

# ***Intergenerational Co-parenting: Supporting Young Parents***

## **National Resource Center for Healthy Marriages and Families**

### **Webinar Transcript**

October 20, 2016

#### **Operator**

Stand by. We're about to begin. Good day, and welcome to the Intergenerational Co-parenting call. Today's conference is being recorded. At this time, I would like to turn the call over to Trevor Hoffberger. Please go ahead, sir.

#### **Trevor Hoffberger**

Thank you, and welcome, everyone. Thank you for joining us today for the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families' webinar on "Intergenerational Co-parenting: Supporting Young Parents." My name is Trevor Hoffberger, and I will be helping with the logistics for the webinar today along with my colleague, Steph Vester.

Before we get to the content for today's webinar, we're going to go through a few logistical items. The webinar today will be an hour and a half, ending at 3:30 PM Eastern Time. Audio for the webinar will be broadcast through your computer. Please make sure your speakers and volume are turned on. If you have any technical issues, problems seeing something or hearing something, you can send us a message in the Q & A box on your screen or call the number appearing on the previous slide, 1-866-916-4672, and we will be sure to assist you. Again, please make sure to turn your computer speakers on to hear the presentation.

After the presentation today, we'll have an online Q & A session. We encourage you to type in questions — anything you think of — at any time while presenters are presenting by typing into the Q & A pod located on the bottom right corner of your screen and clicking Enter. We will collect submitted questions, and then address them during the Q & A session at the end as time permits. If your question is for a specific presenter, please reference that when typing in your question, if possible.

Throughout the webinar, presenters may reference materials or links relevant to their presentation. You can browse weblinks by clicking any of the links on the Weblinks pod on the top right-hand corner on your screen, and you can download materials by selecting files on the Files pod on the right-hand portion of your screen. We'll also be including several poll questions throughout the webinar that we encourage you to participate in.

We're excited for the content that will be shared in today's webinar. The webinar agenda includes a brief introduction of our speakers, opening remarks from the

South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, research regarding the importance of cooperation and support for teen parents by Jacquelyn Mallette, information on co-parenting communication skills and additional resources from Stephanie Toelle, success stories from current grantees in the field from Andrea Heyward of the South Carolina Campaign, and an overview of healthy relationship education materials available at the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families from Robyn Cenizal. Following the presentation, as I mentioned, we will have an online Q & A session.

Our presenters for the webinar today include the following:

- We have Shannon Lindsay. As a training coordinator at the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, Shannon is responsible for the development, planning and implementation of all in-house, off-site and online South Carolina Campaign educational events. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology and a Bachelor of Arts in History from Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and a Master's of Science in Genetic Counseling from the School of Public Health at the University of Pittsburg.
- We have Andrea Heyward. Andrea is the Pregnancy Assistance Fund Coordinator at the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, and is currently responsible for coordinating the federally funded Community Support for Young Parents program. Andrea graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of South Carolina with a Bachelor of Arts in Experimental Psychology and earned a Master of Health Science in Health Education and Health Communication at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.
- Jacquelyn Mallette. Jacquelyn is an assistant professor of Human Development and Family Science at East Carolina University. She earned her Master's at East Carolina University and her Ph.D. at the University of Georgia. Dr. Mallette's research focuses on resilience in vulnerable families. She studies the way that co-parenting relationship functioning and father involvement affect children, parents and family as a whole.
- Stephanie Toelle. Stephanie has earned her Master's Degree in Family and Child development from Auburn University in 1992 and her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from the University of Kansas. The work has focused on child development, personal well-being and family dynamics across the life span.
- Finally, Robyn Cenizal. Robyn is the Project Director of National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families, a federally funded initiative that promotes the integration of healthy relationship skills in the social service delivery systems as part of a holistic service approach to

strengthening families. Ms. Cenizal has over 26 years of local government experience specializing in strategic public-private partnerships to mitigate community distress, including broad expertise of child welfare, workforce development and poverty reduction.

Now, Shannon, I'll turn it over to you to get us started and set the context for our discussion today.

### **Shannon Lindsay**

Thank you, Trevor. As Trevor said, my name is Shannon Lindsay, and I am the Training Coordinator at the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. My job is to share with everyone how we came to be on this webinar today.

It really starts with a project that is ongoing here in South Carolina. It is a cooperative project in conjunction with the Children's Trust Fund of South Carolina. The program is called Community Support for Young Parents. This program assists young parents in making positive, short-term choices that could positively influence the long-term well-being of their families, along with increasing the number and quality of services for expectant and parenting teens, fathers, families and students. We also focus on increased educational attainment among expectant and parenting young mothers and fathers, and hope to reduce the number of repeat teen births and improve parenting skills.

Our partners here in South Carolina participated in a National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families Integration Institute in February of 2015. As a result of that participation in the Institute, the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy developed an action plan to integrate healthy relationship education into our existing services. One of our major services that we offer to our partners in South Carolina is training and education. We've been very thoughtful and deliberate about highlighting healthy relationships and utilizing the resources and expertise at the National Resource Center.

Here's just some general information about teen pregnancy in South Carolina. What you see on the screen is the last 23 years of teen pregnancy data in South Carolina. What's notable about this data is that South Carolina's teen birth rate is at its lowest point that it's been since 1991. It represents an overall 61 percent decrease. You see the blue line in comparison to the United States rate, which is the gold line. Our rate is as close to the national rate as it has ever been, which is certainly something to celebrate and something that we do celebrate here in South Carolina.

What I want to ask though is if those on the line — and I know that there are a lot of people here from South Carolina, because I can see your names — but what do you all think the percent of teen births in South Carolina is to 18- and 19-year-olds each year? [Pause]

I'm watching. There's still folks answering, but it looks like the winning answer is 26 to 50 percent. Actually, the rate here in South Carolina is 72 percent. If you selected the third answer, 50 to 75 percent, you would be correct.

The overwhelming majority of teen births in South Carolina are to older youth — to youth ages 18 and 19. Nearly a third of all of our teen births in South Carolina are repeat pregnancies. Overall, more than 3,100 births are to 18- to 19-year-olds each year. What you see on the bottom of this infographic is the hashtag [#StartEarlyStayLateSC](#). This is something that we're using to drive our work. We feel like we're doing a fairly good job in catching kids early, and what we need to be doing is continuing to focus on them as they reach that older age, 18 to 19, to really be able to make additional impacts on the teen birth rate here in South Carolina.

