ECC Affirming and Supporting our Children as they go back to school

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>> Good afternoon, everyone! I'm sorry. Sorry good afternoon, and welcome to today's Webinar. Considerations for families, educators and community members sponsored by SAMHSA and presented on behalf of the national federation of families. My name is Kelly from the national association of state mental health program directors, and I would like to thank you all for joining us today.

Before we begin, I would like to go over a few housekeeping items. Today's Webinar is being recorded. The recording along with the PowerPoint presentation slides will be sent via e‑mail from three to 5 days to all of those who have registered. However, you may download the PowerPoint presentation on the top of your screen where it says PowerPoint presentation. Please click upload file to download the slides.

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Please also type your questions there for the presenter and at the end of the presentation, we will ask as many questions as we can. Please use the pod to communicate and share ideas and be thoughts. We just want this Webinar to be as interactive as possible.

At the end. Please take a few moments to complete the evaluation for us. On the screen, you may see a letter of attendance you may download. Please note, we do not offer CEU credits for the Webinars. Should you have any questions, my e‑mail address will be available on the top of the screen during the evaluation.

I would like to thank SAMHSA for allowing us to share this information with you today and again, thank you for joining us!

I will now turn it over to our moderator Dr. Lynda Gargan executive director of the national federation of families. Lynda.

>> Lynda: Thank you so much, Kelly! It's always such a privilege to be here on these Webinars. Thanks to all of you joining us today. I love reading all of these different names and interest in the chat and a special shout out to my home state of West Virginia. Thank you for representing here today!

So we have an amazing Webinar planned for you. If you have heard it before, you already know what I'm talking about! If you haven't, prepare to be amazed! Rather than me introducing Sue because her live story is so unique, I'm going to let her introduce herself and then she will begin her Webinar. Thank you in advance, Sue. We are so looking forward to this!

>> Sue: Thank you so much, Lynda! It's exciting to be here with you as well. I also like you noting the different places everyone is from. I live in Philadelphia, but I grew up in Vermont and I have already seen friends checking in which is really fun as well as other colleagues from around the country. Lynda mentioned, I would introduce myself a little bit for those who haven't heard me or don't know me. Like I said, I grew up in Vermont and when I did go to college, I was an education major and I had expected to spend my life in the classroom teaching.

So whenever I can combine the rest of my life story, which I will share in a moment, with the classroom teaching and the ICS, supporting children and families in the school setting, it's really a bonus for me! I love that opportunity. So when I was asked to do this particular session, I was really excited about that.

So I did get my degree in early childhood education. I taught a little bit over the years more as a substitute than a full-time teacher because I immediately went into child welfare and juvenile justice after that. I married my high school sweetheart and together we are foster parents and ran a group home for young people, teenagers who had been both in delinquency as well as in the system so that's where we began cutting our teeth on this type of work that led to what I'm able to share with you today.

My background since then, educationally, I had a heavy focus on trauma, the impact of trauma supporting families and children who have experienced trauma and more importantly, being trauma not just informed but responsive and resiliency focused. I do put that in.

Over the years as foster parents, we did foster over 75 young people, anywhere from infants with very severe special needs to teenagers, mostly teenagers. Over the years, along with my two children by birth, we adopted twenty of those children who are now young adults, so our lifetime family is 22 children, now adults and three of them have terminal illnesses.

So those three have passed away. The others are all adults living some in Vermont, some in Philadelphia and some scattered around in other places with our 40 plus grandchildren and now we're up to 14 great grandchildren.

So I would bring the in the trenches experience as well as the academic experiences when I share the information that I can share with you today. There could be more stuff to talk about. Feel free to ask me any other questions but I just want to really get into our content so I'm not going to share more about myself right now.

I'm glad it was also mentioned for you to please use the chat box because although what I see mostly rolling through are some of the introductions that is great to continue to have those introductions but there will be times when I will ask you to please go ahead and make a response to something I say or offer, a reflection on something that I say in the chat box as well.

So I'm glad many of you are finding it and using it and hopefully that will make this a more interactive time together. In fact, we're going to start with some interaction, besides the chat box. The other form of interaction that I would like to offer is to do some polls so we're going to start with our first poll so I can get a flavor.

I'm seeing all of the chime ins on the chat, but I would like to get a picture here of who is with us in terms of your interests in our particular topic today, whether you're here because you're parenting or you're teaching or you're a supportive provider or advocate.

So please go ahead and leave it up for a little bit longer. We're not going to leave any of these polls up too long. It's just a good way to get the interaction going. I think I'm going to leave it for ten more seconds for anyone who wants to apply. The little blue lines slow down so I'll take it as a sign that most people who wanted to reply had the chance.

And I think, if you can take a look at it before we take it down, you can see the different percentages. We do have parents here, teachers and educators here. We also have a lot of mental healthcare providers and support service providers. And advocates. So wonderful diverse representation of different folks here.

On that note, we can take the chat down. We're going to go from the beginning. Just thinking about the topic as we saw today, is getting back to school after this long season of COVID‑19. So what are social of the things that both the educators and support people including professionals of all sorts and families and advocates need to be thinking about as we get back into this full-time schooling. So going to start by looking at some facts and tips.

So the pandemic has had a lot of consequences for education. We have to really think about these consequences, which ever kind they were. Whatever kind of role we play, all of the different roles that I ask you to identify in the chat. We have to think about what do we actually know?

We can have our own anecdotal stories and note some things that we see or have experienced throughout our own friends or family members but on a broader scale, what do we actually know? We do know that learning and school-based learning and development has certainly been interrupted for just millions and millions of young people and their families.

But we also note that children with special educational needs including those with social and emotional developmental needs have been particularly impacted in big ways. So we know that one million out of 7 million children are students with special educational needs, many of those are needs. And about 40 percent of those children, have not received any supports at all during the time of the pandemic. 40 percent of the children who have special educational needs whether it's IEP or 504, children with social and emotional needs as well as other kinds of special needs. 40 percent have not received any of the services that would be called for in their IEP or 504.

