

***U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
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**Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program
Technical Assistance Coordinating Center's
Webinar**

“Building Stronger Home Visiting Systems through Staff Retention”

June 25, 2013

3:00pm Eastern

Presentations by:

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Anthony Hemmelgarn, Ph.D., Children's Mental Health Services Research Center,
University of Tennessee
Janet Horras, Bureau of Family Health
Iowa Department of Public Health
Arlene McAtee, Mid-Iowa Community Action*

Operator: Good day and welcome to the ZERO TO THREE Building Stronger Home Visiting Systems through Staff Retention conference call.

Today's conference is being recorded. At this time I would like to turn the conference over to Christy Stanton. Please go ahead ma'am.

Christy Stanton: Thank you and hello everybody. Today's webinar is brought to you by the Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Technical Assistance Coordinator Center, the MIECHV TACC.

The TACC is funded by HRSA and is staffed by ZERO TO THREE and subcontracted partners Chapin Hall, the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs and Walter R. McDonald and Associates.

The TACC provides different levels of support to MIECHV grantees using ZERO TO THREE and partner staff along with numerous expert consultants and in coordination with other TA providers.

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My name is Christy Stanton and I am a TACC TA specialist with ZERO TO THREE. I will be introducing this webinar and our presenters today.

Maria Gehl, the Assistant Director of the TACC will be staffing the chat box and Lena Cunningham, Program Associate with the TACC will be providing behind the scenes support with our webinar technology.

These are today's webinar objectives. Participants on this webinar will have a chance to learn about the critical role of leadership and building strong systems that support staff retention at all levels of home visiting programs.

They will deepen their knowledge of how one's organizational culture and climate play a significant role in staff turnover and the accompanying affects on client outcomes. And participants will explore strategies to address and improve staff retention issues in ones own home visiting setting.

The webinar today will have three parts. We will begin with a presentation from Eric Martin on adaptive leadership and at the application to staff retention.

Next, Dr. Anthony Hemmelgarn will provide a presentation on organizational social context, climate and culture.

The third part of today's webinar will feature Janet Horras and Arlene McAtee sharing state and local perspectives from their experiences working in Iowa.

From there, Eric Martin will facilitate an open discussion across our four guests. Before we proceed with the agenda I'd like to share a few items with you.

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First, your phone lines will stay muted throughout the duration of the webinar. For optimal sound quality, we encourage you to call in via the phone line versus listening in on your computer speakers.

There are opportunities to interact during this webinar. There will be a poll question you will be invited to answer. In addition, please share your thoughts and questions via the chat box throughout the webinar.

Staff retention appears to be a topic that interests many of you judging from the sizable number of questions submitted with webinar registrations. We are certain that our presenters' thoughtful contributions will also invite your questions.

Even if your questions submitted through registration or through the chat box today is not answered on the webinar, please be assured that the TACC will provide responses to all questions and information on that will be forthcoming.

The chat box is located in the lower left corner of your webinar window just to the left of the PowerPoint slide. To post your comments in the chat box you will type your post into the text field at the bottom of the chat area which is Number 1 on your screen.

Be sure to click the arrow in the chat box or hit the return/enter button your keyboard to ensure that everyone can see your post. Only public chat is available for this webinar.

And finally, you should have received the PowerPoint slides for today's webinar via email if you registered by this morning. They will be sent out to all attendees after the webinar as well.

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Details about where to find an archived presentation of this webinar will be provided at the end of today's presentation.

Before we hear from our presenters we'd first like to hear from you. What is the most common staff retention scenario you are facing in your current work setting?

Is it that A, finding the right person for the job is difficult, B, people don't stay on the job for long or C, keeping morale up? You can share this information with us by selecting the letter that best represents your answer in the feedback window to the left of the PowerPoint slide.

If you are not seeing the letter options click the little arrow to the left of the word feedback to open that window. As soon as the circle in front of your selected letter has turned blue with a little black dot inside you have submitted your answer.

If your answer doesn't fit into the options listed and you select B, please provide a little detail in the chat box so everyone can understand your situation.

I'll give you a minute to make your selection.

Okay, it looks like people have had a chance to answer and the pie chart is evolving as we watch it. but we - it looks like the primary responses are finding the right person is a challenge when it comes to staff, as well as keeping morale up.

Thank you for sharing that and I know that our presenters will be interested in considering this information.

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Let me introduce our first two presenters, Eric Martin and Dr. Anthony Hemmelgarn. Eric is a Cambridge Leadership Associates Consultant and longtime practitioner of adaptive leadership.

Eric's career spans the corporate, government and nonprofit sectors in the U.S, and internationally. He has over 15 years of experience in consulting and organizational development roles, including strategic planning, change management, impact assessment evaluation and financial management.

He holds an MS in organizational change management from Malano Graduate School of Management and a BS in operations research systems analysis from the University of Michigan.

Eric is a proud native of Detroit, Michigan who now lives in New Jersey with his wife and three children.

And the second presenter you will hear from today is Dr. Anthony Hemmelgarn. Dr. Hemmelgarn is an industrial organizational psychologist who has worked with the University of Tennessee's Children's Mental Health Services Research Center for 20 years.

He has served as principle investigator and as co-investigator on both qualitative and quantitative NIH funded studies of children service organizations and has published in the areas of organizational culture and climate and organizational change.

Dr. Hemmelgarn has been a significant contributor to the development of the empirically based ARC organizational intervention and ARC stands for availability, responsiveness and continuity and has served as an ARC specialist in preliminary studies.

I welcome both of them and turn the floor over to Eric Martin at this time. Thank you, Eric.

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Eric Martin: Well thank you Christy. It's a real delight to be here both as a facilitator later on in this call and also as a presenter on adaptive leadership. And I just have to say Christy and to the team at MIECHV TACC if the level of support that you've shown us over the last few months of planning is any indication, that we're all in great hands. So thank you for that.

My hope is that we can have a conversation today, both with the folks on the call and as much as possible through the chat box and our goal is to present some theory, which I'll present on leadership during the kinds of transitions and change that you all on the phone are engaged in.

And then Anthony will follow up with a bit on the research and showing us what the data shows around retention and then I'll have the real pleasure of - and we'll all have the real pleasure of listening to Janet and Arlene and their stories, which will bring a very practical angle on some of the work that you all are doing and provide some context, I think, for what myself and Tony will be talking about.

So, to begin with I think the challenge as I understand it and part of the research we've done at Harvard at the Kennedy School for many years is trying to understand how it is that people who are very committed, very smart, talented and in some cases even well resources have to continually face challenges for which there is no easy answer. How it is they don't see results that really match the level of aspiration.

And so I think part of the challenge for all of us on this call is to understand what is the problem that we're trying to solve.

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What is the problem that you are trying to solve in your communities, in your state agencies or wherever you may work and given that, how do you deploy yourselves differently from a leadership angle.

So, I think we all realize having done some of this work and talk with folks that MIECHV grantees are neck deep in getting their programs off the ground. Very tight deadlines, high expectations and so there's an opportunity now with many folks that hadn't even gotten the programs off the ground to step back and say well what kind of leadership do we need and what are we really trying to achieve past the initial start up mode.

I see this kind of webinar as an opportunity to take that step back to get on the balconies, a metaphor that we use, and look down on the dance floor on which we're all dancing to say what are we seeing and how do we need to shift the dance a little bit to move forward.

And what I think we've all began to realize is that the work that you're doing keeps you in a state of disequilibrium and a state of discomfort, anxiety in which is uncomfortable and needs to be talked about openly.

And at the same time this disequilibrium, this tension, can create creativity and an opportunity for risk taking and innovation. so what I want to do now is turn to some of the theory that we've come up with after about 30 - 35 years of talking to folks who have found themselves in situations where their current expertise and skill set is not matched with the kind of challenge that they face.

