

**Administration for Children and Families (ACF)  
Integrating Executive Function Principles and Soft Skills Activities and Case Management  
Coaching into TANF Work Programs in Order to Improve Economic Success for TANF  
Recipients Webinar  
February 4, 2015**

**Damon Waters:** Hello everyone and welcome to our webinar on integrating executive function principles and soft skills activities and case management coaching into TANF work programs in order to improve economic success for TANF recipients. Today's webinar is being hosted by the Office of Family Assistance within the Administration for Children and Families.

Understanding the executive function levels and soft skill needs of clients are important to helping clients achieve higher levels of economic stability. It is a cognitive process by which the brain works to help a person achieve goals such as working memory, reasoning, problem solving, as well as planning execution. Developing program strategies including case management and assessment are important components of a comprehensive strategy to improving client outcomes. Many of you know that tailoring services to the needs of a client can have a tremendous impact on client success. It is our hope that today's webinar will provide you with some additional resources to help TANF programs and other human services stakeholders explore ways to integrate a variety of activities into your programming to improve the economic success among those you serve. To assist you in better understanding of executive functioning and how it relates to the work you do, we have brought together representatives from Crittenton Women's Union, the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities Building Better Programs Initiative, and the Minnesota Families Achieving Success Today, also known as Minnesota FAST.

LaDonna Pavetti, from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities will provide an overview of executive function principles and the emergence of using executive function principles within the human services. She will discuss the intersection of execution function and client services and

some of the work coordinated by the Building Better Programs Initiative. Elizabeth Babcock, from the Crittenton's Women's Union, will share some insights on some of the approaches they use at Crittenton to improve executive functioning and economic mobility among TANF clients and low skilled individuals. Kate Probert, from the Ramsey County TANF and Workforce Program, along with Boyd Brown, from Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota, will share lessons learned and implementation strategies from Ramsey County, Minnesota. As I already mentioned, we will have a few minutes for Q&A after each presentation and then a final Q&A session at the conclusion of the webinar. You may use the chat feature on your screen to submit your questions throughout the webinar, as already mentioned. And at the conclusion of the webinar a questionnaire will automatically pop up on your screen. We ask that you take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire, as it helps us in looking at ways we can best provide you with technical assistance that is responsive and relevant to the work you do. Without further ado I would like to turn the floor over to LaDonna Pavetti from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. LaDonna you have the floor.

**Dr. Pavetti:** Thank you very much. So I am delighted to be here. So what I'm going to do today is I'm going to start with sort of what I think the challenge is. And the challenge is really thinking about; can we use executive function concepts and principles to improve the effectiveness of TANF programs? And so what I'm going to do is talk about why are we even asking the question, what are executive function skills and why they matter, and then what would characterize an executive function informed employment program. So what would it actually look like? So starting with "why" or "why are they interested in executive function skills for adults?" One is that we have modest success even in our most effective employment programs, and I'll show you a chart on that in a minute. We also have declining employment among single

mothers with high school education or less for most of the last 10 years. So we actually are doing not as well as we were early on when the economy was much stronger. We also have cash assistance provided to very few families, so employment really is, sort of the pathway and the only pathway out of poverty for families. And that there is also evidence that if we teach life skills, which executive function skills are a part, that we can do better than in other programs. And then finally we have interest, um, the coming really from the two generation perspective, that if we invest in adults that we really would be able to not only see impacts on adults but also on kids. So just sort of now what I want to show you is, this is just a graph that shows you some impacts, these are all programs that have been evaluated in the welfare context that were evaluated using random assignments, all had effective ... all were effective. And what you see here is that our standard programs which the four bar, fourth of the bar to the right on the slide, where we showed more work first, some were mixed models, but sort of our traditional workforce programs. The very first set of bars is from a program called Building Nebraska Families and Building Nebraska Families was a program that was quite different and part of the reason why it was different—there were several components of it, but one is that it was done in people’s homes and it wasn’t specifically focused on achieving, on employment. But it was really focused on really trying to help people build their skills that would allow them to succeed both in their family life as well as at work. So it focused on time management, it focused on setting goals, it focused on money management, on how to deal with stress; so there were lots of things. And what we saw in that program was for the group of TANF recipients who had the most significant barriers; we saw a very significant increase in stable employment. So when people who were employed for 12 months or longer. So that is a pretty high standard. And it is a much bigger impact than we have ever seen in other programs. So I think that really, sort of, is