Also, we know that only about 20 percent have actually received the services they're supposed to receive according to their individualized plan. So 40 percent haven't received any. 20 percent have received all. So that's a big gap of quite a lot of children who have learned and received various parts of their support services that would help them with their education.

And of those children, some of these surveys have found that about 17 percent of them, are not getting, about ‑‑ I'm sorry, excuse me. About a third of them are not having access to remote education at all which compares to about 17 percent of their peers who don't have special educational these.

So nearly double, the children with special educational needs are not getting, even access to get online. And of course, we know that this has exacerbating all of the other kinds of opportunity gaps that face our children as whether it has to do with low income, and whether it has to do with race. Whether it is kinds of disadvantages that were already present long before COVID.

They have been exacerbated and brought into the spotlight more because of this pandemic. I just mentioned about the lack of access to remote learning. So before I go forward and talk about the impact on the adults and teachers, I would love people to start writing in the chat, what have you noticed?

What are some of the biggest issues that you're concerned about the impact of the pandemic has had on schooling and on children's education in the past year and a half. So give a few words of praise, a couple of lines you would like to express about what your concerns are. Please go ahead and put some of that in the chat.

So the next piece I wanted to share is about the adults and the teachers that are in the school. I'm going to look at these in the chat. Students are feeling socially isolated, yeah! Lots and lots of mental health challenges and very few students receiving the mental health support they need.

They have, perhaps, fallen behind academically. We're pretty sure that's true even though assessments are not being done to truly give us the full picture, but we know as someone here already said.

Children who are already behind, already struggling, already isolated, the gap is getting bigger and wider. Now, part of the challenge then is not only because of the children but what is happening for the adults. One‑third of the teachers currently actively teaching in the U.S. school system are in that highest risk categories for severe illness or even death if they contract COVID.

So clearly, we can understand their concerns about returning to the classroom. Even if they themselves, have been vaccinated. We know and a lot of them are in those categories where they were among the first to get vaccinated. And we know there's these breakthrough COVID exposures now with the new variant and we know that children under the age of 12 have not been able to be vaccinated. So teachers are in a very high-risk categories and therefore, they're concerned. And because they have these concerns about meeting their own needs and the needs of the students at the same time as well as, of course, their families and community at home, they are then at an increased risk of secondary traumatic stress.

Teaching, like social work, like mental healthcare giving and others, are all in the fields where we're at a very high risk already for secondary traumatic stress. It's a real thing that can impact our own health and well-being, as well as our capacity to fully meet the needs of the people that we serve.

But this risk is not elevated for teachers because of this risk factor they place as a result of COVID. In fact, educational surveys have found that one‑third of teachers teaching in the grades K through twelve have said that the pandemic in and of itself, have caused them to rethink whether they're going to continue in the teaching career or change careers.

We also know that teachers are working harder and longer than ever and yet, feel they have less support. You know, doing these online questionnaires creates a different challenge. I usually do all of my training and teaching in person, or at least I did before COVID.

I would travel around the country and fly into a state, and I would get to know the community a little bit and I would stand up in front of the room and wander around the room and I would be able to have lunch with people as I was doing training.

That all changed and now everything is in this virtual realm. But as I did the in person and virtual at the same time, even with adult audiences like yourselves, that would be overwhelming to me. So yet, that's what we have been calling upon teachers to do in the past several months as many schools, wharfed into the hybrid status.

What we're even calling them to do, in the fall, even as most schools do go back to full time in person education, they will still have some students that will be learning from home, and they will still have to juggle this sort of dual role which is absolutely overwhelming. But of course, what we have seen in the last few years is that it hasn't only been COVID that has created the challenges that we see presently in classrooms.

And in the preparation for what is going to happen when students return to school. The past one to 2 years have highlighted so many different areas and disparities and injustice. Particularly as it relates to race because simultaneously, concurrently with the COVID, there has already been just a tremendous awareness building of racial injustice ha has already been in our country for decades, even centuries but has been illuminated and have left to integrated upheaval during the same period of time that COVID has existed.

And we have also had to just have quite a number of political upheavals. I'm not making political commentary on this session but there have been quite a number of political upheavals which in and of itself, have left a lot of communities to polarize and that is going to directly factor back to what is it going to take to really get that back to the school piece where everyone is going to be safe.

Where people are not going to feel stigmatize and where everyone will get the support they need. We have one comment in the chat that says, in my opinion, too much pressure is put on the teachers since the pandemic.

That is absolutely right! They're under enormous pressure. The parents are making lots of decisions related to how they will be able to support their child in a school setting as we roll into September.

I mentioned to you that I have 40 plus grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren and they're in schools from Philadelphia to Vermont and a few in other places. Some of them have been full time in school for several months and some have not yet set foot in a classroom since the pandemic and are going to be in September.

So from a personal number, I have been able to see this from so many different angles and perspectives and I have seen the stress and challenge it has placed on their parents as well as what it places on teachers.

So really, all of this put together has volatile cocktail. So many things to think about, so many things to juggle and so many fires burning in different places that just figuring out what is the first best step, what's the next best step, where do we go from here is challenging for everyone!

So I think it's an important time to take a step back and take a breath and think about, well, what is it? What are the most essential things that children and families need right now as they begin to get ready to get back to the school season.

So on the next slide, I'm going to show you three words that I think are the three most important things that children and families need but before I click to that slide, I would love to see some of your notes in the chat. What are you thinking of some of the most important things that children and their families need in this period of time, in these next few weeks and months to get back to the school setting? Any thought the about what they need?

Patience, flexibility, support is coming up. Flexibility, grace! I like that word, coping skills, communication. Safety. The insurance and safety. To know there's a plan and to not have everything feel chaotic. Some understanding that everyone is doing the best they can.

