

Ohio Child Welfare Practice Profiles  
Module 8 - Advocating

(Lindsay Williams)

The Ohio Child Welfare Practice Profile webinar series. I am here today with Sonia Tillman, Tequilla Washington and Jennifer Alberts, who is joining us remotely. Sonia and I are members of Ohio Statewide CQI Community Subcommittee and we invited Tequilla and Jennifer here with us today to talk about our topic of the day, Advocating. And we would like to go around and each do a small introduction and kind of give you a little bit of our history in child welfare. Sonia, would you like to start?

(Sonia Tillman)

Sure, good morning, everyone. This is Sonia Tillman. I am the Differential Response and Special Projects Manager with ODJFS.

(Tequilla Washington)

Good morning. My name is Tequilla Washington and I have about 20 years of child welfare experience working in both the private sector and the public sector. I have worked in residential as well as worked at Franklin County Children's Services and Greene County Children's Services.

(Lindsay Williams)

Thanks, Tequilla. And we are trying to patch Jennifer in here by phone. Jennifer, if you can hear us, can you please give a little introduction of yourself as well?

(Jennifer Alberts)

Good morning, everyone. I am Jennifer Alberts. Hopefully, everyone can hear me. I am with the Hope and Succeed program in Cuyahoga County.

(Lindsay Williams)

Thanks, Jennifer. Okay. And then as we do, see if I can get my slide to change here, as we do every... during every webinar, for those of you that may be joining us for the first time, we want to give you the resources for Ohio's Practice Profiles guide. This is where you can access the guide. And actually these are currently being revised through our DR leadership council and we are close to having a new version that does include trauma informed care and an 11<sup>th</sup> profile of documenting. Do you want to give us an update on that, Sonia?

(Sonia Tillman)

Well, we have submitted our final revision to communications and we are waiting for the rebranding of the Practice Profiles revisions and also the rebranding so the new document will be shared broadly. We probably will have an electronic version first and so we will send that out to everyone. They will be titled the Ohio Practice Profiles and then once we get print versions just like the other booklets, we will as well make sure that all counties and private entities and courts are able to order those through our Forms Central website.

(Lindsay Williams)

That's so exciting.

(Sonia Tillman)

So we are hoping very soon. I don't want to give a date because I don't know for sure but hopefully very soon. Sometime this fall.

(Lindsay Williams)

Okay. And then we wanted to kind of pause here on the CPS principals of intervention. The last couple of webinars, we have kind of run through these slides but we want to hit on them today in case we have some new folks joining us. So as we have laid out Ohio's Practice Profiles we did that on a series of principals for Child Protective Services interventions. These next two slides kind of highlight those principals. Of course, we want to highlight that safety comes first and we want to emphasize the family engagement and involvement in all aspects of our practice. Kind of that collaboration and we want to focus on family's strengths and use that as the basis for working with families to identify underlying conditions that may contribute to child safety. And that that child's safety is best achieved through the active collaboration and respectful engagement, not only as parents but also as family, community and CPS stakeholders.

(Sonia Tillman)

So you will hear a lot about that today as we talk about advocacy because that is kind of the central focus, advocacy. Making sure that we are achieving collaborative and respectful engagement processes and really making sure that we are all assuring safety.

(Lindsay Williams)

Okay. And then on this slide one of the concepts of the differential responses allowing the alternative response track and the traditional response track is being able to have that flexibility to identify families' needs and work with them to find creative solutions, both formal, informal supports and then, you know, we want to of course always approach those in a strength-based way and give families the opportunity to have a voice in selecting the services that they feel will best meet their needs. And then the final principal, of course, is ensuring safety and sometimes it is necessary for us to involve, you know, the agency, courts, community, extended families to be able to do so.

Alright. So here is our worker skillset. And some of you child welfare professionals out there are very, very familiar with these skillsets, especially if you have been tuning into these webinars every single month. I cannot believe we are in August and month eight of the series already. But I really want to highlight here, especially for those of you that may be hearing this for the first time, is how these profiles are set up in a manner that illustrates our continuous quality improvement or CQI process. So they are not just in random order. We start with that engaging and connecting with the family and then move into assessing their strengths and needs and then move into that partnering process, which is really where you join with the family to begin to have that respectful collaboration to identify, you know, the strengths and needs and begin planning for services. And then of course is implementing those services and then stepping back and evaluating the services that we have implemented to determine if anything needs to meet the