Bear with me as I move the slide here. So, it's my experience and my assumption that neither the states nor HRSA or anyone for that matter had a perfect understanding of what the state capacity needs were when they wrote the original MIECHV proposals.

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And this is not, just to be clear, criticism of anybody. It's just a recognition that MIECHV is on a frontier that virtually no one has been on before. There is no easy answer. There is no expert who can say oh yes we did that 45 years ago and this is how you do it.

And when you add to that the reality of hiring freezes in many states and the increased economic and political pressure that all of these programs are under and it's no wonder we find ourselves in what seems like a crisis mode and a constant state of disequilibrium.

So, the first question that I'd like to begin with and we'll come back to later on in this call is what is the problem that we're trying to solve? And, of course, if you ask different people, five different people would probably give you five different answers. But many of the folks on the call, as you just indicated, it's finding the right people for the job or keeping morale high despite the ambiguity and the complexity.

For other folks it may be more systemic, if you will, and I think one of the early pieces of documentation that I saw early on is that the MIECHV program was designed to "create a coordinated system" not program but coordinated system of early childhood visiting in every state with the capacity for ongoing high quality evidence based practice.

I think that word capacity is really critical because capacity as we understand it is about the will and the skill. It's the willingness to actually engage in work that is hard and difficult and having the skill to do that.

So the first notion I want to introduce is this idea of technical and adaptive work or technical and adaptive problems. This is a way to begin to understand some of the complexity that I think you all are facing.

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We suggest and this is a little bit simplicity but just for the sake of moving the conversation forward, that there are two types of problems - technical problems and adaptive problems.

Technical problem is one where the problem and the solution are very clear. And therefore the work can be done by the person in charge, the authority figure or the expert or a consultant that has that kind of technical expertise. And very often it's a matter of just getting the job done well, high quality and quickly.

There is no shortage of technical tasks that are critical to our organizational life. An example that I use as a technical problem that is kind of a field of what we're talking about here but it's a broken arm. and when I have a broken arm it's clear that my arm needs to go straight and now it's going at a 90 degree angle and so there's a clear problem. A broken arm is a technical problem.

And in that case because it's technical there's also a solution that is technical. In other words, an expert who fix a broken are, i.e., a doctor, who set the arm and over a period of time the arm is restored. So I think that's an example of a technical problem.

Now adaptive problem is one that's very different. An adaptive problem is one for which there is not a clear solution and sometimes the problem isn't even so clear.

So, again, getting back to this question of what's the problem. Getting the programs off the ground clearly was a challenge or a problem early on that many of you solved or are still working on. Creating a coordinated system of early childhood visiting in every state with the will and skill to sustain that over a period of time is a different kind of problem, right.

Finding the right people for the job is a different kind of problem and so we want to begin with saying what is the problem that we're focused on and very often what happens is when faced with

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complexity and uncertainty and pressure people will resort to solving the technical aspect of the problem.

And, in fact, applying technical solutions to adaptive challenges is one of the biggest ways of organizational resources, so adaptive problems are fundamentally different than technical problems. They require learning. They require mobilizing stakeholders. As we often say the folks with the problem are the problem and they're the solution.

And because the work is inherently at a frontier that no one has been on before, it requires experimentation and smart risk taking. Michael Marmot a pioneer in noticing and defining behavioral and social determinants of health once said that health is a manifestation of the way we organize society and by asking about health in society we're asking about society itself.

And so I would suggest that in some ways you all are challenging some of the fundamental norms of how your organizations are organize, you're asking people to literally allocate time and resources differently.

This is a very different kind of problem than getting a program off the ground. Not more difficult or easy, it's just different.

And in fact if you were to map technical and adaptive problems over a period of time, what you would notice is a couple of things and this is a complex slide there. And the first thing you would notice is that there is a threshold of change as indicated on this slide under which nothing new happens.

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And this is where the status quo exists and many of you introduce these programs into a status quo that wasn't getting the results that you wanted in terms of focus on early childhood and maternal health outcomes.

And so the threshold of changing is critical and once you go above it and begin to get what we call here in the Y-axis, this is equilibrium. It's anxiety, it's tension, it's stress.

Some times it's excitement but what happens is on this threshold of change is that you begin to get into more fundamental issues that impact the success of your program and the challenge often times in doing this work is holding people between the threshold of the change and this limit of tolerance.

And the limit of tolerance is that line above which people begin to break down. You lose people actually and tension becomes an issue.

It's a fight, flight or freeze mode. And so this productive zone of disequilibrium between the threshold of change and limited tolerance is in the critical space. It's almost as if you have your hand on a thermostat.

Adjusting the heat, adjusting disequilibrium enough that the motivation for change above the threshold and not so much that people and systems begin to breakdown.

With a - with technical work shown here by the green line like a broken arm the pain to this equilibrium is high early on and then it comes down to the application of technical expertise.

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With adaptive work it's quite different and so this equilibrium begin to experience changes as you get deeper into the work. And that may be you're, you know, many years into this and beginning to realize that the outcomes you're getting aren't the outcomes you need.

And so this challenge of holding people in that threshold in that - disequilibrium long enough to experiment to take risks to engage in trial and error is really critical to addressing some of the adaptive challenges you all face.

Now as you might expect this requires a different kind of leadership than technical leadership. And this slide we'll come back to later on I think if we have time.

But what we will begin to do is break down some of the differences between authority and leadership and these are often slated in the organizational life. and we all talk about leaders and what we often mean when we say leaders are really people in authority, people who are providing what's listed here as direction, protection and order.

Direction is about asking the question and answering the question, where are we going? What's the vision? Although it is a planning process is often trying to address that question.

Protection is about saying okay if I follow you on that path, that promised land, will I be safe, will I have a job and I do my job the way I know how to do it and feel confident doing it. These are all issues of protection.

And order's a very complex notion but essentially it's about how we get along on the journey. How do we relate to each other, relate to other stakeholders in the community? How do we handle conflict according to people and roles? Those are all functions of authority.

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And so long as you provide direction and protection the order - and order your people they will in exchange give you power. Power to define the agenda, to make decisions, and decide how decisions are made. Again, those are critical resources organizational wide and it's very different than leadership.

And leadership, as you can see on the right side here, is fundamentally different and our way of thinking about it in authority.

So, for example, with direction, rather than providing an easily recognizable problem and solution, in leadership you're often identifying the adaptive challenge, you're asking questions rather than providing answers, which is hard for folks that maybe have lived their whole life being great problem solvers.

And two of the most valuable things you can do when leading people to the kind of change that you're on is to help them more deeply understand the adaptive nature of the challenge, in this case the retention challenge and then to give the work back to them for addressing it.

You can't solve their problem alone, I think many of you have realized that. You know, it's the pressure of the system is often for you to solve those problems because you're the "leader". Giving their words back to getting the right word back is critical.

Protection is another potential resource of authority but a constraint as well because in leadership work you're disclosing external threats. As I understand it, March 2014 is an important deadline for many of you and the data may already begin to show that family retention as well as staff retention is an issue.

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Maybe on that family you can't produce outcomes, obviously. So, as painful as it may be to recognize where you are, letting people experience that threat themselves so they can respond to it and get above that productive zone of disequilibrium is very critical.

Again it is different than having the answers or telling people what to do because you've never been here before, nor have they.

And the last point I'll leave on protection or rather on leadership is that you need the expert leadership but not all the time because if you're always holding people to their roles asking questions without ever providing answer you wouldn't be a very popular person in your organization.

But the challenge is to create a sense of stability and belonging, providing authority and the functions of authority while mobilizing people to face their adaptive challenges. These are very different things yet I suggest that is your work to do both in the coming days.