What this should show you all, though, is that we do have a great need — in particular, a great need for services to young people who are already parents. Nearly a third of our births to teens are repeat births, and that does compare to one in six or one-sixth nationally. Our repeat birth rate is significantly higher than the national rate. That statistic comes from the CDC.

We know that pregnant and parenting teens experience more success when their support systems are strong and when they're equipped to provide services that address their specific and unique needs. We know that co-parenting resources are typically focused on older parents, and so that is a great need for younger parents as well. There's also this concept of intergenerational parenting — in particular, the differences between young parents and their parents, who are often very involved with their children as a part of their support system.

These needs surface here in South Carolina, and we know that they are not unique to the young people that we work with here. So we reached out to the National Resource Center, to folks that we knew could help us think through this topic and provide for the folks that we work [with] here in South Carolina, some information that might help us better support our young pregnant and parenting adults here in South Carolina.

That's how we got here. It's my pleasure now to turn the presentation over to Jacquelyn Mallette for the next portion.

### **Dr. Jacquelyn Mallette**

Thank you so much. I want to say hello and welcome. Again, my name is Jacquelyn Mallette. Today, I will be discussing teenage parenting and the importance of having a cooperative and supportive parenting relationship.

Before we get started, I'd like all of you to answer the following poll question: Which of the following are important to the maternal identity of teen mothers? Is it parents, peers, the father of the baby, or all of the above? [Pause]

Okay, so far — well, we're almost unanimous. Okay, it looks like the majority is that all of the above are important. In fact, the answer is actually all of the above. We're going to discuss why that is in a little more detail in just a few minutes.

In the U.S., nearly a quarter million adolescents give birth each year, and about 89 percent of these teen parents are not married. However, around half of teenage mothers do report having a romantic relationship with the father of the baby when the baby is born. Unfortunately, young parenting or expecting couples rarely have the opportunity to learn how to navigate successful and healthy relationships, and they often break off their relationships when their children are young. Thus, it has been found that the majority of teenage mothers are not likely to continue their romantic relationship with the father as their child gets older. However, even when the couple decides not to continue a romantic relationship, they do often maintain a connection through their shared parenting relationship.

It is this relationship that I want to highlight today and discuss at length with maternal, paternal, and child functioning. Understanding the linkages between these concepts can help practitioners who are concerned with family functioning to better be able to meet the emotional and relational needs of adolescent mothers and fathers. Raising a child as a teenager holds certain challenges for the young mom and dad. I'm sure many of us can relate to feeling hesitant about parenting a first-born — but for teen mothers and fathers, this anxiety is especially heightened, and younger parents tend to feel less competent with their parenting and less sure of their ability to respond to their child's needs. This lack of competence has been linked with feelings of stress, depression, low self-esteem, and even anger. These heightened risks mean that teenage parents tend to have higher rates of medical, educational, behavioral, psychological, and relational problems. However, as compared to their adult counterparts, they are less likely to seek out resources that are available to assist them.

This lack of assistance and support can unfortunately mean that these parents then experience chronic mental, emotional, and financial distress and become less likely to take appropriate care of their child. Then the children of adolescent parents become at risk for low academic achievement [and] mental and physical health issues, and they carry these risks into adulthood.

However, in spite of these discouraging statistics, teenage parents do not actually differ from adults in their ability to parent effectively, even with these added challenges. The attitudes and support of the people closest to the adolescent mother are going to influence her experience of parenting, so it's important that she receive social support, both during pregnancy and after the birth of her child. Family support, especially from her parents or caregivers, peer support, and support from the father have been found to be the most influential predictors of maternal functioning. I mentioned earlier that teenage mothers often maintain a shared or co-parenting relationship with the father, and it's important

to note that when that relationship is supportive, that can positively impact the parenting practices of both parents.

First, I'm going to focus on maternal functioning and talk a little bit about the process by which women identify with their role as a mother, challenges that teenage mothers face during this process, and the significance of cooperation and support. During pregnancy, a mother-to-be goes through a process known as *maternal role attainment* [MRA]. This is a complex cognitive and social process during which a woman performs certain behaviors to prepare herself for becoming a mother. During this time, the mother thinks about what it's going to be like to have the baby, accesses prenatal education and care, gets information about parenting by maybe reading or by asking others for advice, and practices and plans for her new role. All of this helps her to build an attachment to the fetus and then later to the new baby.

The process is facilitated by the presence of a strong and nurturing support system. The endpoint of this process is referred to as *maternal identity*, which is where the mother enjoys being a parent, feels competent in her ability to parent, feels close to her child, and feels confident that other people are accepting and encouraging of her as a parent. Mothers with a strong sense of maternal identity feel validated in their role, and tend to show more consistent, positive, and nurturing parenting behaviors.

Now for adult women, this transition to motherhood is societally considered as normative and expected. Teenage mothers, however, are still growing both physically and emotionally, while also going through the process of developing their own self-identity and being able to establish independence from their family. As a consequence, these competing developmental demands have the potential to increase her feelings of role strain and make that transition to a new role as a mother more difficult. Again though, with adequate social support, a teen mother can establish a strong, positive maternal identity.

The three types of support that have been considered as the most influential:

- First, family support has been linked with increased well-being, a decrease in parental stress, and a stronger maternal identity.
- Secondly, peer support. During adolescence, support and approval from one's peers become very important for identity formation. It's been found that if the mother's friends are supportive of her as a parent, she's more likely to actually make better behavioral choices — not just for herself, but for the baby as well.
- Lastly, positive, warm emotional support from the father of the baby provides the encouragement, reinforcement and emotional assistance that the mother needs to be able to establish a healthy maternal identity that can benefit herself and her child.