Empathy, self‑care, structure, positivity, coping skills. So there's a lot of things, oh, time to play before they learn. And oh, thank you for joining that particular insight.

You're going to see it ties into some of the things I'm saying in the moments ahead. So let's look at the three words I want to share with you. I like that one, movement and hope. You guys are on track.

You have a lot of really great reminders. So three words I want to share with you here now are the words safety, emotional awareness and connectiveness, or connection.

These are three words, and they are formed in the shape of a pillar here. When you see any of the images on the slides that look like they're from a coloring book, that's because they are. My daughter and I have created a coloring book that is for adults and has both content and pages to color about supporting children who have experienced high levels of stress or trauma.

Not only during the pandemic but for other reasons. So some of the pages are from that book. That's why they look ready to color. And when you get the PowerPoint downloaded, we encourage you to color them.

These are also in the form of a pillar because these are the three words that are often used in the term, the three pillars of trauma informed and trauma responsive care. So I'm spreading that concept of being trauma informed and trauma responsive and resiliency focused.

I'm spreading that concept a little further as we think about returning after the season of COVID‑19. Not everyone child is traumatized but probably every student was stressed. Every student probably has anxiety as a result of the changes in their lives that occurred relative to COVID.

And some are more deeply harmed through an experienced actual trauma, maybe, there were COVID related deaths in the family, illnesses, job losses, economic losses.

Again, the racial tension that I mentioned earlier. There are series of weather events in the past year that affected a lot of communities.

So we know a lot of children are returning to the classroom actually having seen trauma in the past year and a half, as a result as well. But even for those who didn't have their concerns that arise to the level of what we identify as trauma, they definitely would have had anxiety, uncertainty, stress, and so the kinds of things they need are very compatible with what students that have experienced trauma would also need.

So what are these three words mean? Safety, which many many of you mentioned in that chat box that I asked about your input.

Safety here means both actual safety as well as believing that they're safe. And some call it physical and psychological safety as well. That's another way to say it. I really would emphasize, children, if you're here with a child, if you're here with a provider, if you're in the classroom or outside of the classroom, students need to be safe!

Safety has taken on a lot of definitions. We'll get into the mask wears, but they need to be safe. At the same time, they need to believe they're safe. Which is not the same thing. Frequently, not the same thing.

So we have to be concerned about how we ensure that it's safe, that the classrooms are safe, that the way that desks are organized are safe, that policies related to issues like the mask wearing one are designed to increase safety.

Those policies related to bullying and support for students who might be bullied are also designed to support safety and those children who need to feel safe and believe they're safe.

So we have to ask and also consider, what would it take for the child who, some of our children, the little ones that are five, four, six, 7 years old, may have never been in a classroom yet.

Just in the beginning of their classroom experience, boom! COVID hit and they were learning from home. I have a soon to turn five‑year old grandson whose mom has been trying too hard to do pre-K and K on Zoom.

Having never had any classroom experience at all. So we go from that to the array or other possibilities that exist with the things we see every day.

Sarah said, yes, it's up to 1.5 million kids have lost at least one parent to COVID this year. Yeah! Let that settle in for a moment and of course, we know that that's not spread evenly or equitable across the country. But we know that's not spread that way. That sponsor and community, community of color, low income of communities are much harder hit by those statistics than others. So you'll see concentration in schools and classrooms where you have this impact as well.

So we have to be concerned about both physical and psychological safety, both being safe and feeling safe and I will have some more to say about it as we get farther into the Webinar.

And then the word emotions. What does that mean? That covers a range as well. They need the capacity to recognize and express their emotions. We need the capacity to regulate their own emotions.

They need the capacity to identify and understand the emotions of others so they can communicate in ways that are safe. So all of these things, of course, are very closely related to one another. So emotional management, emotional regulation. Emotional awareness and sensitivity emotional fluency if you will. These are all things that are critically important and critical to the school success. As well as their overall well-being and then connections and connectiveness. The single most important thing. Hi, if we had to elevate one of these pillars just a little bit above the other, the single most important thing that children need is attachment and connection. Of course, to their parents, to their families, to the loved ones, to their siblings. But this also has to be carried through. They need a sense of belonging and a sense of connectiveness to the adults in the setting and teachers and a sense of belonging even with their peers. So we need to foster that.

And again, these are things we will talk about in the remainder of our time together this afternoon.

So this little bit of these three pillars is really one of the biggest ways I would like you to learn from today is that regardless of what hat you're wearing, what role you have, as you approach the beginning throughout the school of children going through the COVID‑19 season, this is the area of focus.

Academics is not on this list right now. So that is another message you're going to hear me talk about. Do I want students to do well academically? Absolutely! Do I want them to have the highest potential and have all of the possibilities of the future and the world ahead of them? Absolutely!

If we're going to get there, we need to start at a baseline and feel safe and connected in order to do that. So this is really the core, the single most important thing I want you to remember. And especially going to Vermont and remembering my own life growing up here and having my grandfather and other family members who were gardeners and farmers.

Imagine you had a piece of land that you normally tilled and created a garden or a crop and if that piece of land had been through two years of very terrible events.

Like fires, hurricanes or tornados or other things, you wouldn't just immediately say, oh, it's time to go back to business as usual. Let's just quit the seeds and hope for the best and expect to get a fruitful output from that garden.

No, you would recognize that work has to be done both with the soil itself, and then with the individual plants as you plant them to take into account what has happened in this period of time.

To recover from what has happened in this period of time. So really the most important take away is it's not just business as usual. We can't expect it will be for the children, for the parents, or for the teachers and others that will be working with them.

I would just pause for a moment before we go on. Are there any questions that came up in the chat that I should answer? I see people writing in wonderful comments.

I'm trying to keep up with those. But I would like to know if there's any questions. While you're checking, let me look at this last comment.

These words may fit one family and not another. There may be concern for everyone, especially with this new variant.

So Vanessa, I totally agree with you, that every child and family is different, and their needs will be different. These three words represent the core fundamental needs that every human being has all of the time. All of the time really. Not just coming out of COVID. They were heightened because of what has just come out of it.