So I want to turn now to Tony and Tony will have us - will run us through a series of slides on climate and culture and what the research shows on how it relates to retention. Tony...

Dr. Anthony Hemmelgarn: Thank you. Consistent with what Eric is saying, what I'm going to talk about today is culture and climate that really has a lot to do with the adaptive leadership.

It has to do with creating both cultural norms within your organization as well as a climate where this adaptability can work, where this range of disequilibrium can in a sense actually be broadened a bit so that people are comfortable in that range.

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And so that there are norms in place and processes in place in the organization that allow folks to operate in that zone comfortably and to have tools that they can use to deal with the issues that come up. Not only with client well-being issues or direct treatment but issues like turnover.

So, let me first talk a bit about social context and what it is. Although these two terms culture and climate are often used interchangeably they are actually quite distinct constructs.

When we refer to culture what we're really talking about is the way that your work setting, your work team, your work group that you see everything and work in and that environment of work that you're in what kind of cultural norms or expectations are in place within that setting.

Almost in a sense you can envision this as though when you move to a new job for the first couple of weeks and after a couple of weeks of it you realize wow this place is a lot different than the last place I worked. It really seems like they put a focus on different things here that what's expected of me is much different and what they reward and what people ask for is much different than the last place I worked in.

Climate on the other hand is not all of those norms that kind of guide your behavior but the affect that it's having on you. So, if you could imagine being a well-functioning organization where things are going well.

And the norms are well supportive and people are there to help and all these types of things, what is that feeling that you have within that environment. What is the psychological well-being that you're experiencing within it?

So why is that important? What we found is similar to what Eric is describing that you can always bring in technical kind of things. I can bring in new assessment systems; I can bring in new

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evidenced base practices. I can do some training. A lot of that is still things that we consider somewhat technical.

The socio-technical or the social context part of it is really talking about those norms and the feeling of this work setting that you're in and what affect that has on important outcomes. and what we know is that you can bring in training, you can bring in systems, you can do all of those type of things.

But if you're only bringing in the technology and you're not changing that culture and climate that social context around how those systems and tools are being used is that you still will see detriment to many of the outcomes you're trying to reach.

For instance here you see on the graph past year therapist turn over rate is a function of climate. what we know is when we look at national samples of mental health agencies all across the nation is that when we look at the worst personality, in a sense we call them personality profiles, of organizations in terms of their climates is that they have much higher turn over rates.

And you can see on this graph it's around 22% while the best organizations or the best profiles we see on climate typically predict turnover rates of around 9%.

Now these are self report by CEOs and upper leadership of companies. What we know is that in reality in those worst organizations the turnover rates are much higher than what you're seeing here.

You'll also see on the next slide is that client well being is very strongly affected by climate. I want to put this on here because although we're talking about turnover the things that I'm talking about today.

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These cultural elements and these climate elements that affect you every day when you're trying to do your work really affect a variety of outcomes. And so we also see those affects on issues such as client well-being.

For instance here, when we're looking at children's problem behaviors on a clinical measure is that when we looked at really poor climates, organizations that were really represented by poor climate is that the clients from four months of treatment to 36 months of treatment actually got worse when they were in those environment

Whereas the environments that were represented - representing the best climates what where we saw a significant decreases in the problem behaviors of children within those settings.

So although we're focused on turnover, it's important to understand that this aspect of the culture of your organization and how you feel about your work setting has a very strong affect on a variety of outcomes.

To give you an idea of how different organizations look, these are actual profiles that we gathered from mental health agencies across the nation. And these are some of the dimensions that we talk about when we're talking about the personality of those organizations - proficiency, rigidity, resistance.

You can see the worst profile, it's a place where they don't expect much out of their employees and whether or not they know what they're doing or that they have expertise in what they're doing often times these will be places that focused more of well - more on paperwork, bureaucratic concerns versus well-being of client.

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And those type of issues and they're not all that concerned about their employees being really skilled technically at what they're doing with the clients that they're serving.

Rigidity really gets to whether or not it's an organization that does centralized decision making, very formalized structures. I think Eric hints at this in his slide as well in the sense that it's that difference between being authority based kind of leaders versus being that adaptive based leadership.

And then resistance is really are there cultural norms that stop new things from happening. I mean, in a sense when Eric talks about adaptive leadership, we're talking about also the broader kind of environment that those leaders are creating that allows that organization to be open to change.

To be able to deal with change, to look forward to change, to see it as opportunities versus organizations that either, you know, lay down on the grass and say yes, sure we'll do that.

We like that idea and then they do nothing kind of passively just lie there and don't change or more actively fight against new things that come in by shooting them down critically.

And that's not always bad to do that but if that's that pattern over time then you start to realize there are norms in this work setting that are really stopping us from being innovative and being able to make changes.

You also see this with climate. This is the other part of that personality profile. What we want to see is the dark line, the best organizations out there are highly engaged with the front line and they're highly engaged with their clients that they're serving.

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They feel like they're personally accomplishing something. They're doing something worthwhile. They're engaged with those individuals. They feel like they're an organization that where they have support.

They have support from their coworkers, they have support from this organization, it's clear what they're supposed to be doing. They're not getting conflicting messages.

And indeed, the other issue is that they don't feel as much stress. They're not as burned out and overworked and overloaded in these type of context that really allow them to flourish and be adaptive with the changes that occur.

You could see the dotted line that is actually a real profile as well. I guess I'll tell you what I refer to it as. I refer to that as hell because I think if you worked in that environment you may last for a few months but it's a very destructive environment.

No engagement, no feelings of getting anything accomplished, feeling like your organization has no functionality whatsoever is no assistance to you whatsoever and then it's incredibly stressful.

You can imagine if you think about this, these profiles and that worst profile and here we are talking about turnover, if I come into an organization where I feel like, you know what, they don't care about whether I'm really good at doing my job with clients, that's not what the focus is here.

They don't really care about whether, you know, I'm engaged and really doing something with the clients, they only care about other issues, productivity, you know, getting paperwork done, the regulatory things. All things that have to be done well but that's all they seem to care about.

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Functionality, I don't feel like my coworkers help me, I feel like I got four different people telling me what to do. And then you look at the stress and you could imagine the stress going way up for these folks.

Well, it's a pretty clear pattern what's going to happen. If we look at, for instance, turnover and, again, you can be thinking about your client's well-being and this is all. What we know is there's clear direct affects with that. If I'm burned out and on Sunday I'm already getting anxious about going to work on Monday because I don't want to be back in the that setting, I don't feel support, I'm stressed out the wazoo. All of these things are going on. I'm feeling burnt out, the stress, the emotional exhaustion. I clearly am much more likely to turn over.

This is not a pleasant environment to be in. In terms climate, I am feeling like this is very detrimental to my well-being. But the more powerful thing though is the indirect affects of this.

What is this context that you're living in doing, what are these cultural norms, you know, around we have no decision control, we're not allowed to have any input into problems or things that we experience on our job.

We have no mechanisms to be able to say hey here's a problem in your organization that affects my ability to do my work, please help me with that or here's some suggestions on how to change that. All of those type things.

If they don't exist you start to see these indirect affects where you've really individually start to feel a loss of autonomy and control. There's no real sense of purpose to you.

You're here to help clients and yet everything around you is pushing you away from that and you also see it in organizational systems that reinforce kind of ineffectual cultural norms.

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For instance, you may have a discipline system that when a problem does occur and not a intended problem that was created but lets say that you are really trying to do a good job with clients, it doesn't work out a mistake is made.

The reaction to that and the discipline system around that of the organization starts to really demonstrate to you what are really the norms of how this place operates and what's really rewarded. And so all of these issues start to come in play and start to indirectly affect that turnover as well.