The parenting relationship between young mothers and fathers can either hinder or enhance family relationships, but it's going to be sensitive to the parents' developmental and maturity level. Unfortunately, the relationship between young parents is plagued with challenges. Their co-parenting relationships are often rocky, and they can include undermining behavior, conflict, and unhealthy communication patterns. Although, during the pregnancy and directly after the birth of their child, young couples are more likely to be involved romantically, the relationships tend to be unstable and likely to end early in their child's life, which can also mean strain on or even a termination of their co-parenting relationship. Whereas adult parents tend to display the ability to access both internal and external resources that make them a little less vulnerable to problems in this co-parenting relationship, adolescent parenting relationships are considered less likely to thrive, especially in the absence of a solid support system.

Unhealthy relationship indicators make it more likely that the adolescent mother will experience parenting stress and have trouble adapting to motherhood. However, if the parents are able to effectively collaborate about their parenting practices and have healthy conversations about raising their child, there are positive impacts for their family. As is true of all parents, when teenage parents learn how to develop and maintain healthy communication and conflict management skills, there's potential for less stress and better psychological well-being. Teenagers really benefit from the assistance that comes with having two parents who are actively engaged in parenting tasks and are supportive of each other in their parenting role.

Now, it's often assumed that adolescent fathers don't really participate in co-parenting behavior, maybe because of their developmental stage or that they don't usually remain in this romantic relationship with the mom. While it is true that the lack of a committed romantic or cohabiting relationship may make it more difficult for young fathers to participate in parenting and shared parenting with their child, having a cooperative co-parenting relationship actually encourages more active father involvement.

Recent research has highlighted that adolescent dads who were highly involved prenatally remained highly involved after the birth of their child, but only when their relationship with the mother of their child was cooperative and not conflictual or less conflictual. In fact, it has been found that even maintenance of a friendship between parents makes it more likely that a father will stay involved in the parenting process throughout his child's early years.

The nature of the teenage co-parenting relationship also has an important impact for their children. Parents who have an effective partnership avoid bringing their child into their arguments and work together to model positive interactions, which helps their children learn how to have healthy relationships with others. Likewise, the health of the co-parenting relationship spills over into the parent-child

relationship. If the mother and the father experience great levels of stress and conflict with each other, it is likely that they will take out those feelings in their interactions with their child. Regardless of the relationship or cohabitation status of the parents, children benefit when their parents display cooperation and support with each other.

I mentioned that the co-parenting relationship is of particular relevance to the level of involvement by the adolescent father, so now I'm going to discuss why that is such a crucial factor to consider. Positive father involvement, both residential and non-residential, have impacts for the children, the mother and the father himself. The positive effects for the children of highly involved fathers remain beneficial throughout the child's life. Research on father involvement shows qualitative differences in how fathers and mothers interact with their children, with unique benefits of paternal interactions. Fathers tend to excite and surprise their children. They open them up to the outside world. They encourage them to take risks, but also ensure that they are safe and secure. This actually allows children to be braver in strange situations and encourages them to explore, take chances, overcome obstacles and stand up for themselves. This relationship is called the *father-child activation relationship*. It is considered to only be effective in the context of an emotional connection between the father and child.

Fathers also tend to use more unfamiliar words with their young children, and they ask for clarification more often. That actually allows children to rethink and rephrase their ideas in order to be better understood by other people. Also, fathers are more likely than mothers to ask their children to solve problems for themselves, rather than solving them for them. This allows them to build the ability to think through and solve problems independently.

Now, the impact of a father's involvement on maternal functioning is complex, but overall it has been found to have a positive impact for mothers. Adolescent moms often consider the dad to be a significant source of support. They want him to be involved, both prenatally and after the birth. During pregnancy, father involvement is associated with more maternal feel attachment and positive behavioral changes by the mother that are good for the fetus. After birth, a father's involvement with their child helps the mom's well-being, her self-esteem, and the quality of her relationship with her child.

However, recent research has shown that a father's involvement with his children may only be linked with a positive maternal identity when the parents are able to negotiate and compromise with each other. When fathers are absent or minimally involved, or if there is a negative or stressful relationship between the two, mothers are more likely to report experiencing parenting stress, depression and anxiety.

A father's active involvement seems to [offer] unique benefits for the father himself as well. Dads who spend more time parenting their children feel more self-confident and satisfied in their parenting. They are more attentive and accepting of their children. They tend to exhibit more maturity. They experience less psychological distress. They report that they have more satisfaction with life overall.

Unfortunately, though, adolescent-headed families are at risk for a lack of active father involvement. This is generally attributed to a lack of resources or a lack of interest in parenting. On average, younger dads may have lower income, a lower level of education, and generally, fewer resources with which to support their child. Also, as I mentioned earlier, they are less likely to reside in the same house as their child, making it more difficult for them to engage and maintain a father-child connection.

While fathers who live with their children may have more opportunities to parent, young non-residential fathers are actually more involved than has previously been assumed. In cases where the father does not have much access to the child, it's actually been found that the quality of the father-child relationship is key to positive child outcomes.

Likewise, in recent years, awareness of the different ways that young fathers may be present and accountable for their children has grown, and it's actually been found that even very young fathers are interested in being involved in parenting their child. Thus, when non-residential fathers are taught how to engage in cooperative co-parental interactions and supportive parenting behaviors, there is potential for an increase in active and sustained father involvement and substantial positive child outcomes.

Next, I'm going to talk about the implications for this information. For pregnant and parenting teenage mothers, it is so important that they be able to cultivate healthy relationships with significant persons in their life. Learning about healthy relationship skills can be a step towards building a stronger maternal identity for these moms. For example, since teenage mothers often turn to their parents or family members for support, when there is an open and supportive communication there and assistance between the adolescent and her family members, she's more likely to perceive their support and acceptance and feel more satisfied with her ability to parent effectively.

Likewise, adolescents often turn to informal peer supports during these times, so learning about issues common to peer relationships may enable teens to be able to seek out healthy friendships. If they can establish friendships — specifically with other pregnant or parenting teens — that can also help them to gain parenting advice that can further their maternal role attainment.

Also, building relationship skills can facilitate a supportive co-parenting relationship that really helps adolescent parents be able to manage their differences and conflicts. Adolescents who are encouraged to develop skills and understand aspects of healthy relationships may gain confidence and competence with their parenting relationship, which then, in turn, is going to help them to be able to provide a strong, stable family for their children, whether or not they decide to remain in a romantic relationship. In fact, if they do choose to end their romantic relationship, it's highly likely that one or both of them is going to enter into a new romantic partnership. Learning these relationship tools can help them to form new, stable partnerships that are healthy for themselves and for their children.