Now, the way or the degree to which each and every individual child or family will need, what it may look like for them, that a piece of that connectiveness, for example, for a child in a very impact family that didn't lose their job or didn't lose loved ones during COVID, that sense of connectivitiness may be different.

What they have lost is being with their peers or being with their teachers so they may feel disconnected there, but they have gotten good connective at home.

And on the other hand, a child who did one of those 1.5 million children who lost a parent during COVID or whose family lost a job and they became homeless or something.

Their need for connectiveness is going to look very different. I totally agree with you that the needs are different and it's certainly not one size fits all, but I would also add, there's no one who doesn't need these three core essentials.

What it may look like can be a little bit different with each individual. But then there's a question, is there special consideration for foster children that we need to keep in mind?

Absolutely! Great question. And when I get going through some of these things a little more thoroughly towards the back end of the slides, when I focus specifically on safety, stability and well-being, I want you to think about the stability piece. As it relates to children and foster care.

That I have actually done a variation of this workshop for a foster care agency and just with some of the data I shared in the beginning of this Webinar about how the impact for children with special education needs, the impact of children in foster care has been traumatic.

Foster children had lots of moves, lot of instability. Across the board, and obviously, some students have had different experiences but the lack of access to technology. All of the things I have mentioned have increased and we know if they came into it in the first place, they have a heightened likelihood they have experienced trauma. So their need for safety and stability, particularly in the school setting, and having that stability and not having to move from one classroom to another, even within the same building is really crucial.

And the caregivers, adoptive parents, birth parents that the child may return to, really need attention to how can we help them with both their own secondary trauma but what needs do they have in order to best meet the needs of the children as they go through this, double trauma. Double challenge of facing the ins and outs and instabilities and moving to foster care as well as the instabilities brought on by the pandemic.

So that's the quick answer for now. I think you'll see more as we get to the slides ahead. Thank you for that question!

Oh, thank you, Pam for being here as a foster care manager. I hope you will find that as we go through some of the other things, you'll see special applications for children who either have been, or currently are in foster care or who may come into care this time.

Someone mentioned there were higher risk factors and fewer adult court. More domestic violence and abuse issues that can lead to child trauma and harm and we're just getting our arms around what it really means and looks like and what it will mean as the doors open and the schools.

And now there's more eyes and ears available for these children. So as we consider what are the other children bringing to school with them, whether it's social and emotional challenges. Whether it is a child in foster care. What are the fears and fantasies that sort of come back to school with them in their backpack and I would like to highlight four of the things that are there?

There is a feeling of being really different. They might say, no one understands me. I'm not like the rest of the kids. That's very common for children in foster care to continue from that but it's also common for children who have the special needs, social and emotional and other medical conditions, for example.

For these children who have had lots of things during COVID, they may think, I'm the only child in my class who had a parent die since the last time I was in school.

And in their particular classroom, they may be. Although I mentioned, we're likely to see clusters of things because of the overall representation of risk in some area. But this feeling of being really different.

David who is an author in the world of foster care and adoption talking about this as being a double dose of difference. They kind of feel different because of special needs, or if it's a foster care child because of that, and then the other circumstance of the school, not knowing anybody and you know, being different because they don't fit in or don't belong. So it's kind of the double dose of difference. Which can lead to the next box on the right there that says, kind of this internal working model and this internal way of viewing the world.

That means I'm kind of second rate and I'm doomed to fail. I'm not good enough. I'm not as good. I can't keep up and so on. So this is another piece that is kind of already often there in that backpack.

Some children have had really good early starts and it has helped them avoid having this world view but many times with the social and emotional needs and other special education needs or children in the foster care children will have that sense that I'm just, doomed.

And then, I'm too far behind and I'll never catch up. It's not even worth trying. And then the last one I would like to highlight is that trauma triggers are working everywhere and they're going to pop up when you least expect it. Now, on the one hand, it's kind of a statement of fact. Children who experience trauma, there can be things that trigger them, a sight, a sound, a smell, a circumstance, the particular way a desk looks or sitting on the stairs or being made to line up with others.

There's just so many things, lunchtime. It can trigger their reexperiencing of a trauma they have been through. The other piece, while I put it on this slide, it's kind of that external weight that the child is caring in their backpack meaning they have a sense that their brain is on hyperalert status.

They're brain is hyper tuned in for the potential of those tricks that might pop up anywhere. And so when you have to be hyperalert like that any time, it makes it a lot harder!

So this still makes relationships a lot harder. So some of the impacts of those fantasies and fears carried in the backpack, you can see a whole list of them here. I'm not going to read every word here for you. I don't approach PowerPoints that way, but you know, obviously there's some.

There's a lot of grief and loss that you will see with children this year and even more than others. Some of it is expressed through behavior and some will be expressed in symptoms that look like other things. Which is why you'll see, I have a note on a slide later up. I'm going to say, let's not do heavy duty assessments and evaluations that are going to kind of set the stage for this child's next full year or two or three of schooling at this time.

They may have trauma or other mental health concerns that right now, might be masking in some of these other ways. We're also quite likely to see a heightened degree of social anxiety, the which we might not see before because we have unusual amount of social anxiety but some students bring.

Again, this is very common for our foster care population. And then we have the fact they haven't been with their peers so much in the past year and a half or so which increases anxiety for everyone.

And then we're going to have some kids who are not getting identified for their special educational needs because everyone is kind of in this pool.

Extra anxiety and extra stress level. So sometimes we might miss some kids who have genuine, identifiable special needs that we may need to pay attention to. On the other hand, some of the things may be masking so we may be mislabeling it or funneling kids in special education when that's not the direction they need to go.

They need support. They absolutely need those supports but it doesn't mean they permanently need to be tracking the child who is in special education.