a reason to sort of think about, are there ways that we can use what we learned from that program as well as a lot of what we're learning from brain science to really do a better job in our work programs? The other thing that I think is important is that part of the impetus with thinking about executive function principles for improving disadvantaged adults really comes out of a concern for outcomes for children. And specifically the Frontiers of Innovation Project at the Harvard Center on the Developing Child has a three part theory of change. And one part of that theory of change really involves thinking about ... that basically says that interventions that improve the caregiving environment by strengthening the executive function and self regulation skills will enhance their employability, thereby providing an opportunity to augment child outcomes by strengthening the economic and social stability of the family. So it really is sort of, what's important about that is basically it's really time to say that if we're going to have big impacts on kids, we're not going to do it by just investing in kids; we're also going to have to really think about their parents. The next part of this is ... what I want to do is, really talk about a little bit why they matter. They matter because they're critical for job success. They are critical for cognitive social and psychological development. They are critical for success in school and in life and for mental and physical health. So, executive function skills are skills that really, we use every day in all aspects of our lives. So having, um, being able to have strong executive function skills or compensate for weak ones is really important for success. Now what I want to do is to talk a little bit about what are they? The short definition is sort of conscious control of what we think and do. So it's really sort of being able to take a step back, think, plan what you do and they're ... what's important also is they're brain based, they're newer cognitive processes, and it's the part of the brain that develops the slowest and the least so there's this long period in which they develop, and that they're also very malleable. So those are really important

contexts. I find it useful to think about executive functioning—it has two different dimensions; one is a process dimension which is, what are the steps we go through to achieve a goal? And the other is a skill dimension which is, what are the skills we draw on at each stage of the process in order to be successful? So what I'm going to do is show you, sort of, different representations from different people who have done research in this area. So I'm going to start with some work by Bill Zelazo who runs an Executive Function Lab at the University of Minnesota. His work focuses primarily on kids, but he has developed this four stage sort of—process model which basically says, you know, you start with what he calls “represent”, which is ... what you're saying: “What is it I am trying to achieve; what's the problem I'm trying to solve or what is the goal I'm trying to achieve? And what is my plan for achieving it? How do I put that plan into action so what might be the execution? And then how do I evaluate what I am doing?” And it's a feedback loop that you're constantly going through this process, and it is this process that really allows you to achieve success. And in the next slide what I want to show you is, is that it really depends on who you talk to, how people define what the skills are. And if you look at the literature on children, you will see a very different set of skills than people who focus on older kids or on adults. And that's partially because just, sort of, the tasks that we're tasked with are different. So this is a set of skills that is quite a long list of skills, but this comes out of work that is done by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare, who are mental health practitioners who do a lot of work with trying to work with parents and educators on really thinking about how do you actually use principles and knowledge of executive function skills to help change behaviors. So how do you use it to help kids get their homework done, how do you use it to help kids succeed in college, how do you use it? So a lot of this is sort of thinking much more at a much finer level. So there are things on here like planning. There are things on here like time management.

Do I have a good sense of time and can I organize my time to get things done? Meta-cognition: sometimes the language we use is sort of theoretical but that is a lot about how do we evaluate what we're doing? Task initiation: can I get started doing something? Inhibitory control: can I stop myself from going down the street when I should be going down the other direction to go to my work program? So, it really is ... again, there's a lot of different skills that come into play and some of it is thinking about how do these skills play out in our program? Sylvia Bunge, who is another neuroscientist who runs a lab at the University of California at Berkeley, has ... I'm not sure it's going to your screen. It's missing my ... Oh, there it goes. Really sort of has this view of thinking about executive function skills as being interconnected and of really thinking about that it's the planning, the self control, and monitoring. And her work comes out of work with students; older students and adults. And she sort of sees this as really sort of the core of what really makes a difference. And what I would like to do is sort of propose that we sort of use the language that we're used to using in our programs to put this together. And I just sort of came up with this—so I know we all like acronyms—of really it's setting a goal, it's planning how you achieve it, how you will act to get it done and reviewing and revising it. So I call it SPAR. So again, if you think of this, these are really sort of all components of programs, of what we do often in work programs. But what I would like to posit is that I believe that the way in which you do them is different if you really are taking into account what we know about executive function skills. And I think it is important when thinking about the impact on a program is thinking about what do we know about factors that impair executive function skills? We know that stress, lack of sleep, lack of exercise, sadness, loneliness, poor nutrition ... all of those negatively impact our ability to actually achieve our goals and to use our executive function skills. So how do we improve executive function skills? There's actually three ways in