change and then you kind of start that cycle again. As we are moving into month eight and advocating, the last four principals, actually five now that we have documenting on here. So we have, really speak to the profiles that get implemented throughout that CQI cycle. So advocating is something, of course, that a lot of times happens at the beginning as you embark on change but it also kind of continues through each stage of that cycle. So just like we have done last month. We got a lot of positive feedback on doing the polling questions last month and we would like to do some polling questions with you guys again today, so I am going to launch a test question to make sure that function is working for us correctly. So the test question should be launched now. Everybody hopefully is seeing it. It says: which agency best describes the agency where you work? Okay, it looks like it is working. We are collecting responses. So we will give it a couple of more minutes, well I will make it like 30 more seconds, then we will close the poll here. Maybe less than that. Everybody is pretty quick to respond to this one. Almost 80% so far. Okay. I am going to go ahead and close the poll. And then I am going to share the response. Hopefully, everybody can see the response. So it looks like we have about almost 90% of you are from public Children's Services agencies, so that is awesome. Alright. Now I am going to hide the poll and then you should be able to see the screen again. It looks like you can. And so we will move on into the slide. This is our profile of advocating, which is, you know, recognizing the individual or group needs and providing intervention on behalf of either an individual client or client group, but also being able to communicate with those decision makers and other initiating action, and the goal is to secure or enhance a needed service resource or entitlement. A big piece of advocating is actually advocacy work and we wanted to share this quote with you from the National Association of Social Workers, Standards for Social Work Practice and Child Welfare because I think it does a good job of illustrating the advocacy portion. So social workers in the field of child welfare should use a range of skills to advocate for and with the client for policies that promote the welfare of children and Child Protective Services. Advocacy should be directed at improving administration and public policies to support children and their family and such advocacy should move towards empowering children and families in both urban and rural settings. And these system changes can be implemented by making changes not only in direct practice as well as making changes in laws or policies. And the emphasis on systems reform should seek to make child welfare services more responsive to children and their families, their communities and also diverse cultures. So let's try a scaling question. Everyone loves hearing about all the potential uses of scaling questions, right? We seem to do this in every webinar. So I am going to launch another poll. Let's see here. Okay, it should be launched. And the question is: on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being not important at all and 5 being very important, how important do you consider the skill of advocating to be in your daily practice with children and families? Have about half of you that have voted so far. We know the polling is working, that's great. Okay, we are a little over 80%. We will give it another 10 or 15 seconds and close the poll. We are at 83%. And the remaining – oh, we went to 84%. Got a few more folks weighing in. And we are going to go ahead and close the poll. Let's see if we can share the results here. And it looks like we have 85% of you saying that advocacy is very important in your daily work with children and families and another 14% saying it is moderately important, so that is great to hear. And let's see if I am going to hide this, okay, back to our screen. So we are going to start moving into some of our ideal practices for advocating.

(Sonia Tillman)

So it is good to hear that you all feel that it is very important. It is also just as important to make sure that we are doing that on a regular basis. So these next couple of practices are going to highlight how you can advocate for your families and when you should be able to advocate for your families. So the top two was really, really encouraging to accompany your families to their meetings with school, accompany them to their service provider. Definitely if there are government entities that are involved with them, landlord situations, it sometimes helps to have a child protective staff or court staff or case manager there that can be the sounding board to help navigate through systems. Because many times our families don't always have the experience of navigating through our systems and what we know is that our systems can be very complicated. So your role is to really make sure that they are obtaining those services. That we are helping them to assertively request and receive the services that are needed to help them resolve whatever the concern is that has brought them to our attention. Often times that is with their landlord. Sometimes that is with their school, their child's school provider. So you want to make sure that we really are doing that. And that demonstrates our partnership and our commitment so it's printing them and making sure that their circumstances will have a successful outcome. So let's take a minute to just do another quick polling question. Indicate if you rarely or never use advocating with your work with family. If you sometimes use advocating, if it's several times a year, several times a month or several times a week. Or is this something that you do in your day to day practice?

(Lindsay Williams)

So get at the polls yet. Answers are coming in very quickly. And while everybody is weighing in, I just wanted to, also, we forgot kind of at the beginning to let our guests know that we really try to make these webinars conversational and I know especially you, Jennifer, you know as a parent partner for our Hope Program and working with 60 you have a lot of experience kind of on both sides of the child welfare system so I am sure all of the child welfare professionals that tune in every month will probably benefit a lot from hearing about your experiences. Are you still with us, Jennifer? Maybe not...

[inaudible]

(Jennifer Alberts)

I'm here.

(Lindsay Williams)

Yes, yes, yes. I don't know if you heard what we were just talking about. We were just, while everybody is weighing in on the poll, we were just saying how we really like to make these webinars conversational. We think you have a lot to offer and share with child welfare professionals across the state as a Hope parent partner and all your experiences kind of on both sides of the system. Okay, so I think we are at 74% voting so we will go ahead and close the poll and share the results. And here we go. So why we have, what did we say 85, almost close to 100% thought that advocating and advocacy was important moderately or very important and so in looking at how often that occurs, there is a lot more of a diverse range. But awesomely almost 40% of you are advocating for your clients daily. And another 35% several times a week. So that is great to hear.

(NEW SPEAKER)

Yes it is. So we are going to try something else a little different. Can you tell us how you are advocating and maybe do some responses into the chat bar as to what types of activity you are doing on a regular basis that really involves the component of advocating. Type those into your chat bar. How are you advocating on a regular basis with your family?

(Lindsay Williams)

Alright. So somebody said kinship. Can you give us a little bit more on that? Are you advocating for kinship care providers or reaching out to kin? Encouraging clients to connect with services and what providers would be best. Now we're going. Okay.