So as we think about what is most helpful for children and families, I would like to draw your attention from this work from circle of security and certainly you can learn more about circle of security by looking them up. They have a lot of stuff. You can use Google and other sites and so on. The idea here is, that as you think about what I said earlier, it's not about business as usual.

It's not about, just getting right down to the academics because the kids are behind and you have to catch them up quickly.

It's about, how can I make sure they have the capacity. Again, the tilling of the soil, getting it ready as well as, you know, maybe just not letting it grow from the garden analogy I used earlier.

So circle of security is a web that helps people understand what it is that children need from adults. So circle of security explains it in the sense of parents attending to the needs of their children, but we can also think about it in terms of other adults in any life, such as teachers and mental health providers and community advocates. And these two slides, this one and the next one which I'm about to go to, don't feel like you miss any words. Basically the words are the same.

I want to highlight for you, you can see this slide pictures the concepts with very little kids, babies and toddlers whereas the next slide, pictures it with older kids and you know, junior high and teenagers.

So I really want to make sure you understand this is not just a way of thinking about students for babies or toddlers or for older children, but it's way of thinking about the role of adults in the lives of children.

Charlotte, I see you're familiar with it. It can definitely be helpful to focus on being responsive to the children's needs. So we want the adult, like the hands show, that it's both the secure base that says from this base, you request go forward in the world. You can learn! You can explore. You can try things that are a little bit risky. You haven't seen this from which to do that. And then the ‑‑ they have the base in three layers. The home, the family, at the school through the teachers and other adults they interact with. And they have that base within their community. Other support people, advocates, neighbors and other members of the community.

They can have three layers of that base. That's what is ideal and that's what we should look towards. So then we support they can explore. We support the capacity they can take some risk. We also would say, pay attention and enjoy. When we do explore and when we do have some accomplishments that we're attentive.

That we're tuned in and present so we can enjoy them as they're doing that. As the language and circles of security, we can do that with them. So that's one part of the roles for the adults in the community but then the other part is, you can see the children are turning. It's also these adults saying, I'm here for you. You can safely turn to me.

And I'm going to look out for your safety and offer you as often as possible to be able to protect you. I'm going to always welcome you coming back to me, whether you just need to come back and touch base like the little two‑year olds do when they kind of run out. I will have someone to comfort me sad, confused, scared.

That will help me organize the feelings, getting back to the emotional regulation piece of it. So the adults are part of that, bigger, stronger, wiser but the keyword is also kind. Being in charge when necessary and helping. The next piece I want to talk about is that adults in the life of children can do to help make this transition to school more successful and safer and create the groundwork for that learning opportunity is to sport the family list.

So we often think about individual resilience and that's important but as it relates to a topic today, I really want to stress this idea of family resilience. You see?

The resilience of each individual in the family will contribute to family resilience but it's not exactly the same and it's not a math formula. So the family resilience is not just the sum of the parts of the individual resiliency of the individual members. It's a little more dynamic. It's more complex than that. I'm going to show you in the next couple of slides, some of the signs and characteristics of family resilience and I'm showing you these, not so you can use them against the family in any case.

I don't want you to think of this as something to say, oh, dear! This family isn't do this. You know, some of these things. We should consider them dysfunctional or we should be worried about them or consider taking the children away or reporting them to other systems. That's not the fact.

Sharing this information is to say, here's some things I know about family resilience. Let me get a feel where it is at with this family that I'm supporting or this child I'm teaching. And if there's an area that doesn't seem to be strong right there in their life, what other support services can I pull for them, in partnership with them and that's even better.

To do with, to be with, and to do with. Rather than to do something for or on behalf of it. So four things to look at in terms of signs of family resilience, during times of prolonged structured crisis which, this is kind of what COVID has been, right? Are they able to maintain the sense of membership?

We are also a family. Even if they have, perhaps, been separated in any way during the pandemic either by a family member being hospitalized, or child welfare involvement or someone who lost their job and had to go somewhere else to work and is right now, available to live with the other family member.

Or other kinds of residential substance addiction treatment or incarceration, nursing home care.

There are so many times when there could be a family separation but whether there's separation or even whether everyone is under the same roof as pictured there, are they able to maintain a sense of, we are all in it together?

We're all a family. And in that context is the youngest and most vulnerable still able to be cared for even when the adults are caught up in this time of crisis.

And then the capacity to maintain economic support through the crisis or stress. Now, often times for families, that was a struggle even before COVID and for other families, it was a struggle, but they got support from some income, some ways of making housing. Things that make this stable and then it was thrown out of whack during COVID.

So again, if we see there's a family that is having difficulty with this maintaining of economic support, it's thinking about how can we create it if we know about resources in the community to help them in that area.

The four characteristics of the family, in the classroom and supports outside, is there a sense of hope and optimism? Despite going through it, we're going through it together.

Now, when I talk about whole communities, I give caution about that phrase. Oh, we're all in it together. Because it doesn't really ring true. We're not in it all together. There are inequities, serious ones related to race, related to income, related to age, related to gender, related to sexuality.

There's a lot of inequities in our world and we're not letting it all, quote, be it in together. That's a different thing when I talk about family resilience, the idea behind family resilience is, together as a family, we're in it together. Whatever we're facing. We're hopeful.

We're going to get through it. There's something good on the other end of it. Even for a family that is able to communicate with feelings, not just the easy ones but the hard ones too! And many of you have mentioned the word flexibility when I asked what children need, absolutely, there needs to be flexibility but at the same time, there's also consistency, consistency, stability. Structure.

So for family resilience, there needs to be the capacity to not go too far in either of those directions but to really be able to have some balance.

Sometimes, we have some basic stable structure and consistency and other times, we can be flexible, you know. Maybe we have to shift around when it's mealtime to accommodate some of the new challenges that are in our life. We can be flexible and have some core consistency. And then capacity for problem solving. You know, how does that parent juggle working from home and moving their child, schooling from home.