which we can do it. One is we work on reducing things that impair executive function. So the things I just talked about. There are ways that we can do what I often refer to as work-arounds. What are the ways to reduce the demands on executive function skills? How can we change the environment? How can we provide tools to make tasks easier? And then the other is actually working on building those skills directly. So breaking things into small steps. Training them. Challenging them. Practicing them. And practice is a really important way in which executive function skills are built. And what I'd like to do now is just sort of think about if you were going to really operate a program that would ... that builds on executive function skills, what would it look like? And there are a number of things that I have outlined here. One is that it really starts with setting goals and the participants are encouraged to set individualized goals that are both challenging but achievable and meaningful. The second is, is that participants are supported in pursuit of intermediate goals. So the goal may not, the first goal may not be getting a job. The first goal may be really addressing something that's getting in the way of either keeping a job or getting a job; so really the support of those intermediate steps that have a short time horizon. Coaching, which you're going to hear more about from Beth, is used to facilitate the achievement of goal and development skills. And coaches really act as guides through the process and facilitate the stages of a goal setting process. And they help individuals to develop a detailed plan that serves as a roadmap for actually reaching their goal. Another sort of characteristic is, the program helps individuals to recognize their strengths and their weaknesses and really helps individuals to think about how can they use their strengths to compensate for weaknesses. So it really tries very much to be a strength based model. Other components is that expectations for individuals are consistent with their ability to successfully engage in effortful tasks. One thing that we know about using executive function skills is because they are, um, it's

conscious control; they're very effortful to use and so you want to make sure that what you're asking of people is consistent with their ability to actually successfully engage in those tasks.

Next is that the program helps individuals to handle stress and or helps them to reduce stress in their lives. So, stress is really, a really important part of thinking about executive function skills because it really does diminish people's ability to be able to engage in effortful behavior. And then the program really understands and supports strategies for modifying the environment.

That's something we don't tend to do. So that's really sort of an important part, is thinking about how can you lessen the negative impact of skills if they're weak? There is also opportunities for participants that they ... to build their executive function skills that are built into the program.

And also incentives are used thoughtfully and systematically to help individuals to maintain their effort and motivation for ... to work towards longer term goals and again when the effort is really difficult. And finally, if you think about the four stages, there is this stage; the last stage is really about sort of monitoring and evaluating. And so you want to make sure that what's built into the program is a process for reviewing and reflecting and it's an integral part of the program so that when plans are developed, they're not static, but they are a living document that you really engage in a process of saying "Okay, here's my plan." You allow people to execute the plan and when the plan is executed, either successfully or not, you're evaluating to say "What did we learn and what can we do differently?" So with that I'm going to stop. I have a slide here with my email and more information; so if you want to just be engaged in further activities, just let me know. We've been doing a lot of work around this and really trying to build a process and tools for programs to use. So with that I will open it up for questions. I'm going to turn it over to Damon.

**Damon:** Thanks Donna. We do have a couple of questions. The first one is with regard to the programs that are working primarily with adults. “Can executive function skills be taught to adults, and if so, what are some promising strategies or activities that programs should invest in to coordinate that?”