In addition to the benefits for the teenage mother, development of healthy relationship skills may have an impact for the dad, too. Programming for adolescent fathers has often been geared towards financial support and some parenting skills, but programming that teaches both parents how to work together as a team — especially early on during the pregnancy or during infancy — may give these young couples an advantage as they try to negotiate parenting together and can help the father to build an ongoing, quality father-child relationship.

There's lots of different ways that information on healthy relationship skills can be disseminated to young parents. It may be possible to provide age-appropriate brochures, tip sheets, [and] posters in lobbies or waiting rooms. Also, delivery of accurate and accessible information through the internet or social media may increase the likelihood that teens are going to be able to obtain the information.

Also, if there are other organizations that already provide services to pregnant or parenting teenagers, it's possible that some resource sharing or some sort of development of new ideas could occur. Lastly, it's also possible to integrate strengths-based education about relationship skills directly into existing programming, such as parenting skills classes. In these cases, it's suggested that every attempt be made to tailor the information to the unique needs of the adolescents, then also to include both parents, so that they can practice these skills together.

In conclusion, teaching and encouraging the development of relationship skills to these vulnerable parents may set them on a safer and healthier path that is going to benefit the family environment and its members. These are references in case you want to look into any of this in further detail. Then, I would like to turn it over to Stephanie.

**Stephanie Toelle**

Thanks, Jacquelyn. I'd like to start you out with a poll. How familiar are you with the Cooperative Extension Service as a community resource? Our choices are not familiar at all, somewhat familiar, or very familiar? [Pause]

It's looking like "not familiar at all." Okay, so just in a nutshell, the Extension Service is a national program. It's an outreach of your state's land-grant university, making the university's research applicable in your community to the educational programming of county Extension agents. Essentially, every county in the nation is served by a Cooperative Extension county office that has educators from the university system.

I'm going to focus on the challenges and the conflict between teen parents and their own parents when raising their child. Let's talk about the sources of conflict — first, defining co-parenting as "parents and caregivers working together to raise a child."

The three ways that teens co-parent include, first, a traditional model [where] the couple assumes traditional gender-based bread-winner, homemaker roles, and they're focused on their present needs. These teens report conflict, but are generally satisfied with their relationship. The extended family is emotionally supportive, but they provide less concrete or material support, because the teens have taken more of an adult role.

The second model is non-traditional, in which the couple expends a substantial amount of time and effort attending school and building careers. As such, they maintain a double life of a teen and a parent. This is the most complicated scenario. They need or require a strong shared commitment in their relationship and consistent and reliable support from their families.

The last is an end-coupled model where the parents are no longer living together. The extended family assumes some of the responsibilities of the missing co-parent. Significant support from the extended family is most common for end-coupled mothers, because the need is more apparent.

When the extended family provides greater resources, they also gain more power and influence on decisions and parenting style. There is also pressure to push the baby's father away. Pressure can involve withholding financial resources and/or emotional support. The father's family often encourages him to deny paternity, which further damages the co-parenting relationship. When there are these pressures from the grandparents, teens often desire to prove wrong a family member who is pessimistic about their romantic relationship or their parenting abilities — plus, remembering that teens are teens, and their developmental stages, independence and self-sufficiency, where the grandparents in this situation are in mid-life with the stage [of] looking forward towards the empty nest. Amidst all of the potential intergenerational conflict, our

goal is to create the most cohesive, supportive family environment for the baby so it has the greatest opportunity for success.

In reviewing those co-parenting models, there's a myriad of parenting styles. There's undoubtedly going to be some conflict. Let's do a quick overview of the four parenting styles. First, there is the authoritarian or dominating style, in which the parent is a firm believer in rules that are inflexible and rigid. They typically use firm or harsh discipline, demanding obedience. This parent usually doesn't show much affection.

The second style is permissive or indulgent. That's where the parents exhibit inconsistent expectations. They communicate openly and let the child do what they want most of the time. This parent has trouble setting and enforcing rules.

The third style is unengaged or neglectful, where the parent is uninvolved or perhaps not present due to a variety of circumstances. They're distracted or focused on work or other interests.

The last style is the authoritative or positive parent style, where the parent has rules and limits that are flexible within boundaries. They are consistent, fair and firm with high expectations. This parent has the final say regarding issues of safety, values and health.

Co-parents — the teen parents plus their parents — are not usually going to see eye to eye, even in the best of circumstances. Research finds that the authoritative style is the most successful. When there are inconsistencies, it's best for the co-parents to agree on the parenting goal and choose the best method for achieving that goal. To achieve the goal between the teen parents and the grandparents, it's best for them to —

- Communicate regularly, daily if possible.
- Understand each other's point of view or perspective — in other words, how the other parent is trying to resolve the problem or accomplish the goal or change the behavior.
- Compromise, where the parents and the grandparents love their child, and they want what is best for them, but they may have different values, or they have different talents and skills to bring to parenting — learning to compromise and promote the best of their different traits and talents.
- Then, last is striving for an environment that fosters unity and builds cohesion, making an effort to include the other parent in fun interactions involving the child, [and] asking for the partner's opinions in parenting decisions.

We've talked about the conflict and so forth, so it's good to look at how we can communicate better. This slide brings us to John Gottman's Four Don'ts and Five Do's in terms of communication skills.

Let's look at the Four Don'ts first:

- First is *criticism* — criticism is attacking the personality or the character of an individual.
- Second is *contempt*, which is showing disgust or a lack of respect, intentional insulting, name calling, mocking, rolling the eyes or sneering.
- *Defensiveness*, where the individual is refusing to take responsibility for their personal actions and feeling injured by the other's response to criticism and contempt.
- *Stonewalling*, which involves withdrawing from interactions and refusing to communicate.