How have they been able to do that? What has that looked like? Give grace. One of the phrases I like to use when I teach about self‑care but it certainly applies here, and someone did mention the word is that, grace and space. We have to give the children and families the grace and space to emerge from this period into the next phase of their life development.

So if children have not been able to keep up, for example, with their schoolwork, to have a sense of grace. But if that parent was struggling to meet the needs of three different children, three different school requirements, virtual, and only having one computer and still maintaining their own workload and maybe worry about an aging parent that was in a nursing home that was exposed to COVID.

All of these things that families were juggling. Half have been able to solve this problem and I'm giving them grace and space and support for the capacity they have demonstrated around solving problems. Now, this chart just has a few more ways of looking at family resilience and I'm not going to linger on it, and I'll keep us moving.

You'll have it in the handout, and it breaks it down even further about the things you can think about in terms of supporting family resilience. So as we think about what does it take to support children and families during this time, here's some quick tips. I said some of them. I told you I would bring them throughout.

Relationships will matter more than the schoolwork right now. The social and emotional learning is critical. And it's part of setting that foundational, so they will be able to learn. It's not saying we don't want them to learn. It's saying we need to create the circumstances that help them best to learn. We have to know each individual child, parent, staff and community like someone said a few months ago.

I showed the three pillars and be everyone was different. Absolutely! So one of the really important things is do we know our community? Do we know our students? Do we know our children?

So addressing the needs during this post-COVID period is going to be more essential than trying to restart some kind of pre-COVID sense of normal or approach. As I said, it's not time to do the long-term educational assessments.

We have to do some; we have to know what is going on and happening. We have to make some assessments, but we need to recognize, that once people settle in, we may have to redo the assessments.

This is not the time to lock something in and say, oh, wow, the assessment shows me this. There's going to be a lot of flex and fluidity. There's going to be symptoms that mask other things, so we just need to be aware of that as we approach any kind of assessment process.

And then I started right in the beginning with a slide about the teachers and staff because it's so critical. If we're going to really think about the whole, getting back to school, we have to attend to the needs of the teachers as well as the students. Now, before we go on to this next set of tips, I would like us to just try doing a poll too.

This is just your thoughts on how educators can best support families as they transition back to school learning.

I still see answers popping up there I'll leave it for ten more seconds and then close it down.

So we can see there is this understanding that we need to focus on social and emotional learning, reinforcing, relationships and well-being are more important than academic accomplishments at this time and using learning from COVID to address the economic status and other learning differences.

We see this coming through and then we have to have flexibility related to some of the specific things like mask wearing and vaccinations.

Fewer of you said, do as much as possible to make sure everything is the way with it used to be. Yes, we have to be cautious about that. The way it used to be wasn't necessarily great for every student and every family. So to the extent it was good for some families, we want to help them have that sense of safety. But we also don't want to have blinders on and just return to some kind of quote, normal that wasn't really that equitable or good to begin with.

We can take the poll down now. As you're taking it down, Lynda, I noticed a comment here there's a link to the info graphic with the responses from over a thousand families regarding their experiences from the past year.

Yeah, that is a really really helpful info graphic and I hope you will share it with everyone because it's very eye opening.

So some of the things we want to encourage and support and help families to do is to locate, what are the learning resources that will help my child and me help me with my child. Schools vary greatly but communication steps up and even corporations in some instances have stepped up to offer learning resources. We just don't want to overwhelm anyone. We don't want it like a fire hose, oh, here's all of the resources. But give parents support and help as they find learning resources that will be useful and valuable to their particular child and family. As well as other resources, not necessarily learning related. Whether it's about food security, housing security or other things needed.

Parents, we also want you to be encouraged that when you are a parent or if you're working with parents, be proactive about communicating your needs and expectations related to all kinds of things, you know? Your children’s social anxiety and strength and progress and needs. Even around things like math scoring which I'm going to say more in a few moments.

And then, not only make your own needs known, but being considerate and giving grace, giving grace and being sensitive to those other needs of other students and parents as well.

Some other things to keep in mind for the parents at home. We still may not be learning and hopefully everyone is coming back to school but even for the students who are still learning from home or at least come home after school and have homework or other things.

Relax some of the rules around things like screen time or chore time or things and try to have some flexibility so you can build relationships. Use some of the resources that we just talked about in the last slide but without getting overwhelmed. Don't feel like because a therapist has given you a resource, you don't have to use every single one. You can be choosey, picky or selective.

By following the child's leads, that's a good way to do that as we mentioned in the circle of security slide. And someone very often said, the idea about what people need is to move our bodies! Please build an opportunity for children to move in their bodies, at least, little kids every twenty or 30 minutes and older kids, at least an hour get movement in.

Whatever takes, building one on one time, whether it's doing a chore or going to the grocery store together. Build in one-on-one time so you can connect and understand what their worries and concerns and successes and highlights are. So I have mentioned earlier that both predictability and flexibility are important. Predictability is really key to having children feel safe and stable. This is especially true about children from the foster care world.

We want to use predictability in a way but to go to the bottom and say, that doesn't have rigidity involved. Think about it, what is it in the environment and at home and in school, that can be stable and predictable for the child.

What is it how we use time, rituals, routines around mealtimes, study times, around individual time versus group time? How can we as time help with unpredicted ways. Especially, rules and consequences.

So thinking, are we creating a sense of stability and unpredictability without being rigid.

Please be aware that some of the most difficult times for many children is transition time. So when they're facing transition, any children have been dealing with transitions long before COVID hit. So again, this is one of the things that is exaggerated and heightened. So think about ways that you can create calming and peaceful moments when there's a transition, whether it's between a group activity and an individual one, or sedentary activity and a physically active one or a home versus school or changing classes.

Can there be a little bit of time for some breathing, can there be a little time for a snack or hydration? Can there be time, almost like a mantra, a song to sing. What can be built into those transitions that help make them a little smoother.