So what do you do about it? you know, we do two to three year interventions within organizations have been highly successful in changing that organization social context to make it a much more learning environment, a much more positive environment where you see much more organizational commitment, you see much more job satisfaction, you see much less turnover.

You'll see the improvements in the well being of the clients. You'll see staff be much happier, much more involved with what their doing in the organizations. And you'll see the organization function much better. But how do you get to that.

One of the things we've identified over the years is all the top tier organizations we see across this country is that leadership does a really good job of embedding five principles in what they do. And these are five principles that are backed up by empirical data.

If you look at organizational research there are principles all over the place. Very few of them have data backing them up to say that these are legitimate, the data really suggest these are important.

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I don't have time to go through all of these. I'm going to briefly describe each one and then I'm going to focus on one specifically because I think it's very critical for turnover.

First is mission driven, which is really staying focused on the business that you're doing which is well-being of the clients and that is really all actions and decisions contribute to the well-being of clients.

I think everybody that's in leadership roles understand that is not easy to do. Everybody believes it, everybody says yes that's what we're absolutely about.

But when you have all of the funders asking for things and doing all these other type of demands being placed on folks it's very difficult to do.

Results oriented really the counter to - part to that is being process oriented. Are you paying attention to the end results for the clients or are you just doing head counts? Are you paying attention to data and driving what you're doing? That's all part of creating that adaptive environment where people can continually learn.

Improvement directed is exactly what it sounds like. There are some organizations that have cultural norms in place and they have a climate where it is comfortable, it is safe and it is easy and there are processes in place to talk about problems that exist and challenges that they face and mechanisms to get through those.

Relationships centered, that really gets to an issue I was listening to earlier when this began, which is how do we get the whole network of people involved in this that need to be involved to be highly effective.

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So, in a sense relationships centered not only means that at a client level you have everybody on the same page and everybody involved that's involved with that client's life.

That means that in the works setting all the individuals in the work setting, all the programs within an organization, all of the different support departments really work together well so that you can be most effective at what you're doing.

But it also means that when you reach out to other stakeholders and you're working with other community agencies that that relationship centered and that kind of network is there as well.

The one I really want to focus on participatory based, we know from 15 to 20 years of working in organizations that the key to really bringing organizations out from being a worst organization where they had the poor culture and climate is to get the front line involved.

And get all levels of the organization listening to them and putting processes in place so that they're able to be heard. And so that they can start to take on challenges and look at some of the barriers that exist.

Well that's hard and it takes a lot of things to make that happen. One of them is exactly, I think, what Eric is talking about is an adaptive leadership style. When we talk about leadership we talk about embedding really deeply held beliefs within leaders that will make them be able to have an adaptive environment.

For instance, if you want to be highly participatory based, then you better have the thought in your mind that all of your staff really want to do a good job. And most people say well of course that's what I believe. That's not what we see in organizations that are functioning poorly.

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People really start to believe that these front line staff if we don't watch them every moment of the day and control everything that they're doing, they're really kind of lazy and they don't want to do a good job and it becomes self fulfilling.

If you have those type of beliefs you start to behave in ways that are very top down, very bureaucratic, very centralized, very formalized. All of those kind of authority based ways where it starts to feed on itself and sure enough after a while you do have staff that don't care, that don't want to do a good job.

So you have to get to these deep belief and one of the biggest separating ones we see is whether or not leaders believe in their frontline that they want to do a good job or whether they see them as people that they have to monitor and track and watch all the time to assure that they do a good job.

You'll also see that reflected in organizational systems. Let's go back to participatory based. So I have a discipline system in a worst organization where somebody may say well intended they didn't mean to have problems occur but they're well intended trying to serve clients well and they create a problem, something blows up.

In the worst organization they get hugely punished for that. They get written up for it and now they're on the trend to maybe losing their job.

First step down that path and the whole discipline system is oriented towards you're going to pay for this. We're going to look back and you better fix this.

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Now nobody's helped them fix it, nobody's talked to them about what to do. Contrast that with a very top tier organization I would see is they would see that as opportunity for growth; not only for that individual but for even the broader team or organization itself.

It doesn't mean that they let, you know, intentional mistakes go without some form of discipline but they really have a productive developmental kind of belief system.

And so it affects these systems and these systems really, in a sense, kind of show you that social culture that you're living in or that social context that you're living in.

Organizational processes and skills, when I think about turnover and the issues one of the suggestions I would make to everyone if you're dealing with turnover is start to listen to the front line staff.

And get a continuous team improvement process of some kind in place that allows your front line to get information and suggestions up to managers and leaders of the organization, because they have to be involved as well.

But they need to listen to the front line who are experiencing the problems. Help them let you, in a sense, get information from them that will help the organization get better with turnover.

Now the last thing you'll see on this slide and my last suggestion to folks is a construct that comes from a woman named Amy Edmonson at Harvard and you could look this up.

She did a lot of research around psych safety. it's not a new construct it was around in the 40s or 50s but it really gets at how do you create an environment within the work setting that you're in

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where folks feel psychologically safe to talk about their own personal deficits as well as organizational barriers and problems that they experience.

That is a hard thing to do but I think if you look at some of Amy's materials and think through some of those you'll start to realize, if I really want my program, I really want my organization to be more adaptive, to be in that zone where we feel some tension but yet we know we can make change is how do you have to act as a leader to create that psychological safety so that they show up at your door and when they make a mistake they stay to you I don't have the skill to work with this particular client or this problem, I need help. Can you help me?

And broader that they're able to come to the program and the team and say I believe that this type of communication barrier or this type of assessment process we use in our organization or that some of the leadership behavior that's occurring in this organization is actually working against us. How do we approach that and deal with it?

If you can create that safety so that they're able to talk about those issues and put processes in places so that they can deal with that you can very specifically have them at a front line level help the whole organization talk about what is the turnover problem, what are the barriers and what would you guys suggest that we try to do to make this better?

So I'll turn it back over to Christy.

Christy Stanton: Thank you so much Tony and thank you Eric as well for your thoughtful perspectives on this topic.

Right now we'd love to hear from you the audience, so I asked Maria who is staffing the chat box to share a question with us which Tony and then Eric can respond to, Maria?

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Maria Gehl: Hi everyone, we've actually had a few questions come in during the pre- registration request for questions and basically the participants were asking how do you retain staff when the pay scale of home visitors is low and really significant pay scale adjustments are not an option?

Tony Hemmelgarn: Eric you want me to go first?

Eric Martin: Yes Tony if you could just take maybe one minute or so and then we'll use the time remaining to turn back to Janet and Arlene.

Tony Hemmelgarn: Oh, I'm sorry Eric. Go ahead and let Janet and Arlene respond if they'd like.

Eric Martin: Oh, no, no, please Tony. You - why don't you take a crack at it...

Tony Hemmelgarn: First I would say this, one, if you have a very strong culture and climate it can overcome a lot of the kind of financial concerns. What I often see is folks - one of the first targets they look at and if there's not as positive a climate culture is kind of salary, we need to get paid more and we'll do a better job. If they're not making comparable wages to other programs around them that are doing the same thing there is an inequity and that will cause problems.

But what the research shows and what we know is as long as its equitable pay - sorry - to other programs in the area is that it's really more about making sure they have input autonomy and control into what they're doing. And under those conditions that they feel a lot of that is that you'll see a lot of the pay problems kind of disappear.

Eric Martin: Yes and I'll build on that Tony. I think that's - this is a - salary it comes up often obviously and it's a form of protection to use that language that I used a moment ago.

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A form of protection and it's a big question that needs to be address. And obviously since it involves in this case the inability to provide protection to people in the way that they want it poses a leadership challenge.

Now, you know, and I think that Tony is saying, people are connected to purpose if they're excited about the work they're doing, if they're involved. You know, these are huge motivational contributors to retention.