The Five Do's of communication include —

- *Calming down*. If your heart is beating more than 90 beats per minute, it becomes more difficult to access the logical part of your brain. Disengaging from an interaction before something hurtful is said should last for least 20 or 25 minutes or longer for a person to really calm down.
- *Complain*. Now that one sounds counterintuitive, but in contrast to criticism, this one is attacking the behavior rather than the person, so bringing up a complaint about a specific issue or behavior is actually one of the healthiest activities that a person can do.
- *Speaking non-defensively*. Here, this language is an art form that usually includes speaking with a soft voice, using complaint statements that start with "I feel" rather than "You," and garnering the listener's trust in our ability to communicate effectively without eliciting defensiveness.
- *Validate* is to acknowledge the other person's emotions.
- *Overlearning the skill*, so that it becomes natural over time.

Then, we have 10 rules for constructive conflict.

- The first is, refuse to use the destructive conflict tactics. So this goes to our four don'ts that we just talked about: criticizing, showing contempt, being defensive, stonewalling, and speaking defensively [*sic*].
- Number two is to choose to gain the skills to conflict constructively, so the five do's: calming down, speaking non-defensively, validating our partner, and then overlearning the skills. [*sic*]

- Third is to focus on feelings first and then move to the specific issue. This is an important part to learn to speak non-defensively, softening our introduction of a complaint.
- Number four is, focus on one issue at a time. Before bringing up anything else, resolve the first issue.
- Number five: identify the patterns of behavior that reveal the root cause. Look for a cycle of communication that's destructive to find that root cause of the problem.
- Six is think win-win. Look for the solution where both individuals are happy with the outcome, with the strategy that they're going to move forward on.
- Number seven is to learn to calm yourself. Learn to relax. Take a personal time out. Think positively about the other person.
- Number eight is learn to calm the other person — here, using those strategies of a soft voice, a smile, [or] some humor, and validate the other person's feelings.
- Number nine is to be congruent in your communication. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Make sure there's consistency with your language, your tone of voice, and your gestures.
- Then, number 10 is to seek closure and resolution of the specific issue ASAP. It's a myth that going to bed and resting on it before you deal with it the next day — it's healthier to go ahead and resolve the conflict so that you can rest a little bit easier.

So when a parent or caregiver is seeking reliable parenting information, there is a variety of strategies that we can use, probably a combination of several or all of these. A lot of times with different generations, they come to the table with different perspectives, a different history, and different experiences.

- First, the teen parent can talk with their partner and talk about working together towards a solution, and work as a team to find some information that they can trust.
- Second is asking friends, neighbors, family members and neighbors that you have admired and trust and respect [in] their approach to parenting.
- Third is seek community resources. The United Way's 2-1-1 information line can be very helpful in terms of providing referrals to community services, parenting classes, home visiting programs [and] parenting groups that are out there.
- Fourth is search for helpful books.

There's a lot of things that parents should look for in a book. I'm going to give you some tips on that.

- First is to avoid books that have rigid rules or simple formulas, because one size doesn't fit all. All of us have — every child has a different temperament.
- Two is, is the author an expert, and do they have the credentials that match the content? There might be a Dr. Smith who's written a parenting book, but is his doctorate in archeology or is it in human development? Who do you trust?
- Number three: Is the information based theory, research or clinical experience, or is it just someone's opinion?
- Four: Is the book only addressing one group of society, or is it considering a variety of family structures and culture?
- Five: Does the author address both the child and the adult? Do they address both of them in terms of their needs for parenting?
- Six: Are both the child and the parent portrayed in a positive manner?

Then, with the internet resources, besides some of those considerations, also look at the extension of the internet address. Is it a .edu, .gov, or .org most of the time? Those are your reliable sources for information.

As I mentioned, grandparents and neighbors may have some outdated information about parenting and child development, so here is a list of some reliable resources for parenting and child development. I have a couple [of] slides of those.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/index.html>
- Child Development and Parenting (University of Florida Extension):  
[http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic\\_children](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_children)
- ChildMind Institute: <http://childmind.org/audience/for-families>
- Healthy Children (American Academy of Pediatrics):  
<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/Pages/default.aspx>

You'll see we have some of our Extension resources there as well. [iitp.extension.org](http://iitp.extension.org) is a conglomeration of a variety of universities, land-grant universities. We have Illinois.

- Just in Time Parenting (eXtension.org): <http://www.iitp.extension.org/>
- Parent Further (Search Institute): <http://parentfurther.com/>
- Parenting 24/7 (University of Illinois Extension): <http://parenting247.org/>

- National Parent Helpline: <http://www.nationalparenthelpline.org/>
- Zero to Three: <https://www.zerotothree.org/early-development>

Then, here is some other fact sheets that we have. Some are over in the files that you can download, or you can come back to the archived webinar later to catch a couple of these other ones. There's one also on parenting styles and co-parenting.

- 9 Important Communication Skills for Every Relationship:  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/FY/FY127700.pdf>
- 10 Rules for Constructive Conflict:  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/FY/FY127600.pdf>
- Conflict Resolution: Five Simple Tips for Handling a Difficult Situation:  
[http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/conflict\\_resolution\\_five\\_simple\\_tips\\_for\\_handling\\_a\\_difficult\\_situation/](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/conflict_resolution_five_simple_tips_for_handling_a_difficult_situation/)
- Effective Communication Skills: "I" Messages and Beyond:  
[http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/FC\\_Relationships\\_2\\_012-01pr.pdf](http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/FC_Relationships_2_012-01pr.pdf)
- Effective Communications Skills: Resolving Conflicts:  
[http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/FC\\_Relationships\\_2\\_012-02pr.pdf](http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/FC_Relationships_2_012-02pr.pdf)
- What is Your Parenting Style?  
<http://www.extension.umn.edu/family/parents-forever/resources-for-families/children/docs/parenting-style-assessment.pdf>
- When People Parent Together: Let's Talk About Co-Parenting:  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/FY/FY100000.pdf>

For professionals, there's some curricula from state Extension Services, so you can start to learn about some of the resources available at the Extension Service.

- First is a guide for new parents that comes from the University of Georgia Extension Service, *The Guide for New Parents*:  
<http://www.fcs.uga.edu/extension/guide-for-new-parents>.
- *Stay Connected*, that one is actually one about raising teenagers, so it could be helpful for the grandparents to understand some of the behaviors of their teen who is still developing  
<http://aces.edu/teens/stayconnected/parentgoals.php>.
- Then, we have *Together We Can*, which a co-parenting curricula  
[http://msue.anr.msu.edu/resources/together\\_we\\_can\\_curriculum](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/resources/together_we_can_curriculum).