As you think about transitions, think about having a child. Helping them to understand and make a concrete visual! What are the activities that make me feel strong? What are the activities that make me feel calm? What are the activities that help me focus on my goals and my dreams?

Help each individual child in the classroom and at home, identify these three types of activities and make a visual. Whether they can write or journal, make a collage out of magazine pictures or do their own artwork. A checklist that can be on the back of a bedroom door or refrigerator.

So they have the capacity to self‑identify, if I feel like I'm having a hard time, feeling a less stressed, maybe I can try one of these activities to help me feel stronger or calmer or safer during that time.

And at the same time, help create a sense of balance for children and adults. So we want to help children learn how they can even use their own breathing to regulate, again, their emotions and senses.

What permission do they have to move their body, even if it's not officially the time to move their body? Thinking without being disruptive or chaotic for the people who need predictability and structure, are there ways for children who need a little bit of opportunity to move their body, sooner than the official body moving time, what options can we give them?

Can we give them something to do with their hands? Stress balls to squeeze in something on their desk they can push on with their feet. What are some opportunities we can give them when it's not technically that time?

And then nurturing, creativity, laughter and play. And might have noticed, this adds up to the AB and C of things to remember about helping children in the classroom settle. So B is the balancing of body heart and senses and now we're at communication and connection.

At home, as often as possible, eating meals together and even in the classroom and school, even when there's a shared time per eating, it's very valuable.

So showing affection. How can touch be shared appropriately? You have seen some of the memes that have gone around about teachers and classrooms. You know, giving some kids a hug and some kids a high five and some kids just an air high five as options to how we greet each other in the beginning or end of the school day.

But addressing these things directly rather than making an assumption. Letting people know they have choices. That we respect their body and sense of safety.

Part of that feeling safe that I brought up in the beginning. And never hinging their opportunity for relationship based on behavior.

So whatever consequences there is for behavior and if you need it written in an IEP or 504, please do it.

Never have it be that you don't get play time with your peers, at recess, or you don't get that special art class with your favorite teacher if your behavior is unacceptable.

That we find other ways to create the consequences for behaviors that do not damage or harm their capacity to have their meaningful relationships that really are going to give them what they need. So now we'll think beyond COVID‑19 and beyond the areas of safety, stability, emotional regulation and connection.

Another way I'm going to word it is in the language of safety and stability and well-being. Regardless of COVID, or not COVID, what are the tips that will be helpful.

This is where I would like to have poll number three brought up, please. So thinking about your own life, when you're in school, did you usually feel safe? Rarely or never feel safe? Or didn't even have half a thought to safety?

All right, so we see that the biggest number of answers here is that I really didn't have to give much thought to my safety and others who are saying, I usually felt safe. And a few who are saying, I thought rarely or never felt safe. We can take this poll down now.

What I want you to think about is, what a gift it is to not even worry about whether I'm safe or not, or whether I'm ‑‑ or if I do think about it, I think, oh, yeah, I am safe!

Those are the biggest answers. I either didn't have to think about it or yeah, I know I'm safe. What a gift? So many children, back to the children in foster care, as well as children with special educational needs, especially in the categories, that's not a given like it was for us who answered the poll.

So they're always on high alert. This is before COVID and beyond COVID and again, it's one of the things exaggerated during COVID.

I had awesome teachers at school, and they went beyond what was asked. Now a lot of children and adults have that memory in the collection of teachers in their life.

I see the question there and I'm going to try to get to it about addressing leadership that is not allowing access to professional development. I'm going to try to come to it in a couple of slides down the road. If you don't feel that I'm getting to it, Kelly, in a few moments, give me another reminder.

I do think I will come to that. Some of the things to support physical and psychological safety. Is there a go to person, for parents, caregivers and children and caseworkers, if it's a child with a caseworker?

When there's a child with identifying needs, is there a go to person that they know they can turn to?

How often do we provide choice and control? This is a big part of believing that you're safe, not just being safe. So whether you can do this piece of work now or later or you can sit over here in this area of the classroom to do this or you can do that at your desk? You can work together with another person, or you can work on your own.

However many times there can be some choice or control, it increases the sense of safety and connection and regulation. Really focus on the antibullying, community building and school climate and ensure it's inclusive of all students.

It's not all of the time, not just career post-COVID but it's imperative now. The consequences of disciplinary actions are not overly punitive. Which unfortunately does happen a lot. And then be sure we're proactively addressing the senses in terms of the concerns related to COVID like the vaccines and mask wear. Many schools are going to have mask optional policies.

So if there are mask optional policies, do you have a way to make sure those who do wear masks are not stigmatized to bullies or on the other hand, depending on culture, maybe it's the ones who don't wear it that are stigmatized it. How are we protecting against that?

How the school policy? What are we doing with that? And then of course, with the slow return of in person schooling, it's a lot less likely that we're going to really have any kind of social distancing so for parents who are concerned about that, what are some of the responses that we can give?

What are some of the ways we can minimize at least the times when children are really crowded together? Can we juggle and vary alternate times when students have to pass in the hall? Or can we alternate lunchroom time?

So just thinking creatively. Yeah, we may not be able to fully do the thing we think of as social distancing, but can we create this little bit more safe space and concept in the way we handle our schedules and our moving about in the school.

And then we want to support stability. And as we think about supporting stability, this is just another place I had a poll question to get you to think about what these children today might be going through, versus what we may have gone through.

So can we put up poll four here, please?

Thinking about stability at home and at school and how they are related based on this question? While you're finishing up your response to the poll, I see Sally's question.

Isn't this presentation for all students and be not just those with social and emotional needs? Absolutely! I want to highlight the things that are particularly important for those students because that's the scope of what we're doing here with SAMHSA but it's absolutely relevant to all students and pre-COVID as well as post.

So I definitely agree with your premises in that question. It lacks like we have good answers. We don't have safe or stable situation at home. Stability and school stability, directly interact and are related to each other.