(Sonia Tillman)

We have to scroll back. Attending school meetings. Very, common yes. Going to court. Working with grandparents and relatives. With IEP.

(Lindsay Williams)

That is a key one that we wanted to hit on today.

(Sonia Tillman)

Yes. Advocating for other social services. Transporting to court. Helping them sign up for benefits.

(Lindsay Williams)

That's a good one.

(Sonia Tillman)

Advocating to have educational testing. That is another huge component. A lot of times our youth are not receiving the services educationally that they need and so sometimes it takes us to help the parents advocate for that multi-factored evaluation to see if there are some specialized services that could benefit.

(Lindsay Williams)

And just went with them to attend counseling sessions, meetings, court sessions. Oh, this is a good one, providing adoption assistance for post adoptive families using the PASSS services, using kinship permanency incentives for those who have received legal custody of a child. Calling schools and providers getting extended services. Checking out concerns. Adoption recruitment. What else are we seeing, Sonia?

(Sonia Tillman)

Discussing with counselors the change of treatment or barriers to treatment. That is a really great one as well. Making sure you are connected. Not just referring the family for counseling but touching base with their therapist and checking to see how the progress is going or if we need to make a change. \_\_\_\_ [19:21] to help me grow. Getting them involved.

(Lindsay Williams)

And someone says this is kind of challenging in their role because they are a screener. But there are some things that that person does when taking in information, you know, they help with searching out in the screening department and just providing resources, maybe to those callers.

(Sonia Tillman)

Another one was anything that, whatever the parent needs, from housing to services to basic needs. Someone else said they were able to speak to a landlord to get a family's rent reduced so that they could financially afford the rent. Opening the lines of communication on behalf of those that we serve. Assisting with, attending meetings with disability providers along with the parents who are trying to reunify. Oh, here's a unique one – credit recovery advocacy for high school students who are under-credited.

(Lindsay Williams)

That's a good one.

(Sonia Tillman)

That's a good one.

(Lindsay Williams)

Thank you all. These are great.

(Sonia Tillman)

Also with other services, filling out applications. Excellent.

(Lindsay Williams)

You guys are awesome. You got this down. Helping with social security. That's a good one. Got some more landlord issues, other community resources.

(Sonia Tillman)

Go to NA meetings to support my family. Awesome. All of those things absolutely are beneficial and it lets the family know that we genuinely are there to help them and that is going to contribute to their success because they know that they are not just out there doing this by themselves. So that kind of goes into our next slide. This helps the family to overcome any systemic or organizational barriers and it allows us to help negotiate any change or improvements in their benefits and their entitlements. Recognizing that we have somewhat of a role of power or a perceived role of power helps them to also feel like we have their back. We are there to support them. And we are there to speak about their well-being: help them find solutions, continue to help them grow, but really trying to overall give them everything that is needed so that we can help them be self-sufficient. Advocates, when you are doing this, are champions. And so when we are modeling these new behaviors, we are also showing them how to speak for themselves. We may not be involved with them forever and hopefully we are not involved with them forever, but we want to be able to show them how to do this and so you want to coach the behavior that you are looking for. And this will get us towards those necessary steps. So safety, making sure that their overall well-being and permanency will also be in that.

(Lindsay Williams)

And I really like that last one there that talks about the modeling because I think that's a really an important role, because as child welfare professionals when we go with our families and we talk to these service providers and these agencies, they watch how we do it, watch how we interact and watch how we advocate for them and they can kind of take that on and then learn to do that for themselves. Which I think takes us right in as a great segue into our HOPE slide and talking about that program a little bit. Let's go back one. Here we go.

(NEW SPEAKER)

In my role here at ODJFS I am the Strategic Initiatives Administrator and so with that I manage a number of different programs, one of them being the Helping Ohio Parent Effectively program, also known as HOPE. So in 2013 PCSAO and Casey Family Programs put a workgroup together to identify ways to promote and improve parental engagement in Ohio. And what they determined was that they would utilize primary parent with previous child worker experience to increase engagement by using those parents' experiences to mentor parents who are newly involved in the child welfare system. And so with that, we recruited a number of different counties to join. So in 2014, Cuyahoga, Richland, and Trumbull joined the HOPE program. In 2015, Stark came aboard. In 2016 Athens and Montgomery County joined. And 2017 we had our first primary parent recognition banquet and then in 2018 Fairfield County recently joined our team. And so with all of those counties, they have the ability to manage their program the way that works best for their county and their families' needs. And so they each do a number of different things and one of them, what I think, some of them do is family team meetings where they have primary parents who are available to accompany parents into their family team meeting or a TDM to serve as a support for that family. We had, I believe, over 1000 TDMs and family team meetings that have been facilitated with a primary parent mentor and to date, no one has ever refused to have a parent join them in one of those meetings.

(Lindsay Williams)

That is so awesome.