Then here's my references, and I will turn the presentation over to Andrea.

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## Andrea Heyward

Good afternoon, and greetings from South Carolina. My name is Andrea Heyward, and I am the Project Coordinator for the Community Support for Young Parents Program.

This program is being implemented as a partnership between the Children's Trust of South Carolina and the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. The Children's Trust and South Carolina Campaign work closely with the South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families, S.C. Thrive, PASOs, and the South Carolina Rural Health Research Center to provide program support and oversight to fund the counties across the state. Funding for this program is provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Adolescent Health.

The Community Support for Young Parents Program funds four counties in South Carolina to work collaboratively to provide services to young families. The funded counties include Darlington, Horry, Richland, and Spartanburg counties. Each county works to meet the four overall program goals:

- increase quality, quantity and awareness of services for young parents in South Carolina
- increase educational attainment among expectant and parenting young mothers and fathers
- reduce number of repeat teen births
- improve parenting skills, leading to children being well cared for

The Community Support for Young Parents Program received funding through the Office of Adolescent Health Pregnancy Assistance Fund from August 1, 2013 through July 31, 2017, and is currently in its final year of program funding. In Project Year 3, August 1, 2015 through July 31, 2016, a total of 831 individuals were served. This included 529 young parents, 275 children and 27 non-participant family members. For this program, non-participant family members can include the spouse or partner of a participant, grandparent or other extended family member. For today's webinar, we will provide an example from the field of how one of our funded communities has worked to engage non-participant family members to support young parents in co-parenting.

Today, I will highlight Darlington County First Steps, a program located in Darlington County, South Carolina. Just to provide some background on Darlington County, the total population is approximately 68,000. Fifty-seven percent of the population is white, 41 percent African American, and two percent Hispanic. More than 36 percent of the children live in poverty; 28 percent live in areas of concentrated poverty; the annual unemployment rate is eight percent; and 27 percent of residents lack a high school diploma. A fun fact about

Darlington County is that it is home to Darlington Raceway, which I'm sure all the NASCAR fans will love.

Darlington County First Steps implements the Parents Are First, or PAF Program. This program provides a variety of services to young mothers, fathers, their children, and extended family members. In Project Year 3 of the Community Support for Young Parents Program, Parents Are First provided services to 131 individuals in Darlington County, to include 63 young parents, 46 children, and 22 non-participant family members.

This slide provides a snapshot of key activities implemented with young fathers in [the] Parents Are First program: Father Talks, a support group for young fathers; *Responsible Fatherhood*, a positive parenting curriculum; *Be Proud! Be Responsible!*, an evidence-based pregnancy prevention curriculum; assistance with child support and custody; educational and job skills information; guest speakers; and special events.

Most critical to note is the creation of the Dad Cave, a father-friendly space where young fathers receive educational services and referrals, in addition to being a space to foster peer support. Trust me, this is definitely a place that any man will love to hang out. The Dad Cave was created to house two areas: one area was designed for service provision, and the other specifically models your traditional man cave, with the idea that most program environments are not always male- or father-friendly. The Dad Cave provides a space that is welcoming to young fathers, whether they're receiving services or just as a space to hang out.

Here [are] young fathers receiving support services from a local partner in the Dad Cave. This space also is utilized to host events for families and community members. Hosting events in this space has been key to keeping families and the community informed of the great work taking place with young fathers in the county. As mentioned previously, the Dad Cave speaks true to its name. This environment definitely allows a space to foster peer support for the young fathers participating in the Parents Are First program.

Young mothers also have access to a variety of services through the Parents Are First program: Tracy Talks!, a support group facilitated by a licensed counselor; evidence-based parenting curricula, to include *Nurturing Parenting and Parents as Teachers: Teen Curriculum*; *Motheread/Fatheread*, a program focused on literacy and school readiness; *Be Proud! Be Responsible! Be Protective!*, an evidence-based, repeat pregnancy prevention curriculum; 17 Days, an evidence-based pregnancy prevention program; guest speakers; and special events.

In a similar fashion to the Dad Cave, the Diva Den was created with the support of a local community foundation to provide a space for educational sessions and support services for participants. This site also hosts a child care facility, which

participants can utilize while they are accessing services [or] taking adult education courses, or for special events.

Here you will see young mothers participating in Tracy Talks!, a support group for participants implemented by a community partner and licensed counselor. Not to be outdone by the Dad Cave, the Diva Den creates a space for young mothers that also fosters peer support. The Diva Den was created with support from the Byerly Foundation, and is a great example of how this community has worked to leverage resources to support this effort.

Partners in Darlington County have worked extremely hard to create a network of services for young parents. As an extension of these services, they implement events to include extended family members. The Parents Are First program works to support the full household to improve the support systems for the young parents that they serve. Key activities implemented include family events. Two of their annual events include a Thanksgiving celebration and Christmas on a Dime, in addition to referrals to individual and family counseling services, and linkages to additional support services to include financial, housing and emergency services.

The Christmas on a Dime event is an annual event for participants and their extended family members. Young parents and grandparents come together to participate in this event. As you can see, last year's event was hosted at the Dad Cave. Children are also able to enjoy story time with Santa as young parents and their support systems learn all about budget-friendly ways to enjoy the holiday season. This includes coupon books for family activities: for example, Family Movie Night, and creating gifts, as seen here where participants and grandparents make ornaments for their families. Events such as this are critical to address issues around financial literacy with a focus on budgeting and saving around critical times of the year, such as the holiday season.

There are common issues that the Parents Are First program works to address to support intergenerational families. A case manager often works with families to address parent-child communication, supporting young fathers, defining roles of family members, and household stability. The next two slides provide some key strategies for how this particular program works to address these issues. This month is Let's Talk Month, where we focus on parent-child communication around love, sex and relationships.