And we all know Mother Theresa didn't have her retention challenged but there's a lot of validity in this notion of purpose and being connected to that.

At the same time, if from a leadership angle I would suggest that sometimes you just have to acknowledge the hard truth. You're in a small town and you can't change the way the thing is funded and so being able to talk about it and still be creative even in that - despite the constant is critical.

But, again, the question is, what is the problem you're trying to solve? And Janet if we have time later on you might share your story with the juvenile justice facilities as the kind of seed for our discussion that will come later on.

But this is change work. It's not surprising that you can't find the right people. The system was not set up in a way that honors and supports the value of home visits, right.

So, to the point earlier on, this is not about running a program. It's not about getting a program off the ground. It's really about changing the nature of the system in how people are compensated, how they're retained, that is the work. It's not just an obstacle to overcome.

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And if you don't do it now and if you don't do it during the process of creating these great programs then chances are when the funding runs dry, when the attention is no longer on it that these programs you've nurtured will go back to what they were before they were drafted.

Christy Stanton: Thank you Eric and Tony for your response to that question.

We're pleased to introduce two additional guests on the webinar today who will add to the discussion that Eric and Tony kicked off.

First of all we have Janet Horras from the State of Iowa. And Janet has over 25 years of experience in the family support field. She has been employed by the State of Iowa since 1999 and she currently works for the Iowa Department of Public Health in the Bureau of Family Health as the state home visitation program director.

She previously worked for the Iowa Department of Management in the Early Childhood Iowa Office as the family support coordinator and the Iowa Department of Human Rights in the Division of Community Action Agencies.

Janet also has ten years of experience administering a variety of family support program models at the community level. She began her career as a home visitor, which provides her with a deep understanding of the complexities of family support services.

Janet has a BA degree in human services and has completed additional graduate studies. She's also earned the certified community action professional designation and is a certified family development specialist.

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Together Janet and her husband have eight children, ranging in age from 32 to 15 and they've also been blessed with six grandsons all under the age of seven.

And right before this call Janet informed us that she now has a seventh grandson to add to that troop, so congratulations to her and her family.

After we hear from Janet, we will be hearing from Arlene McAtee. Arlene has worked in several leadership capacities for Mid-Iowa Communication Action, MICA, for the past 36 years.

She currently serves as the executive director of the agency and has done so for 10 years. MICA is an agency with an annual budget of \$13 million dollars and a staff of 240. While Arlene has provided leadership to a number of MICA's departments over the years.

She's also been a key architect and led many of MICA's national research project, including the HHS Comprehensive Child Development program, the HHS Head Start Transition program, the SAMSA Strengthening Families project and MICA's 21st Century Learning Center and AmeriCorps projects.

Arlene was also the leader in designing and implementing the comprehensive model for assisting families to exit poverty, known nationally as the Family Development Approach.

She is the author of "Family Development, Empowering Families to Move out of Poverty". We're thrilled to have both Janet and Arlene and I will turn the floor over to Janet.

Operator: This is the operator, her line has disconnected at this time.

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Christy Stanton: Oh, shoot. I'm sure she'll be calling right back in and I wonder Arlene would you be willing to proceed with yours talking about some of your experience at MICA.

Arlene McAtee: I'd be happy to do that. I am going to talk about what we've done in the area of staff retention and it really relates well to what both Tony and Eric had talked about with regarding culture, climate, leadership and disequilibrium.

First of all I'd like to say that one of the things we devoted ourselves to when we were experiencing a turnover of over 25% a year, so we've been there, done that, was to engage in our entire leadership in studying our turnover patterns.

We wanted to understand where we were losing people, what positions, what locations, what teams, when and for what reason. And that provided us with a lot of data about where we were losing people and when we lost them.

But we also did extensive exit interviews with anyone who was willing to do them with us so that we can find out what the story was behind the data.

One of the things we learned from that process by talking to people when they left and being very open and not be pensive is to learn exactly what our strengths were that we wanted to keep building on and where our weaknesses were was that were losing people most frequently in the first 18 months of their employment, that was our highest rate of turnover

If we could keep them through that year and a half that we were highly likely to keep them for many years beyond that. That led us to thinking about how do we plan for individual growth and development so that people get into our organization, grasp the culture, grasp - develop that

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sense of well-being and understand that this is not going to be your kind of typical work environment here at MICA.

That meant that we had to do some better hiring than we've done in the past. Not just look for that one body but really take our time to get to know the people who were applying for the job. And not to soft sell them on the difficulty and ambiguity that was going to come along with the kinds of work we were asking them to do.

So that we could give them a very honest appraisal of the environment that they were going to find themselves in. Not to settle for anyone. If we didn't find the right person we would go back out and re-advertise.

We also asked our people at the very top of the departments to be engaged with their teams on the hiring process to make sure that they were providing oversight to finding the highest quality person.

One of the other things we did was identify the people who were best at the hiring process and create hiring teams within the departments and did the interviewing. And that has really changed our turnover. That in and of itself made a huge difference in who we were bringing into the organization.

From there we want to make sure that we're deliberate, thoughtful and systematic about providing orientation to people. We have a checklist; we make sure people are understanding the basic requirements of their job.

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That they are mentored, that they get to observe others doing that work so that they don't just come through the door and then they're asked to do this rather unique kind of emotional labor that's engaged with families that you're - where, you're trying to work with families toward change.

An ongoing tool we have for all of our staff then to make sure that that support and learning continues is our professional development planning. Each quarter, every person in the agency, writes up what they think they have to do over the next three months with regard to compliance.

Also then they look at their work and think about what improvements and innovations do they want to make in their work, what training and development do they need to get better at that work and what support are they going to need from their team leader in order to accomplish that.

And then there is a monthly meeting one on one with the team leader and every staff person in the organization, no matter what their job is, will have ongoing discussions that takes place regarding that person's development towards the best performance they can possibly achieve.

And now we have become more and more results and outcome oriented in that discussion so that the exploration is about how are we changing lives, what's working, what not working and what do we think will be leading us forward to higher and better outcomes.

It's ongoing coaching and mentoring of our staff. Then we have a climate and a culture of teamwork and support. Every team - geographical team - which may have people working on different kinds of grants engages in regular team meeting where they problem solve, share information, learn more about the organization, talk about the community.

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There are staff meetings where they focus specifically on the families and their caseloads and those happen months, as well. They work on joint projects and they plan for the improvement of the team's overall performance together.

I think this is really important because in this work we find that when staff members are in their exit interviews and they're leaving one of the top, top reasons that they stay as long as they do is because they value the team members that they worked with.

So that can be a real prime fringe benefit that you could offer when salaries are not as high as you would like them to be is to create both meaningful work and meaningful work that you get to do with others you respect.

On top of all this we know that we need very strong leaders to make all this happen in a consistent and effective fashion.

But like many organizations, a lot of our team leaders are practitioners who were good at what they did and then get promoted although they've never really studied leadership, they never even intended to perhaps find themselves in that position.

So we do a very deliberate process of helping practitioners become just as effective leaders as they were in performing their work with families. We have new leader orientation.

We have team leader trainings where they get to get together with the other leaders of the organization, share information, get some skill building and some knowledge enhancement and receive support from one another.

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So again, they model amongst themselves that sort of teamwork that we want them to take back then to their site teams that they are going to be working with.

So we tried to put together a whole package here, you know, where we're looking horizontally and vertically throughout the organization at providing the support people need, removing enough of the tension and stress that they can perform the functions of their job without that - without worry.

But also at the same time knowing that we're never as good as we could be in keeping a disequilibrium that they can continue to work towards improvement over time.

So that's a quick overview of the kind of things that we've put into place. We're strong believers in the notion that a structure that's consistent can allow for spontaneity. And spontaneity is where we find our folks are able to put their creativity to work for the better outcomes of the families they serve.