(NEW SPEAKER)

Yeah, so we also have parents, primary parents who will call parents after a child has been removed as a comfort call to find out the needs of the child, needs of the parent. We also have primary parents who will complete orientation for parents who are newly involved in the child welfare system to help them understand the process. You know it is an overwhelming process, you know, to have a child removed and even with this new system, the different barriers that there are so the primary parent is able to help break down those barriers. Help the parent to understand the court system. To understand that we only have a limited amount of time to provide permanency for the children so they are really able to help them understand that process and really connect with the parent in a way that, you know, our system is not always able to. We also have parents who will provide orientation for new staff to help them understand the system and also their role in the agency.

(Lindsay Williams)

That's what I mean. What kind of feedback are you getting from the agency?

(NEW SPEAKER)

Our caseworkers report that they really like the program – that it really does help them to engage parents. We do know that it does help to reduce the length of time in custody because parents who are on board and they understand that we do have a limited amount of time to, you know, to reunify children or to find permanency.

(Lindsay Williams)

If you guys are out there in webinar land, if you are one of those agencies that have a primary or a HOPE program or a Succeed program, feel free to type into the chat bar and let us know how that is going for you or how what benefit you have seen for your clients.

(NEW SPEAKER)

Our parents who serve as mentors also find that it helps to improve their leadership skills. It also helps them to remain accountable and it also helps with their recovery. We have parents who are also in recovery that serve as mentors and help them to, you know, to stay accountable and to remain sober.

(Lindsay Williams)

Excellent. Okay. I am going to go ahead and go to the next slide so... we have Jennifer joining us, who is a HOPE parent in Cuyahoga County and she just has an awesome success story. So, Jennifer, I am just going to turn it over to you and let you share with everybody, you know, a little bit about your experiences and, you know, your story, I guess.

(Jennifer Alberts)

Okay. Well, hello everyone again. My name is Jennifer Alberts. I am with the Hope and Succeed program. I joined Hope and Succeed, I think, a little bit over a year ago last year and I learned about it through a friend of a family member that told me about it and so I contacted her and she said, you know, you would really fit in here. I think you would really love it. I said, “yeah, I am really looking for somewhere where I can share my experiences and what I have gone through in the foster care system and just be that hope for those who have gone through the system to know that you can make it through whatever it is you are facing because I did it as well.” I grew up in foster care all my life pretty much. I got adopted when I was 8 years old. And then I was sexually abused by my adoptive father for 8 years. Then I went back into the foster care system where I was there until I turned 18. After that, I started to really want to get involved at that point with Children's Services in the system. I actually had, I have two children of my own, which at one point in time actually got a case with Children's Services. My biological mother had come back into my life and I had let my biological mother keep my children for a little bit and she seemed to be, you know, in a normal state of mind but I guess she still was not on her medication that I wasn't aware of it. So when she is not on her medications it causes her to do things that are not, you know, what normal people would do when they are thinking in their normal mindset. And she left them on the street one day in downtown Akron and they were missing for about 24 hours before Children's Services called me that they picked them up on the street of downtown Akron and that they were in their care. So that's how I got my case. My case was very, very rare because they weren't in the system for too long. I actually got them back not long after that situation when they came to the home and, you know, saw that my home was suitable for them and that everything was good on my behalf. But I still always

share the story that it was a decision that I made. One night I just wanted to go out and party and I was in that state where I just got a divorce and I had two young children and was a single mother raising them. So here I am today. I actually wrote a book. It does talk about the foster care system and about adoption and my journey with the foster care system and the adoption and my road to recovery and healing from the trauma that was associated with growing up in the system and going from home to home. And yet still getting a loving home. It was just the trauma that as a child when they go through different changes in life and then you do get adopted and you are excited and you are happy and then you go through abuse and then you go back into the system. It is just a cycle that continued in my life for many years that was finally broken after time after going through healing. And it did take time but here I am today and I did write the book. It just again shares my recovery of healing and being made whole and being back restored to a healthy state of mind and being able to raise my children now and having that support and being that voice to others that like I said, "you can make it through anything." I am living proof of that. That's my story.

(NEW SPEAKER)

Thank you so much for sharing your story, Jennifer. Where can your book be purchased or are you having any book signing events that we can share with everyone?

(Jennifer Alberts)

It can be purchased at [www.jenniferlalbets.com](http://www.jenniferlalbets.com) and there is also a book signing tomorrow for anyone that is in the Columbus area that is maybe free or available, I will be in the Columbus area tomorrow. I'm pulling up the address here at Crossroads World Outreach Ministries, at 165 South Cypress Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43222. And that is from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

(Lindsay Williams)

Thanks, Jennifer. You have such a powerful story and I think it is so good for folks out there to hear the success stories because a lot of times we work with families and we try to be advocates and we try to be supportive and we try to help them kind of overcome, but a lot of times we don't get to see where folks end up on the other side of it. But I think that is really, really powerful. And from an advocacy standpoint now being able to kind of give back and work with other parents passing from circumstances. What has that been like for you?