In any parent-child relationship, I'm sure we have all heard this or may have even said it ourselves: "This is my house, and we will do things my way!" In working with parents of young parents, it is definitely critical to acknowledge the strain that they are experiencing as their children and homes are transitioning. The work with parents of teen parents has to include helping them to manage their feelings, which often can include feelings of frustration and disappointment. It is essential to work with parents, guardians and extended family members to

provide a positive and supportive environment for teen parents and their children. The case managers in the Parents Are First program work together to create a space where grandparents and extended family members can vent, whether this be through referrals to individual and/or family counseling services. It is also critical to work with both teen parents and parents to identify positive conflict resolution strategies.

Another key strategy is to emphasize the importance of young fathers being engaged for the benefit of the child or children. Through their work with young families, case managers have found it critical to often engage the paternal grandmother as the gatekeeper who greatly influences the father's desire to be involved with his children. Also key is working with families to reframe the perception of the family structure. As most participants' homes are single parent, male-absent homes, a case manager works with young mothers, grandparents and extended family members to emphasize the importance of the young father's involvement.

A key aspect of the Parents Are First program is that participants receive evidence-based positive parenting curriculum. Case managers work with extended family members to support the positive parenting skills [and] learn through the program within their household. Parents Are First also works to empower young parents within their homes through their work with extended family members. It is critical that families have clearly defined co-parenting roles and that boundaries are established.

Finally, and probably most critical, is the issue of household stability. Clients are often in situations of crisis or conflict at the time that they seek support. It is critical that programs provide or have connections to service agencies to assist with both financial crises and issues around conflict and emotional issues.

I will say that these were just highlights of lessons learned through this work in the field. As we continue to learn how to better support young families, it is essential to engage entire household units, who have a great impact on positive outcomes for teen parents and their children. At this time, I would like to thank the Community Support for Young Parents Program partners for their continued efforts on the ground to serve young families across the state of South Carolina. I would also like to extend a special thank you to the staff of Darlington County First Steps for sharing their experiences and lessons learned through the Parents Are First program. With that, I'm going to turn it over to Robyn.

### **Robyn Cenizal**

Thanks, Andrea. Thank you so much also, Shannon, Jacquelyn and Stephanie. Thank you for sharing the information. Welcome to all of you who have been joining us today to hear this great information on intergenerational parenting.

First, I'd like to start with a poll question. How familiar are you with the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families? Not familiar at all, somewhat familiar [or] very familiar? [Pause]

All right. Great. It looks like we're pretty split: 42.8 [percent] not familiar at all, somewhat familiar 45.2, and then, 11.9 are very familiar, so that's a nice split.

The National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families — our purpose is to serve as a national repository for healthy marriage and relationship education. What we really like to do is to gather, develop and disseminate timely relevant research, tools and other resources. But what's really important, like what you've heard on today's webinar, is the connection between the research and the practice. That's what we think is really important: providing folks around the country information that's research-based but also has practical application, so we welcome the opportunity, like today, to bring you that sort of resource.

Additionally, we provide training and technical assistance to public human service administrators who are interested in integrating healthy relationship education into their service delivery systems. We focus at the Resource Center on four key areas. Two, communication and conflict management, are interpersonal skills that are just as important in couple relationships as they are, as we've heard [sic] throughout today's presentation. They're equally as important in parent-child and grandparent-to-parent relationships, as well as couples, whether those couples are together or not.

Our approach at the Resource Center is very multi-faceted, and we have four core areas. We have the National Forum and Repository, also known as the website and Clearinghouse. We offer products, outreach and training, and technical assistance. I'm just going to give you a quick overview on some of these pieces.

The Resource Center website — the link is here [\[https://www.healthymarriageandfamilies.org\]](https://www.healthymarriageandfamilies.org), as well as in your Weblinks box to the right. Oh, let me stop real quick. If you haven't already had a chance to type in your questions, please feel free to go ahead and type in your questions in the Q & A box, because we're going to open it up for questions in a few minutes.

Back to the Resource Center website. We have a very comprehensive website, including a media gallery with video clips and so forth that you can see. We archive our webinars and our newsletters, so you can access those after the fact as well. We have a calendar of events. If you're looking for a conference or a webinar that might be appropriate for you or other stakeholders, feel free to visit our calendar of events.

Our virtual library includes over 1,400 research-based resources that might be of interest to you and those you serve. The library's also a great resource if you're

working on pursuing funding — for example, writing a grant — and you're looking for some research to support your work. It's a perfect place to check for that.

We also have a Virtual Training Center. The Virtual Training Center includes six courses, and each of those courses, if you complete them and take the quiz at the end and complete the quiz with 80 percent accuracy, you will receive a certificate of completion, which is good for CEUs.

I hope that you'll take advantage of our website. When you visit the website, there is a popup survey. I hope you'll take a minute to complete the survey. It helps us to make sure that we're providing the resources and support that you need.

I mentioned products. We heard from Jacquelyn. She talked about one of the research-to-practice briefs that we have available, which is available for download, but we also have other products. We have a lot of very interesting culturally responsive toolkits. You see some samples here on working with American Indian and Alaskan Native families, Latino families [and] African-American families.

We also have a lot of other resources that target Muslim and other immigrant populations, so take a look at those in our Fostering Cultural Competency section on the website. We also offer fact sheets, research-to-practice briefs, tip sheets and guides. For example, we have a curriculum guide for free and low-cost curriculum that's available on our website, if that's of interest to you.

We do a number of outreach activities, including a monthly newsletter. If you sign up for our Listserv — if you haven't already, please do — but if you are on our Listserv, we try to not to inundate your inbox, so we do a monthly newsletter where we highlight various new resources that have come out and upcoming webinars and other events that might be of interest to you. We hope that you'll do that. We're also on Twitter [[@MarriageResCtr](#)], so be sure to follow us. We will be launching a LinkedIn account for the Resource Center in the next couple of months, so watch for that as well. Our training and technical assistance, as I mentioned, the Virtual Training Center is available on our website.

We also do Integration Institutes, which is actually how we met Shannon. We did a South Carolina Integration Institute for that state. In the Integration Institute, it's a one-day training where we bring together leaders at the state level to talk to them about the importance of healthy relationship education and how it can be integrated into their programs, and we actually help them develop action plans. We provide webinars like the one you're enjoying today. I hope you'll plan to visit other webinars in the future. We can also assist with resource identification support. If you're looking for a resource and you can't find it, if you just contact us, we can help you locate it.