And...

Christy Stanton: Thanks...

Arlene McAtee: ...we'll see if Janet's back on now.

Christy Stanton: She is and thank you Arlene. I know we'll be interested in hearing more about your experiences in the open discussion. And I believe that's Janet's first slide and we'll turn it over to her. Thanks for being with us Janet.

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Janet Horras: Yes, I'm so glad to be with you and I'm glad it all worked out. Now it may seem strange to have the person that's in the state leader role hire staff because I don't hire the home visitors in the ((inaudible)) program. What I can do is I can help set a tone ((inaudible)) for we'll all work together. And that does start at the staff ((inaudible)).

Eric Martin: Janet I don't know if you can hear us, this Eric speaking but you're breaking up and I think we just lost you.

Christy Stanton: Yes, I think so too Janet. Do you mind calling back in one more time? And...

Janet Horras: ((inaudible)) I can hear you just fine. What I may do - I'll try calling back, okay.

Eric Martin: Janet actually you sound okay now.

Christy Stanton: Yes, that's better.

Janet Horras: That's better, okay...

Eric Martin: Yes.

Janet Horras: Okay well I'll keep trying. You tell me if it's not working, we'll ((inaudible)). One of the things a state leader do is monitor or ((inaudible)) challenges and ((inaudible)) and you know you first need to seek to understand that there are always two sides to every story and you may hear some ((inaudible)) from the state office...

Eric Martin: Janet, I'm sorry, we're losing you again. Do you mind trying to call back in?

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Janet Horras: Okay, I will try. I'm not sure it's going to work though.

Eric Martin: Thank you.

Christy Stanton: I wonder if while we're waiting for Janet we can consider the question Tony that came in from the chat box and that is - let me see if I can find it, it was an interesting one that Maria provided to us.

And hold on, it says - and this might be something Arlene could talk about.

How do you retain staff when the funding climate changes dramatically and quickly and the concentration in the short term needs to focus on a change in production or expectations or documentation?

Can you talk about any of your experiences when you've encountered changes like that Arlene and how you've managed to continue to provide an environment that feels supportive to your staff?

Arlene McAtee: Well, I think part of what was discussed earlier in the presentation is that, you know, a real key to that is that the leaders maintain a great deal of honesty and transparency with people about what's going on.

I think often times as leaders we think we have to bear the burden of these dramatic changes and people then don't understand clearly why some of the decisions that are coming at them are happening. And that creates even greater fear and perhaps a dysfunctional disequilibrium as we talked about earlier.

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I think one of the things leaders need to do in those environments is share their knowledge about what's happening and why it's happening with the team. And allow the team to be engaged in looking at how we all can handle this and not make this something that becomes the leader only sort of responsibility.

I think the more people can know about what's going on in the larger political environment, in the funding environment, in the regulatory environment, in which they work, the more understanding they are.

And then they are prepared with knowledge, skills and attitudes to engage in problem solving around that. So I think, you know, one of the things that you have to do is just make sure that people understand what the environment really is. So that they can participate in finding solutions to what's going on.

If they participate in finding those solutions they're going to feel some ownership for that. They're also going to understand what they can and cannot control and change and that is always very helpful too. So those are - that's one of the basic ideas is just not to - engage people in solving the process that those sorts of environments create.

Christy Stanton: Great, thank you Arlene. Anything to add to that Eric and Tony? And then once you've had a chance to add any pieces to Arlene's response perhaps Eric you could just take the open discussion from here. And if Janet can join us that'll be terrific.

Eric Martin: That sounds great.

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Tony Hemmelgarn: Eric I'll make a quick comment. Absolutely, what she said is probably the factor to really do which is openness but it's very difficult because leadership is very concerned that we open it up and tell them what kind of shape we're in they're just going to flood out.

But it takes a while to have the trust in those processes that the front line, you know, are big girls and big boys. They're adults, they can handle it. They can help solve those problems. Getting them involved, as she described is critical.

I think we often underestimate, you know, just how much potential the front line staff have to help work through these problems and it is clearly the case that if you allow to be a part of it it will be much more invested in helping to solve and work through that issue.

Eric Martin: Thank you Tony and I'll just - I'll add to that too. I think Arlene the example you've given both around how you dealt with the turnover situation and how you dealt with this kind of dramatic funding change question that's come up are really great examples again of leadership and authority, let's focus on the latter one first.

What you've said is sometimes, you know, we feel like we need to take on responsibility for addressing the problem ourselves. And when people don't feel like they know what's happening that does create issues around retention and morale that Tony's talked about.

And so this idea that it's not only leader responsible for helping people face that external threat is really critical and that's an act of leadership. But then you go on to say, I think quite appropriately, that there is some sense making you can do for folks. There is some protection you can afford them using your technical expertise by looking at the larger political funding in regulatory environment.

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And so the more clarity you can give people around that, the more they're able to make their own choices. So, again, a good example of using your technical expertise to provide some structure, some clarity where this is clarity to be had but not overstepping that line where you're just making things up.

And as we know, folks in authority often make things up just because the pressure on them to have the answers and tell people it'll be okay is immense and it's sounds like you've done a terrific job of actually holding back that pressure.

Arlene McAtee: I just want to add that, you know, if you're working - and I think we are today in the world of human services - in a very unpredictable time. Policies are changing, gridlock prohibits movement on issues and polices that are important to us. all of those things are coming together to make this, I think, one of the most difficult periods of the 36 years I've been in this field.

But I think on the front end as you're interviewing people and hiring people even that they don't want to, you know, scare them away. But if you can help people understand the nature of the funding of the position, the nature of the political environment and those sorts of things as people come in so it doesn't also take them by surprise.

You know, we let people know that, you know, we've been around for nearly 50 years and we have people who've worked here for very long periods of time. On the other hand there's never any guarantees here.

Every year we're out raising the money to run the organization and I think if people know from the beginning the context for this work. You know, and then that also might empower them to maybe pay a little attention to what's going on in the political environment and understand that it is

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important for them to have a voice in those - in that arena as well because it does affect the people they serve and it could affect them.

Tony Hemmelgarn: I'm going to add one more quick thing too to follow on that which is take that opportunity if you can figure out the mechanism and be able to talk to the front line staff about the problem. they clearly will be a part of the solution but a part of that solution is always productivity and getting more money in too if you let them be a part of that figuring out how it will be done and making it transparent that without doing that you know there will be positions cut they will very strongly come on board to help solve the problem. And that's a very powerful thing to have happen.

Eric Martin: Arlene as I hear you talk - and Janet I'm going to try to loop you in in a moment given the technical difficulties - when I hear you talk there's a theme here that I'm hearing at least around how you are actually in some ways changing the system, changing your own organization while stepping back studying turnover patterns. I don't know if that was something you had done in the past as a best practice or something new that - new you developed to a problem you hadn't faced before.

But that's an example I think, taking time to hear people, to prepare people for the nature of this work. It's another good example of something you've done and now you talked about building capacity in growing a deeper alliance read the political and regulatory environment. Wow, that's beautiful, right? Building leadership capacity, diagnostic capacity; deepening your organization. So wonderful examples of changing the organization again as I hear it in response to this adaptive challenge that you face. And we should all think about what we could be doing in our own organizations.

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I'm curious though and Janet, again, feel free to step in here if you have a thought on this, how do you help other organizations do that? The leadership as we think about it is a behavior; it's not a position or a title. It's something you can exercise; anyone could exercise no matter where they are within an organization or even outside an organization.

So if you engage with other stakeholders, other partners in the community in the states and elsewhere how - what have you found to be an effective way of helping them engage in their own adaptive work and developing leadership in a way that sounds like you've been able to do in Iowa?

