 2 will be live in the next couple of weeks. And it is an actual curriculum that folks can go online, participate in, get a certificate of completion which can be used for CEU so I would encourage you to check that out.

We also archive our Webinars so, for example, today's Webinar in a few days will be posted online so that you can actually go and watch this Webinar again or share it with colleagues who couldn't join us.

There's also a technical assistance request form online so I would encourage you if you have other questions or could use help in your state implementing healthy marriage education into the service delivery system that you would take advantage of that technical assistance form and request help.

So in addition to all the things that you've heard, behind the Resource Center, we have a tremendous amount of expertise, research, program design, implementation, organizational development, policy analysis, all of these great things as well as a cadre of experts, great folks like Dave Schramm that we've heard about today behind the scenes who are helping to make all of this happen.

So again, I would encourage you to take advantage of the Resource Center. All of our resources are research-based and they are all free. And with that, I'm going to turn it over to Rebecca for questions and answers.

Rebecca Fairchild: Thank you so much everyone for your presentations today. At this time we would like to transition to our question and answer period. And please stay tuned for our final poll questions afterwards.

We had quite a few great questions submitted and I would like to pose them to our presenters. I'd like to ask everyone to please feel free to continue to submit your questions using the question and answer function on your screen.

Our first question is for you, Robyn. If I'm in a state that doesn't have an Institute or won't have one soon, how can I get started on this? What should I do?

Robyn Cenizal: Well, that's a great question. I would suggest that you go online and visit the Resource Center Website and fill out a training and technical assistance request form. And that way we'll get the information and we can internally process it and reach out to you and develop a strategy based on where you are in your process.

Rebecca Fairchild: Thank you so much Robyn. And Ted, we actually have another question. How can I find somebody like Dave Schramm or with a Cooperative Extension in my state? Would you be able to tell us a little bit about the services provided through the Cooperative Extension?

Ted Futris: Sure. Every state has a land grant university so the first step is to find out who - where that land grant university is in your state. That land grant university usually - has a three-part mission of teaching, research and outreach. That outreach, one of the ways that the universities provide outreach is through Cooperative Extension.

Many folks might be familiar with 4-H which serves and works with youth. But there are also other services like ag [agriculture] that works with our rural and as well as growing urban communities.

But also family consumer sciences which provide resources on many topics related to healthy marriage and relationship education that also facilitate healthy marriages and relationships including relationships, education, parenting education, financial, literacy education as well as some other services in nutrition, housing, health, et cetera. So reach out to your - find your land grant university, identify - and then contact them.

Many states have websites, extension websites that you can look up. So if you were to just simply do a Google search for Cooperative Extension and put your state's name in it so "Cooperative Extension Georgia" and you will receive Georgia Cooperative Extension will come up. And you can look - usually look for someone in the family human development area for some support in this area.

Rebecca Fairchild: Thanks Ted. Another question we had that we'd actually like each of our panelists to answer is "What specific skills did you teach for interpersonal relationships when you were developing your program or focusing on when you were integrating services?"

Susan, would you like to start?

Susan Savage: So are you asking the specific skills taught in some of the trainings that we did for our staff? Is that - I think I can speak to that.

Rebecca Fairchild: Yes.

Susan Savage: Great.

Rebecca Fairchild: So specific skills that you guys chose to focus on.

Susan Savage: Right. So it's a day-long sort of course but it really sort of focuses on how you go about being intentional in your choices, the choices about being in a relationship, who you're in a relationship with, intentional in your choices once you're in a relationship.

That relationships aren't about you know, they "just sort of happen," but that you have to commit time and energy to them and be intentional about them, how to be respectful of your partner's thoughts and feelings, how to express sincere interest with your partner.

Just really it's very - it's not really rocket science, you know, and when you go through the course it's like, "Oh, yes, oh, I do that, oh, I could do better at that." I mean, it's just really kind of common sense, very concrete kind of skills, I think.

Rebecca Fairchild: Great, thank you. Geneva, would you have any additional skills that you use in integrating your services?

Geneva Rodriguez: I think we focus a lot on communication. That seems to be where the lack is and it has to do with where our clientele comes from in the prison and what they're used to in regards to communication and then coming back out where the spouse or the family - no one acts like that out here.

And having that ability to communicate in a healthy way and if that communication is broken down and it becomes an argument how to deal with that argument and how to recognize that at a certain junction that there's no compromise at this point and maybe you need to step away from what you're discussing or arguing about.

That seems to be very key, having that simple skill of being able to communicate, recognize when you're at a junction you can't move forward and stepping away and getting a third party like your counselor involved or probation who's been through the training and helping to deal with that conflict at home.

Rebecca Fairchild: Great, thank you. And Takeda would you have any additional skills that you would like to highlight?

Takeda Legrand: In addition to the ones that were mentioned our curriculum contains conflict resolution, decision-making, group dynamic goal-setting in the family unit.

Rebecca Fairchild: Great, thank you. Actually Takeda we got - we just received another question. Do you provide healthy relationship programming to parents of school students?

Takeda Legrand: That is beyond the scope of my job description. However, we do have in certain schools, we have student support chains and that may be something that they may incorporate into their program which includes outreach beyond a school to deal with certain issues.

They may be called child family support teams where they may consist of an administrator from the school or a social worker or maybe a nurse. And they may use those types of skills. Curriculum development goal was my scope of work. I'm going to have to say no.

Rebecca Fairchild: Great, thank you. We received another question and feel free any of the panelists to respond. What's the best advice for getting buy-in from leadership?

Susan Savage: This is Susan. I am sort of leadership but I think what really - and certainly I have the buy-in of my director but I think what really finally spoke to me was when you were talking - they were talking in a language that I could understand, that I can relate to as a social worker.

So when you're framing it in the context for me of child safety, child permanency, child wellbeing, in that kind of context it really got my attention and better able to get the attention of other audiences we were, you know, seeking to share this information with. I think that's pretty key. And once you do that they're like "Oh, this is how this fits with what I've - what my mission and vision is." And I think that's really the key.

Geneva Rodriguez: This is Geneva here. You know, with buy-in on my leadership I would have to agree with Susan and that's a good way to go and, you know, like I said show your enthusiasm about it.

But my department is also very number-oriented so if you can show them that, you know, healthy marriages end up reducing recidivism, reducing the amount of crime out there, in my case.

And additionally my department likes to do joint ventures, have collaborations so being able to say I have a collaboration with Agency A, B and C really looks good for your agency or your department. Put that in there. Show them that building these relationships builds their name, builds our department and kind of puts us out there as kind of putting the leading role into getting stuff like this started. So that's another way I would suggest getting buy-in.

Rebecca Fairchild: Takeda, would you - do you have anything you'd like to add?

Takeda Legrand: No, thanks.

Rebecca Fairchild: Well, once again this concludes our question and answer session and I would like to thank all of our panelists and our presenters for the - for being with us today for this Webinar.

A recording of this presentation, the slides, a transcript and the question and answer document will be posted in the Past Events Archive of our website, healthymarriageandfamilies.org, under the Training, Technical Assistance & Events tab.

I would like everyone - to ask everybody to participate in the final two poll questions. Just as a reminder all of your responses are anonymous. This really helps us plan our future Webinars.

The first question is “Are you likely to use the National Resource Center for resources or training and technical assistance in the future?”

And our final question is please rate your overall satisfaction with today’s Webinar.

I would like to thank everyone for joining. Have a great afternoon.

END