(Jennifer Alberts)

That has been amazing. That – it makes me get emotional when you said that. Because this has been like one of my dreams. Like growing up and like I used to write even when I was younger so I used to always write that I wanted to adopt a child and I still do today, one day I will. I will give back by adopting another child. And it is an incredible feeling because this has been a dream even after everything that I have gone through because I think it is so amazing for someone to foster a child or to adopt a child that was not birthed to them biologically. That is just incredible to me to be able to share that love and that home with them, you know, and just love them like they are your own. And I think that is incredible so I definitely stand on it today and say these things because I really truly believe them. It is just – it is an incredible feeling. It is. And it is incredible to watch people from when I do speaking and when I talk to people to watch their reaction shift from when I first stand up there to the end, you know, when I am

finished talking and to see people receive it and be touched by it. So that's what keeps me going in it.

(Lindsay Williams)

And it is definitely very touching. What really kind of struck me is when you shared that when you were – that you were sexually abused by your foster father for so many years and there would be a lot of people, rightfully so, that would have a lot of, you know, negative feelings about the child protection system after going through something like that. So I guess my question to you would be what kind of advocacy supports did you have in your life to help you get through that trauma and kind of come out better for it on the other side? Not better, but better for being able to become a stronger person – I'm sorry, I did not relay that well.

(Jennifer Alberts)

It took me a long time to be able to open up to people in general because, you know, growing up I was very close to my adoptive mom and I looked at my adoptive father as my father. And I was very vulnerable at the time and I was able to speak and voice how I felt in a way, but it was always received in a negative way. So I built up this way inside of me where as I got older I started to shut down and I didn't know how to speak to people. I didn't know how to ask people for help because I thought it was going to be received in a negative way and it was going to backlash on my end. So I had to really, really start trusting in people and a lot of it was my faith and what I believe in and I really stood on that and I started to be able to reach out to people and I got some counseling as well for it and that really helped a lot too to be able to sit down and talk to someone and they hear me and listen and know that it is safe there and it is not going to go anywhere, you know, unless there was something that I said like, you know, I wanted to commit suicide or something then, obviously that is different. But even in that, you know, trying to even commit suicide three times in my life as well and making it through that and just having people that now I can look back on and say wow if I only would have voiced it to those people that actually did step up and did care, you know, I could have gotten help sooner. But there is a lot of people now that I can look to, family and friends that I have now that have been in my corner and have been here through this whole thing that were there then but because then I wasn't quite able to voice it, now I can voice it and they say, "Yeah, I remember you were going through those things but you just didn't really say anything." And so it is kind of funny how that works. But just my family and my friends. I am a very tight, close niche person when it comes to family and friends. I love my family and friends. And when I get that chance to be close to them, I definitely appreciate that and I don't take it for granted so.

(Lindsay Williams)

Your story just gives me goosebumps. We really appreciate you being so candid and sharing that.

(Jennifer Alberts)

Thank you.

(NEW SPEAKER)

Jennifer, you also talk about your experience leading the Succeed groups and how the group, what that's about, and how that helps to support absent parents as well.

(Jennifer Alberts)

Yes, so the Succeed groups, I started with the Succeed groups last year. We went and we did the training to be a facilitator and the Succeed groups have been very amazing. It is one of those things, like I said, when you get up there and you are sharing things that you have gone through and you watch everybody's expression just completely change and you can see that it really restores things within them as far as hope and giving them that hope to keep moving forward. And that is what the groups have really been about. Sometimes you know when you go through things and you know you are talking to a counselor and you are going well, "what do they know?" Or, you know, they don't know, they are on the other side of this. You know, they have a degree. I don't have a degree. So, you know, you feel little. You feel small. But it is really. And then if you think let's put some people in here who have gone through it and it is not to say that you still feel little or small, you actually feel really great and you feel really big because it is like, wow, like you are looking at them like, "wow, they have actually gone through things that I have gone through..." and that is not to – obviously I am not bashing counselors. I actually love counselors. I wish I went to school to be a psychologist. I absolutely love everything that they do and my mom was the school psychologist so it is just when you get someone from the other side that you can relate to, I think that helps people because they feel sometimes like they are being judged. And I know for me I felt like I was being judged so it made me not share certain things with certain people because I felt, "well, they are at a higher level than me or they have a degree and they have gone through years and they have never gone through any of this. They will never understand this. They are just going to tell me suck it up and get it together and you have a choice like everyone else." So it has really been a great thing for the community too. Because we have gone – oh my goodness, we have gone all over the community of Cleveland. I think we have had like five or six and we have gone different sides, any side of town that we can get in Cleveland. Cleveland is pretty big. You can get in – we have gone through a lot of different sides of town and just to see the different people come out from the different areas and to hear different stories and everybody's story is, of course, different. Everybody has a unique story. But I think that is what makes it even more great. And it empowers them to know that "Hey, I can keep going in this and this can turn out to be good. This can work. And I can get through this." So that's what the Succeed group has really been about.

(Lindsay Williams)

That's awesome. And I wish we could stay here and talk to you all day. We are running short on time. We should have put in more time for you. I do have one more question because we do have an audience full of child welfare professionals so coming out on the other side now and being an advocate for parents and families currently involved with the child welfare system, what would be one or two pieces of key advice that you would give to child welfare professionals currently in the workforce?