So Janet why don't we turn to you if you're on and maybe you can speak to that from a state angle and then...

Janet Horras: Sure.

Eric Martin: ...Arlene if you can come in. Yes.

Janet Horras: Sure, I'm hoping that you all can hear me better now.

Eric Martin: Yes, we can hear you just fine. Thank you.

Janet Horras: Thank you, great, great. Well I would say it's a challenge within state government to empower other state departments to model that same behavior of, you know, taking; being more empowered, taking control of your future.

And it's a different way of doing business in most state departments as operated within. And so that's very difficult to change that culture and state government. I mean, it does happen. It

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happens slowly. If you challenge with things like why does it have to be this way. If this doesn't work well for staff can it be done a different way?

And, you know, helping people really just kind of think through some of those barriers that we put up that prevent best practice from happening out in the field.

Eric Martin: Thank you Janet and Arlene anything in response to that question. As I understand it, you have a very clear mission, right, and a clear focus of this program and yet you need others to kind of, you know, play their part as well.

So what have you found to be an effective way of intervening and engaging them?

Arlene McAtee: You know, we've been doing a lot of looking into the collective impact models that are out there right now that have come out of the community schools and some other arenas.

And, you know, we have a highly collaborative community and I think that's because we model kind of same things I was talking about that would go on internally with our community members, which is to bring them together, to recognize what they have to offer to the problem solving process. To provide lots of data, to provide the story behind the data and then, you know, people want to, you know, what we found is people want to ask. But, you know, trying to get people educated about how we choose evidence based and evidence informed practices, how we can do that together.

I mean, it does require some - a defend kind of skill I think and I think Janet was alluding to that. You don't have authority per se to exercise there. What you have to do is be a convener and a facilitator. you have to make sure your partner's needs are being heard if not addressed and

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when you think of solutions you're thing of how we can all work together for the better good of families and you keep that mission in front of you as you work on that.

And we found that that does allows us to actually attract more resources to our community that we all are able to benefit from when we are able to set up this sort of more collaborative collective impact model that we are able to put together and use here.

Eric Martin: It sounds like you both have found ways to keep people's attention, both your own people but also people in other organizations to keep their attention focused on the home visiting programs sufficiently enough to move forward.

And this is amidst all of the economic and political pressures talked about as well as the day to day. As I said earlier, these systems are not set up to naturally focus on what you're asking them to focus on.

What is - as you think about the - this work or this challenge of keeping people focused on the challenge, what have you found to be the biggest competing pressure and what else is grabbing people's action other than home visiting that you constantly find yourself coming up against and having to perhaps refrain the problem or otherwise engaging or stay focused?

Janet Horras: Now Arlene may have a different perspective on this but I know one of the things that we hear about are infrastructure projects - roads, bridges, you know, things that we all need. and or sometimes it's senior citizens and, you know, it's not a - it - you don't want to set yourself up as it's one or the other. You know, we need all of those things.

And I think, you know, as much as we've tried really hard in Iowa to keep home visiting politically neutral. It isn't a Democratic project, it's not a Republican project.

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It's something that we all care about in Iowa. You know, they're all our kids and, you know, we value our children. And so, we try very hard to keep it not a political, you know, attached to any one political party.

Arlene McAtee: I don't know that I'm going to follow the same vein as that as all but I find that, you know, our - one of our biggest challenges is to keep the people we have in the field focused on the families they're serving and the outcomes and the results and the changes that are occurring there.

And whether we're getting there or not and what we need to change because there's such pressure, I think, on all of us to sort of - to ease our way back to the technical aspect of this work, to be focused. I mean, it comes from every direction.

Be focused on the compliance, be focused on the numbers, be focused on the paperwork, you know. It can't hardly be avoided in a project like MIECHV where it's a research project. You have to document so many things so how do you find that balance with folks.

You have to carve out real time that's spent talking on the other issues. Whatever you're going to focus on that's what's going to grow and if you focus on the compliance and the paperwork that will grow. If you focus on how are things going with families, where do we see ourselves having leverage points, what are families asking from us. What are - what do you different, you know, just aggregating the data and talking about what different kinds of families need from us?

You know, if you make that your conversational agenda than that will grow. But the tension is terrific out there in the field. To get the count, to get the paperwork, to do all the compliance stuff

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and leader to just sort of create some psychological space between eh people doing the work and that requirement that's very real is a challenge.

Eric Martin: Thank you. again, very good examples of putting space, getting on the balcony, as it were, to help people understand what is it that we're really here to do and so we don't get sucked up in the day to day pressures of technical work, which is critical. So let's not minimize it all but what I think we all recognize it's not going to get us where we need to go.

So, I want to just shift it a little bit here and Janet since you didn't have much of a chance to present, if there's anything that you want to bring in based on what you've heard and other things that you think my be useful to move the conversation forward.

Janet Horras: Really my message was about how the state office can help set that tone and those expectations and, you know, really be open to hearing criticism and recognize if there are barrier that you're putting in place that are keeping people from doing their work, you want to have those lines of communication open so that you'll hear that, because we need to hear that.

You can become very isolated in a state office and it is critically important to get out into the field to build those relationships and in some ways have a parallel process to the relationship that we want for the home visitor to have for the families they're serving.

One that there is communication going back and forth and that's real approachable, and that will be value to the work that's happening at the local level. I know Arlene's talked a lot about how important that work is and how important it is to keep the home visitors, you know, focused on that work. And I know at the same time I'm probably saying what's your capacity today because there's pressure to make sure we're at capacity.

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And it's a balance act to make sure that that isn't what's the most important thing that's happening and to balance that level of accountability with also being very much a strengths based technical assistance it is sometimes very difficult. And I know that we have that same type of partnership at the federal level as well. And to create an environment where people feel like they can take a risk and we don't want to have it so rigid and so focused on this is what we have to do today that we don't allow that freedom for home visitors and for organizations to take some risks and learn some new things.

And one of the things we try to focus on with MIECHV is this is such an exciting time in home visitation. This is our chance, this is our opportunity to try new and different things and learn from those. There are no mistakes because if something does work quite the way we intended we will learn from that and that will help us be better in the future.

But that's really the context that I think it's the state office's responsibility is to help set and then for folks like Arlene then to reinforced that back in their organization and even expand upon that because they have those day to day relationships with those home visitors.

Eric Martin: And I think the risk taking, you know, piece is really important and the courage it takes to do that. I'm sure some people on this call in their own institutions are probably wondering themselves how much courage or risk should they take on behalf of this program and what they believe in and also the other things they're trying to accomplish in their own professional careers.

And one of the things we know about adaptation is that there's no reason to take a reason unless there's a purpose behind here. And we've talked a bit about purpose but we also know that risk taking creates disequilibrium. And so it's a real risk with tangible implications.

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I'm curious, what are ways that you've found to create a situation where people can take more risks. And I'm thinking about the culture and climate work that Tony presented as well. But how do you help increase people's capacity for risk taking and learning from that risk taking.

Janet Horras: I think, you know, if you're the person that who have the contract, which our contractors we have a contract with the Department of Public Health is saying and saying it meaningful that it's the truth, this is our time to take some risks and we want to learn from that. and, you know, creating a form even to exchange, you know, information about best practices and what we're learning and reinforcing that over and over again that it's okay. I think that that makes a big difference.

I know it made a difference for me when I heard Dr. Willis, who's the federal home visitation director; say we expect you to take risks. And I remember feeling this sense of relief thinking thank goodness I heard that because I feel like we're taking a lot of risks.

And, you know, this isn't business as usual, this is a new day and this is our opportunity and I just feel like if we don't do this we're missing something big. We're missing such a wonderful opportunity to be able to take those risks.