Caring teachers, coaches or school-based mentors. That is a trick response that I put in there. It doesn't necessarily make up for not having stability at home, but it can be a mitigated factor that can make a huge difference in well-being and safety.

And multiple school or family moves can harm school success so we want to focus on stability as much as we can. We can take that flag down. So as you think stability, make sure there's meaningful and concrete supports given. I did see the note from Margaret making sure families know about parenting. I agree with it.

I'm going to throw in a caveat here. There's a lot of research about parenting classes and unfortunately many of them have been found to be ineffective. And it's not necessarily because the class itself is bad or ineffective. It's because of instead of the right dose at the right time at the right purpose, it's kind of the opposite of that. Classes, they are not targeted enough. So people who have teenagers and are struggling with it, are in a parent’s class talking about the developmental needs of two‑year olds.

That's an extreme way to put it but be careful about blanket recommending parents classes but allowing them to know about the resources and being available to help them discern which ones may be most useful for them. So the home and the school and any other providers and other supports that is doing. And then minimizing the disruption, like, I was involved with one school where they had to just put all of the same graders together and then that three or four ‑‑ if we can minimize that, that instability be is really difficult for students.

So we, we're getting close to the end and I'm going to allow time for additional questions. So I'm going to go through the last couple of slides I have for you very quickly and then we'll get to the questions.

But as you can think about supporting well-being as well. There needs to be ‑‑ all students, not just those who recognized social and emotional disturbances but especially in this post-COVID era we're entering

Make sure there's coaching and teaching for teacher. We have to help leadership understand, when teachers can get their secondary trauma needs met and have professional development, you're going to get better outcomes for the students, for the test results.

You're going to get the better outcomes for the leaders and put it in terms of, this is how we're going to get the outcomes they need and want is by providing these opportunities for the training and the coaching and the mentoring for the teachers, the professional development and secondary trauma support.

We also want to provide ways that students can get that self‑regulation and multi‑sensory support for when they are just needing a little extra of that.

Tune in. I always use an old fashion radio. When you tune the dial, and you're not quite on the station, you get the static. But when you get to the station, then you get the clear message. Your act of tuning in is not changing what is being broadcast. You're just making yourself better to receive it.

That's what we have to get better at when it comes to children. So tuning in on what children are feeling and what concerns they might have. How they understand the information. Information that is around the community related to COVID or vaccines or just, you know, a race or gender or anything. How are they receiving information? And then, who? Who might they be concerned about? Who is on their mind? Not just what is on their mind and then finally, the last piece I just wanted to highlight very briefly and then I will be open for any additional questions.

The support for well-being it has to especially focus on the older youth. Imagine what it is like for the youth who were juniors and seniors in high school. Now, we have another group coming along.

They are starting to get into the transition planning stage. So we really have to fully engage them as well as their parents in transition planning and you know, there's transition planning in the school setting. Sometimes there's medical or mental health transition planning. If they're in foster care, there's a whole transition planning.

Let's make sure we get these things in sync. No one should have three or four five different transition plans.

And make sure they have access to the things. They need concrete logistic things so they can successfully take the next step towards adulthood.

And access to a full array of resources that they can participate in after they complete high school. It doesn't all have to be college or no college. It can be all of these other types of opportunities as well. And part of supporting the well-being is being an advocate and supporting caregivers and view themselves to be their own advocates.

So to really help them know their way. Help them know their options. Help equip them with skill building that they can then use to be their own voice and their own advocate. And so they can really facilitate their own journey through the system, particularly if they do need an IEP or a 504 plan.

And then we want them to ‑‑ well, we do want to have broader activities that do involve the whole school, so we don't miss anything. So that anyone who has anxiety or trauma or stress or just ‑‑ needs extra support or feeling a little bit unstable or scare.

Everyone has these opportunities. To any about all of the positive things we have been talking about that engage. Parent support groups as well as training classes that were mentioned a moment ago. There is a lot of research that even though a lot of the parent training classes don't have as much, but peer support is very high in terms of resulting in effective outcomes. And then providing materials for teachers. Going back to the question that, we want to really help our leadership understand that this is in their best interest too as leadership if they ensure their teachers and other axillary members of the staff have their needs met, they will be more equipped to meet the needs of the students.

So on that note, I have completed the formal part of what I wanted to share. And I think we have a little bit of time left for some questions. So Lynda?

>> Lynda: Sue, you had mentioned in the incredible presentation that you wanted to circle back to Vanessa's comment about her teachers when she was in school and how they went far beyond what was asked or what they need and really had to do to make sure their students were okay.

>> Sue: Yes, absolutely! The key point that Vanessa made is that's how you remembered it. The reason you remember it is because those teachers placed a value on connection and relationship. So other teachers might have done equally as well with other aspects of teaching but didn't place the same value on connection and relationship and so that doesn't carry forth to the student.

So that again goes to what I said was going to be my most important point of the whole session is that connection and relation, along with ‑‑ emotional regulation, those are the pillars. They are the most important things.

When you do that, years to come, when your student is Vanessa, they're going to say, yeah, I had that teacher and they're going to learn better as a result.

>> Lynda: That's a great analogy! Thank you so much! As always, Sue, you are so soothing and we're not in soothing times, so we definitely appreciate your wisdom. I would just one more time, want to direct you to the links that we have added to the notes. Please feel free to use that info graphic any way that you find is helpful.

The information included is from families who are raising their children during this time, and it is very eye opening! With that, I would thank all of you for being here with us today. And Kelly, I will turn this over to you.

>> Thank you, Lynda and Sue for your presentation today. I think I can say on behalf of the participants, we thoroughly enjoyed it and we appreciate the information! Thank you so much!

I will switch the screen now to a short evaluation and ask that you take a few moments to fill this out for us. Please know that a letter of attendance is available there for you to download. One will also be sent to you via e‑mail with the recording link and the PowerPoint presentation.

Again, I would like to thank SAMHSA for allowing us to share this information with you today and enjoy the rest of your afternoon!

Thanks so much!