(Jennifer Alberts)

Umm... what would be, okay, so these are child welfare –

(NEW SPEAKER)

Caseworkers, supervisors?

(Jennifer Alberts)

When dealing with children. Okay. Key advice. I would say, what is the right word? Sometimes an ear – being an ear to listen. I know sometimes we listen to response and I hope this comes out right. I don't want to offend anyone. Sometimes we listen to the response and sometimes I know for a lot of parents, I know for me, sometimes we are just venting and we just need to know that someone can hear us. And so I would say sometimes just really listen to where they are at and something else. Maybe be understanding. I know that there is a lot of cases out there. There is a lot of things that you see. I watched my mother struggle with five of us for many years in the childcare system and I watched her break down. I have watched her turn back to drugs many times. I have watched her, you know, really struggle with the child welfare system and with the caseworkers and with all of the things she had to do, even at a young age, I still remember to this day – it never leaves the child's memory and so just to kind of understand it from both sides, me being the parent and me being that child. I would say to really just be able to listen and understand from both sides of the spectrum, if that makes sense, that the child and the parent both are going through things that are different, but they are both really going through things that they are dealing with as well that is difficult for them. So to just be able to understand them more and to listen a little bit more to understand better, I guess. If that makes sense.

(Lindsay Williams)

Thank you. It does. And those are very great pieces of advice and we really appreciate you sharing your story with us. You are just amazing. You have inspired me today. You have given me goosebumps up and down. Feel free to jump in.

(Jennifer Alberts)

Thank you so much for having me.

(Lindsay Williams)

Absolutely. So we have ten minutes to cover probably about half more of our content so we are going to start moving through this but feel free to jump in if you think of anything else as we continue on. Thanks, Jennifer.

(Jennifer Alberts)

Thank you, everyone.

(NEW SPEAKER)

So we are just going to kind of quickly go through some of these other ideal practices. I think as you heard through Jennifer's story and some of the examples that we have provided earlier, advocacy is advocating for families can look totally different depending on the circumstance. Another way that you can advocate is by helping to identify service gaps. I remember when I used to supervise a child welfare unit, we often would find that we would have issues with service providers only being open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. And then all of this was a conflict for our families who were working because they didn't get off work until 4:00 or 5:00 p.m. And so one of the things that we did as a team was to go out and try to advocate for our providers to offer extended hours. Over time, that started becoming a common practice and so you would have service providers with after-hours mental health sessions or parenting classes that were held

in the evenings. And so, again one of the key responsibilities as a child protection worker is to be able to identify where there are gaps. And if we can't help the family receive the service, how can we help to advocate for the service to become available so that we can resolve the concern? So that is again one of the ideal practices. Another thing is to give our feedback when policies and procedures are needing to be changed or implemented. Or if you feel that there is a policy or procedure that should change as a result of providing, doing it in practice. Maybe it doesn't quite align with the way that we practice it and you want to make a suggestion through the Rule Review website. How many of you all are familiar with the Rule Review website? We are going to launch a poll to ask how many are familiar with our Ohio Rule Review website.

(Lindsay Williams)

Actually, the question is not are you familiar, it is, have you ever commented on a rule using the Ohio Rule Review website?

(NEW SPEAKER)

Even better.

(Lindsay Williams)

So we have a little over half, let's give it a few more seconds.

(NEW SPEAKER)

And be honest if you didn't even know that the Rule Review website existed, that's okay.

(Lindsay Williams)

You will after today! You'll know how to get there. That's a little over 70%. Let's try to hit 80% participation in the poll. 74%. Give it about ten more seconds. 5 more seconds. Oh, we're almost to 80%. 78%. Oh, we hit 80%. We are going to go ahead and close the poll now and share the results. A little less than a fourth of you have commented on a rule and almost a little over 21% didn't even know that was an option. So that was kind of a role with the poll is today is to show how you can be in advocacy for policy changes.

(Sonia Tillman)

Our next slide is going to give you the Ohio Rule Review website log-in and this is kind of a screen shot of what it looks like I think, maybe earlier this week. It always changes. Every OFC or Office of Families and Children administrative rule is scheduled to be reviewed every five years. The state law requires us to make sure that we are receiving feedback from all practitioners, from all families, all service providers and anyone that is interested in the function of that rule. And so what we do is upon having the rule be revised so before the developer even makes the changes, the developer will post the rule to this website. And will ask for feedback. So we are looking at opening up the rules for, I don't know, independent living. And before we open up those rules and make revisions, we are going to post it to this website. We are going to let you see what that rule looks like as it is and we are going to ask for your feedback. Are there any suggestions that you want to make based on what this independent living rule outlines? Here is your opportunity to go in and give any feedback related to that particular rule. The rule will remain on this Ohio Review website for 30 days and then all of the comments and the feedback is then provided to the developer who is actually doing the revision. They take all of that into

consideration while they are making their changes to that rule and then it goes through the promulgation process. So that is where you will see it in clearance, there's another opportunity once it goes into clearance to offer even more feedback on the draft of the rule. And so here's a piece that a lot of folks don't quite know, you can advocate for policy change right there on Ohio's Rule Review website. You can also continue to advocate for policy change as it is going through the clearance process. So we really just want you all and we challenge you all to take a minute to go to this website and look at the rules that are open for comment and if there are any comments or suggest the things that you would like to add in, we encourage you to do that.