But I think making sure that people know it's okay and sharing when you've made mistakes and what you've learned from those and so that home visitors hear that and contractors hear that. That you know, we take our fair share of risks as well and we've made some mistakes and we share when we've made those mistakes and what we've learned from them.

Eric Martin: Arlene anything you would add on the topic of risk taking?

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Arlene McAtee: Well, I think that if you can create team environments and they can work together than can allow - you know, and what Janet said is absolutely crucial. People have to know that risk is something that is welcomed. Taking risk is something that's welcomed and that there is no failure as long as learn. Let's evaluate them as we go along how things are going and we'll do this together.

And one of the things we've done and I'm probably not going to even pronounce this right is to allow time in team meetings for people to take problems and take their computers, there's a model called "Sugata Mitra" that they use with children in third world countries that shows that they can learn to solve almost any problem in a period of time if you give them access to the information that they to solve that problem.

And we've sort of been trying to do that with our teams is just give them a problem, tell them they can do what they need to do to solve it. Inform yourself as well as you can and then come up with a solution that you want to try and then go do it.

And then they're not in that alone, they can work on that together and there's a shared risk. Although to some degree I would say that when you say we're going to support you as you take these risks, in a way you reduce the risk.

So...

Eric Martin: Right. Right.

Arlene McAtee: ... So, maybe there's that sort of redundancy in what I'm trying to even say here but it think that you can actually structure it so people can learn to step out a little further towards the edge than they have before. And then if you make sure as that unfolds that there aren't - you

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really have to be careful that there aren't too many repercussions for them. And that you're helping them to do that with wisdom but also with support, I think that people can learn to do more and more of it.

Eric Martin: Yes, and we are all so in tuned to watching our authority figures for clues so the program officer, Janet, that you've mentioned who said that so that you are hyper tuned to hearing what their expectations are and also what their concerns are in recognizing that others are looking at us in that same way that everything we do or say can be taken as an edit by folks is an important self-awareness skill to build.

I'm curious, Tony, from your perspective in looking at the research as we talk about risks is this is a kind of linear thing or does this impact climate and culture in ways we need to anticipate?

Tony Hemmelgarn: Well, I think – you know when I listened to you call it risk or whatever, what I know, Eric, is that when you create the environment that's being described here where the leadership is modeling to the front line staff that hey, we want you to think about these problems, it's okay to talk about them, it's okay to talk about these challenges, it's okay to talk about areas of difficulty, we're okay with that. We're not going to punish you for that, we're not going to harm you for that. In fact, here are some processes or techniques that we're going to let you use to do this, is that the thing that we're very much risk in other organizational settings in their organizational settings are not really perceived as much as risk anymore.

And so it is risk-taking behavior when you look at it from the outside. There are trying new things that other organizations are not trying. But the reality is they're not experiencing a perception of risk and danger that I think they see in some of the other organizations.

Eric Martin: Thank you, Tony.

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Eric Martin: And so, as I hear you guys talk, Arlene and Janet in particular, it occurs to me that this work and leadership is both partly inspiration; having the vision and the clarity and everything we talked about there, but it is also really hard work, the perspiration as well.

And I'm just curious from your perspectives if you don't mind reflecting how do you hold steady in this? What are the structures you've put in place for yourself or for the relationships? How do you connect to your own purpose in the meeting? Just give us a sense amidst all of the ambiguity and push back and resistance even that you receive from folks what is some techniques that you've found useful for yourselves to hold steady and keeping yourselves in that protective zone of disequilibrium?

Janet Horras: This is Janet again. You need to have people you can talk to and for me I have a nice cadre of other state leaders in Regions VII and VIII and we're lucky that we have project officers that have encouraged and facilitated our ability to get together and talk. And that's really helpful when you have somebody that is in a like-position to be able to share some of your frustrations, your fears, concerns, etc.

But I also think, and Arlene taught me this a long time ago is, when you give a lot to your job, and in this type of your work you do you've got to keep your cup filled so when you're constantly giving to others you'd better make sure you're refilling at different times so taking vacation, keeping perspective and I always include the piece about how many children and grandchildren I have because that really does help me keep perspective.

Work will continue long after I'm gone and my family will remember the things that I did for them long after people at work would remember those things. So, keeping the perspective it is a job and I feel very very called to the do job, but it is a job.

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Eric Martin: That is a very helpful reminder, Janet. Arlene, how do you keep steady?

Arlene McAtee: I do have things I love to do outside of work and I make sure I have a chance to pursue those things. So, like Janet pointed out it is that work-life balance I think is crucial if you're going to be able to model all of this. And in the environment we're working in right now especially you have to have things in your life that give you pleasure that fill you up as she talked about.

Janet Horras: The other thing that helps me is I read an article, I wish I could say who wrote it or whatever but they said as a leader one of the things that can really help is if you can carve out some time every day to think about the future, you know some days are like you're being attacked to death by a hundred chickens, I swear. But you know if you have a little quiet time, time by yourself to think about where you want to go and what you want to do and do that every day that that helps to keep you centered as you go through what's required of you in other ways. It helps you to remember what you're about, what the organization is about and what you think is possible. And I think that that's what gives me the energy needed to go on and work through the little things and the all of the energy needed for the really big things.

Eric Martin: Perfect and so I think you're reminding us of three or four things here which if I can just quickly articulate them before turning it back to Christy.

And the first is to find partners, don't do this work alone. You talked a lot about how you've engaged folks in the organization and outside. And these are people who will share the risk, who will share the work, believe in the cause and will share the difficulty with you when it comes.

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I think the second thing I hear you talking about is finding what I would think of is a confidant. This is someone who cares more about you than the work. You know, it's grandchildren, it's friends, it's people that no matter what happens will be with you.

And I think the mistake people often make is they will make their confidant their partners. You know, they'll confide to someone in the workplace and then there's a reorg or something else happens and this person has information about you that you wish they would forget and it's just not realistic to ask them to forget. So having confidants in partners but finding the appropriate place for that I think is really critical.

And Arlene I hear you talking about what I think of as this idea of finding a sanctuary. It's finding a moment each day, just when all of the noise stops to let your mind quiet, just let all the pressures that are on you in whatever form that takes, meditation, prayer, jogging, retreats or what have you.

And I think we all know that organizations are much better at getting from you what they want, not giving to you what you need to stay strong. I really appreciate you mentioning all three of those things.

And I think, of course, the obvious one is just staying well. You can't be available to people, you can't be helpful if you're not taking care of yourself and getting the appropriate fluid and sleep and what have you. So thank you for that. I think it really brings a human touch to the work that you guys do, which is inherently human.

So with that I'll turn it back to Christy and Christy let us know if you need anything from us, otherwise the floor is yours.

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Christy Stanton: Great, thank you so much Eric, Dr. Hemmelgarn, Janet and Arlene and thank you to those listening for a very provocative and stimulating discussion. I think there's still much discussion to be had but we've reached the end of our time together today.

Please be reminded of the objectives for today's webinar. Tomorrow you will receive an email from Tenna Valado of Walter McDonald and Associates that will contain a Survey Monkey link. Please click on that link and let us know how well the learning objectives were met today. Your input helps us to design future webinars and to be responsive to your needs and interests.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete that feedback form.

Please also keep an eye out for the TACC newsletter. The June MIECHV TACC newsletter went out a few days ago and July's edition will include follow up to many of your questions today.

Please also watch for information on the July 23rd and September 24th TACC webinars on Family Recruitment, Engagement and Retention. Mark your calendars and look for forthcoming registration materials.

And finally, for more information and archived copy of this webinar please visit the MIECHV TACC website. The archived copies of this webinar will be available as soon as all materials have been processed to meet 508 compliance quality assurance standards.

Thank you for joining us today and have a wonderful rest of your day.

Operator: And that does conclude today's conference. We do thank you for your participation.

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