We have a call center. You'll see the contact information. You can call us [1-866-916-4672]. You can email us [[info@HealthyMarriageandFamilies.org](mailto:info@HealthyMarriageandFamilies.org)]. We also have on the website, a training/technical assistance request form. Just go there and fill it out online, and we're happy to follow up with you and provide whatever technical assistance is appropriate.

We also do targeted conference calls. For example, we've had calls where an agency was trying to develop a training agenda for their staff on healthy relationship education, and we participated in the call and helped them draft that.

With that, I'm going to open it up for questions, and feel free to target your questions to any of the individuals, or you can ask a general question. But I certainly appreciate all of you joining us today. Trevor?

**Trevor Hoffberger**

Yeah. Thanks so much, Robyn. Thank you to all of our speakers. That was really, really great.

Once again, we have the Q & A pod located on the bottom right hand corner of your screen, and you can type a question in there and click Enter. We've had a few people do that. While people are adding a few more questions, we have some in the queue already. One question that's come through a couple times has to do with accessing these resources and whether they'll be archived on the website. The answer to that is yes, they will be archived on the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriages and Families website. You will be able to access these slides and the audio presentation and be able to click the files available and the links throughout the webinar.

The first question for our speaker[s] is for Jacquelyn. Jacquelyn, the question reads, "Do fathers also go through paternal role attainment to establish their paternal identity, and if so, do the same supports and processes facilitate this?"

**Dr. Jacquelyn Mallette**

Yes. That is a great question. Yes, there is definitely research on father identity. Fathers do definitely obtain this identity through different, careful processes, but let me say, the relational challenges that they experience and the support that they require are very similar to the way that a mother would establish her identity.

**Trevor Hoffberger**

Thanks. That's great. The next question has to do with child support. It asks, "Are there tips for communicating with teen fathers to help explain financially why they're so important when they might be struggling with co-parenting and the visitation or custody as the main issues?" This is open to anybody, any tips for communicating that issue.

**Stephanie Toelle**

This is Stephanie. I think you would use some of the same techniques for communication, but I think you would reinforce it with some things that would appeal to the father, in terms of how his role can make a difference in terms of his support.

**Trevor Hoffberger**

Anybody else have anything to add to that? If not, the next question we have in the queue asks about tips for creating parent support groups at schools in the school setting, if anybody has any tips for creating parent support groups.

**Robyn Cenizal**

Well, this is Robyn. I'll just jump in with a couple of examples. For example, the All Pro Dad program, they work in schools and have been very successful in creating father groups in the schools. The way it works is that there are activities for father and child. Then there is separate session time for just the fathers, where they have an opportunity to treat this supportive atmosphere for dads. That's one example.

I know that many of the Head Start organizations offer parent events, where they try to help create an environment where there can be natural support networks developed. The other thought that comes to mind is, I know, Stephanie, you've done some work around this in the past, where you used Family Treasures to try to create some family groups. You want to talk a little bit about that? The Family Treasures stuff is still available through Extension, isn't it?

**Stephanie Toelle**

I believe so. The University of Nebraska Extension produced that. Those were essentially activities that involved the whole family. I recall working with a local United Way full-service school program who worked with parents and the kids involved — middle school and elementary school aged children. They provided a meal. Then we did just some brief introduction to a family strengthening concept. Then we did an activity that reinforced it and something that was fun. We had different props and gadgets to manipulate. Everybody had a part of it. I think you can grow from there, build some excitement and maybe have other opportunities that branch out from that that involve the family.

**Robyn Cenizal**

One of the most important things about engaging parents in the school environment or any other environment is that you have to keep in mind adult learner concepts. Adults want to participate in things that they view to be relevant, and they can see the immediate translation of whatever this is into their practical lives. It needs to feel like it's something that they would want to participate in, and it needs to be promoted as a value to them and a value to their kids for them to participate.

**Trevor Hoffberger**

Great. Thank you both. While I give people a few more seconds to put questions in for the Q & A box, I want to check the phone lines and our operator to see if anybody has asked a question through the phone.

**Operator**

To signal for a question on the phone, please press Star-1 at this time. [pause]  
We have no questions, sir.

**Trevor Hoffberger**

Okay. We have one more question that just came through. It asks if there are resources that you might recommend to parents who have had a surprise pregnancy, maybe a tool for them to help support their child's pregnancy.

**Robyn Cenizal**

Are we talking about a teen who's had a surprise pregnancy and resources —

**Trevor Hoffberger**

Yeah. I think —

**Robyn Cenizal**

— for the parent of the teen?

**Trevor Hoffberger**

Correct. I think it would be for both — a tool for the parent to support and maybe also a grandparent to support their child who has gone through a surprise pregnancy.

**Robyn Cenizal**

I would definitely say, first of all, check the Resource Center library. I'm sure we have some resources in there that might be helpful in that regard. Also, I would encourage [you] to look for Cooperative Extension programs in your communities that may offer parenting classes or parenting support programs.

There are also a lot of resources for kinship caregivers, which might also provide some additional supports. We have a lot of grandparents raising grandchildren, and sometimes there are a lot of resources through Extension to support some of that. But I would certainly suggest, start with communication skills, and feel free to visit the Virtual Training Center and complete the communication skills mini course before you start having those all-important conversations about that topic.

**Stephanie Toelle**

That's great. Speaking of kinship, I recall the weblink that's online there, Zero to Three, had a link particular to kinship caregivers. That would be another one to check out.

**Trevor Hoffberger**

Awesome. On that note, thank you all so much for your expertise and willing[ness] to share with us today. I thought those presentations were clear and comprehensive, and I think that's why we had only a couple questions there toward the end.

As the webinar concludes, there will be brief survey that pops up on your screen. Please remember to provide your feedback using the survey, as it helps us in planning for future webinars. The survey includes a link to a certificate of attendance. If you all have any additional questions, you can send them to [info@healthymarriageandfamilies.org](mailto:info@healthymarriageandfamilies.org). To check out more of our resources and information, you can do so through our website at [www.healthymarriageandfamilies.org](http://www.healthymarriageandfamilies.org). Thank you so much, and I hope you have a great day.

**Operator**

Again, that does conclude our presentation. Thank you for your participation. You may disconnect at this time.