(Lindsay Williams)

And it's probably safe and quiet, right?

(Sonia Tillman)

So a private agency, families, clients can go to this website. Also give their comments and give their suggestions on the rule. It impacts them most of the time so definitely it is an open face website so we encourage you all to do that. So I won't spend a lot of time on the Rule Review process but we definitely wanted to make you aware that it is out there and that you can give your feedback.

(Lindsay Williams)

Thanks, Sonia. Okay, so we are just going to kind of sneak through a few more best practices. This slide speaks to encouraging community partners and providers and others to use best practices during their planning assessment, service delivery, etc. So this could be done through from family team meetings, onboarding meetings with service provider agencies, some communities that will have regular meetings for different service providers where a lot of their clients go so they can talk about issues, concerns, what is working, what is not. That's a great place to do just kind of advocacy, regional collaborative. I know, you know, many agencies attend the regional PCSAO meetings or our ODJFS regional team meetings where we give thoughts about things and ask for feedback about what is going on across the state. This next slide talks about education – advocacy through education. And so a lot of what I think about when I read this slide and this profile is all of those April child abuse and neglect prevention loss activities that we do. With the pinwheel prevention, different events maybe at a library or a local school or, you know, talking to just community constituents. Various community meetings and events. I know a lot of our agencies will participate in local parades or local fairs. They will have a booth. The youth and actually our private agencies do as well, use those forums to get out in the community and educate the community about the services we provide. Use it for foster parents, adoptive parents, recruitment and fundraising. I have seen a lot of our agencies do fundraising, the 5K races are a big thing lately so I have seen a lot of agencies do fundraising and education through those kinds of things as well. So next we want to talk about just some ways that you can be an advocate for families. And that's basically, it's everything we have been talking about. Recognizing their needs. Helping them to find appropriate resources and services. You know, work with the community agencies and the providers to ensure that they are treating families fairly and respectfully. And then, of course, you know, my favorite is helping families learn how to advocate for themselves to meet the needs of their families through modeling, coaching and encouragement. And this goes back to where we were talking about the IEPs earlier. I think that is a big one. You know, when we have children that have special

educational needs, a lot of times our families, you know, they may not feel empowered to go to those forums... You know, "My child has these needs, can they have these special accommodations?" They may not know the words to say or even...

(NEW SPEAKER)

The process.

(Lindsay Williams)

Yeah, that they can even do that. So those are all great ways to be an advocate. A couple of other ways are identifying those gaps and services, policies, then working together to alleviate them, so of course, commenting on their Rule Review website. And then, you know, using this best practice standard. And we already talked about this too. This kind of gives a visual to kind of when we started at the beginning today, but this shows where advocacy fits in through that CQI lens. So this picture illustrates our CQI or Continuous Quality Improvement cycle and you can see that advocacy starts right at the beginning at that problem identification stage. And a lot of times through advocacy and through hearing feedback from you guys, from families, from kinship providers, that is where it starts, so kind of grass root movements, to elicit change and then the advocacy if the arrow could go all the way around the circle but it kind of continues throughout the stages of the CQI process.

(Sonia Tillman)

And if you think about a lot of our statewide issues that are going on currently, a lot of them were founded out of advocacy, opportunities. Our opiate addiction, the opiate epidemic has taken over a pile and so what you are seeing is Ohio Start. You are seeing Moms' programs. You are seeing community, drug court, many of our providers or stakeholders are getting together saying, "we have to fight this together," and that is really the only way that we are going to help families is by coming together and offering a more unified way of serving them and so you have, as big issues come up, that sparks a lot of our statewide initiatives as well through this cycle.

(Lindsay Williams)

Absolutely. And then this last slide here. I think Sonia is going to talk to us a little bit about some coaching and supervision questions you can ask.

(Sonia Tillman)

So we are getting very close to the end. If you are familiar with the supervisory coaching toolkit. The DR supervisory coaching toolkit. These are some things that you can do as a manager or as a supervisor to help encourage your staff. Again, I think the key is helping to coach the behavior that you want to see and so as your workers are going out and assessing families and providing services, you want to make sure that you are asking them, "So, what barriers have you overcome?" And then find out from them what other barrier has this family been faced with and how did you help that family overcome their barriers. But we also want to model that in the parallel process of talking with our workers and our staff on things that they may anticipate as a problem or a barrier and how we as supervisors and managers can also help them so that they can better help the family. And so these are just some prompts that we provide in their toolkit to spark some conversation on again, helping to build up the skill of advocating.

(Lindsay Williams)

So that concludes all of our content for today. Based off the feedback we received from last month, we have not been giving you guys enough time to kind of chat amongst yourselves and compose your questions so I am going to pause the recording here for five minutes and give everybody a five minute break to kind of think about everything we have heard about today and our message from Jennifer and submit any questions that you may have on advocacy or for any of us. Thank you.

(NEW SPEAKER)

----- There's a module. I know that I advocate hard for my kinship families. I put them in a school who did not want to complete testing for a child's IEP who really needed to be on one for a learning disability. They let him go for a year. I stepped up to the plate and had a strong conversation with the school. As a result the child is now in IEP and also receiving additional help. It is a must to advocate for your clients.

Absolutely, Daphne. Thank you, Daphne.

And it encourages her to continue so thank you. The school system sometimes can be a little bit of a challenge. I mentioned previously that there always have been legislation trying to assist with that. Now we have ESSA, Every Student Succeeds Act. And I think that has also been a great way to help us advocate for our foster youth, help us advocate for our families, especially our foster youth. How often do we get a youth that has been removed and needs to go and be enrolled in a new school district but there is a wait for sometimes a week, sometimes two weeks, while the paperwork is being processed. And so the ESSA act prevents that from happening. You are not going to have a youth sitting out uneducated for weeks on end just waiting for the paperwork and so I think those kinds of big legislative pieces definitely help to advocate for educational rights of kids and then for those that are not court involved or have been removed, again, just like Daphne is explaining, sometimes we have to be the voice of that family and really help to get the youth the services that they need. So great job.

Another comment was that I do believe that this will be most beneficial to newer workers and I think all of us, I think, even those of us that are seasoned and have been in this for years and years, we still have to refresh and again that is really the purpose of why we are going through all of these Practice Profile skills. We need to sometimes get back to the basics. And get back to why we are doing this. And get some new skills on how to do it and how to improve. I don't think there are many of us out there that don't feel like we can always have a little bit of room for improvement.

(Lindsay Williams)

This is what – I have two things to add to that. So one is something that I shared early on in one of these webinars but it was an analogy and I even forget who gave it to me now. But think about your favorite movie, maybe your movie that you watched 100+ times. Have you ever – and this happens to me all the time, you watch the movie again and you are like, “I never noticed that.” And that's just the same with these skills. We may have done this work for 20+ years, kind of sitting where you are Sonia or you are Tequilla, and there is always room to learn and I will tell you, I was just in a training last week for our CFSR program improvement plan. We are

working on a canvas infusion plan where we are going to kind of give some updates about our CAPMIS model and kind of a refresher on that, integrate the Practice Profiles in there in addition to some newer things and I sat through that training and I have been in child welfare going on 14 years. I also was originally trained on CAPMIS back in 2005, 2006 and I learned so much. And some of it was stuff I had forgotten and it was a refresher for me and other pieces were like it clicked on a different level. So that is kind of our hope for all of you guys with this webinar series.

(Sonia Tillman)

Apply it to what your level of experience and work involvement is. You want to make sure that you are at least trying to refresh your skills and get up to date on... this is why we go to trainings regularly. This is why it is required that we have 36 hours of training annually, because after 20 years or 25 years in this business, we always can learn more.

(Lindsay Williams)

There is always new stuff. New things that we are learning.

(Sonia Tillman)

New techniques. New approaches. New strategies. So.

(Lindsay Williams)

Let's see here. We have not gotten many more other comments but we do want to give you guys a few more seconds if you had a comment or something that you have experienced where you have advocated for a client or family. We don't want to cut you short on this time based on feedback we received last month that we didn't give you enough time to formulate your questions. Don't be shy.

We are not seeing anything roll in. I will add kind of along the line of the whole back to basics and everything and we got some clarification on one comment that that person agrees that it is helpful for everyone to kind of do the back to basics thing and also these webinars are really great for new staff that are just coming into the field of child welfare. And we appreciate that. And we totally agree and actually we have been working with our partners at IHS and are hoping to be able to have this webinar series forever live as a distance learning opportunity that you can access through E-Track so we are hoping to get there soon and then that way you won't have to go in after you have watched one of these webinars and add your hours into E-Track, you would be able to clip on E-Track, select your webinar and then it would automatically add your continuing training hours. So we do recognize that. Thank you.

(Sonia Tillman)

And bear with us with the other training certificates; we are going to be getting those out as well very soon. I know you mentioned that at the beginning, but I don't know if folks may have joined in afterwards. We are still processing all of the certificates or CEUs for webinars 4, 5 and 6.

(Lindsay Williams)

I think we have gotten through 4 and 5, 6 and 7. And a shout out to Felicia Saunders and Jeanette Gronfeld in helping with us with the certificate processing. And everything else they do at for us every day. And thanks again to CQI and Jennifer for joining us today.

(Sonia Tillman)

And Jay Crawford, who is our technical genius who helps get us going every month. With all of our technical quirks that we don't quite know what we are doing. And we really appreciate it, Jay, thank you so very much.

(Lindsay Williams)

Thanks, everyone. Have a great rest of your Wednesday and tune in next month when we are, I believe we are doing cultural and diversity competence next month, so we will see you then. Talk to you then.

(NEW SPEAKER)

Thank you.

(OTHER SPEAKERS)

Bye.