**Dr. Pavetti:** Executive function skills can be taught and I think that you know we ... there isn't sort of one particular way. First of all, it depends on what skill you are trying to build. So what you would do around time management is very different than what you would be doing around inhibitory control. So it's really trying to think about what is the skill that is weak, that may be causing difficulties for people? And then trying to sort of think about what are the ways to actually do that. But if, when I said before, one of the things that is really critical is the way you build executive function skills is to practice them. So it is not just a matter of teaching, so a didactic saying, “This is what you do for time management, for time,” and that's sort of a relatively easy example ... is that what you want to do is, just assume you have, um, if you're doing a couple week's job readiness program, what you want to do is to build into that program exercises, things where people have to actually develop a way to manage their time so they're actually doing it and you're able to work with them about how to do it best. So, I think that while that question may seem ... that's a pretty complicated question, because when you think about having a lot of different skills, you're really, what you do for each one of them is different and we're going to be working with Mathematica on really trying to develop some of those tools and some very specific concrete pieces that people can do to actually address each of those skills.

**Damon:** Thanks Donna. We have another question. “How do you discern the difference between executive function skills and soft skills?”

**Dr. Pavetti:** I don't. I think that you know there is a lot of different terms that are out there. And I think that a lot of what we refer to as soft skills are executive function skills. I think what ... you know, if you talk to 10 different people who do research in this area they will give you 10 different sorts of definitions. And I think what's more important is thinking about what is it you're trying to accomplish and what are the skills that really are critical for achieving that? And really then ... thinking about how can you use principles of what we have learned on brain science from executive function work to help build those skills? So I think it's important that we don't get caught up in what we call them; but more thinking about trying to think about what might be getting in the way and what we can do to actually help people make progress just thinking about that differently.

**Damon:** And we have one more. "Can you go a little bit more into detail about the particular executive function skills most important to TANF programs and Human Services and Workforce Development programs?"

**Dr. Pavetti:** Well, what's interesting about that is, I actually think that that long list of skills—if you look closely at it—just about all of those are really important for success. And they're important at different stages. So if you think about it, a common complaint that programs have is that people don't show up. And it could be any number of executive function skill weaknesses that could be causing that. So it could be a problem with task initiation, that somebody has difficulty getting started. It could be that it's a working memory issue. That people just can't remember that, you know, sort of keeping track of everything they have to do. It could be ... if people start and don't finish, it could be an issue around sustained attention or goal to active persistence. So, really all of them are important. It's important though, of thinking about where do you think things are falling apart for people, and trying to really sort of hone in on what you

think is the best starting place. So for some it might be that people are overwhelmed with what's going on in their lives and really helping them to do a very detailed plan for how they're going to get things done will help them to get it done. So it could be that helping with the time management. So, I'm not sure that I think any of the skills aren't important. And what will be different is that what is important will vary from person to person and what is strong and what is weak will vary from person to person.

**Damon:** I'll ask one more. The floodgates opened up, but I'll ask one more and I'll save the rest for the one at the end. "How long should you work on one skill before needing to revamp or rethink a skill?"

**Dr. Pavetti:** You know, it's really not an issue of working on one skill or working on another skill. What you're really trying to work on is thinking about what is it that you're trying to achieve and work backwards. So if what you're trying to achieve is ... just say you're working with somebody on trying to get child care set, but they never quite get to ... they don't get the paperwork done. So what you want to work on is figuring out what's the plan and making that plan and breaking it down into very small steps to make sure that you really get success so that you can move people forward. So, I think that sort of probably ... I think one of the most critical pieces is that—often what we do, is we ask people to do things that are much more complicated than we think they are. And so helping people to break them down into steps and then, depending on what happens if they're successful or not, is reviewing it to try and get at the root of what's going on. And, you know, I think Beth will talk some about this in the way they do their work. But it really is a process. It's not like you're working on one skill and then another skill. You're working on sort of keeping your eye on the ball of what are you trying to achieve and constantly sort of thinking about "Is the plan for achieving it a good one?" "Is the action

needed to happen actually happening?" And if it isn't, what can you do to sort of make adjustments to actually do a better job of getting to a success.

**Damon:** Thanks Donna. We have quite a few questions, but we will get to them as many as possible at the end. I wanted to turn it over to Beth Babcock at Crittenton Women's Union for our next presentation.

**Dr. Babcock:** Thank you very much Damon. Well, there we go. I would like to talk with you a little bit about what we at the Crittenton Women's Union do to build frameworks to work with participants who have executive function challenges and how the work when it's informed by executive functioning principles, how the work can be stronger and the interventions can be improved. So the Crittenton Women's Union, we are an unusual organization in that we combine research, direct services, and public advocacy to create improved participant outcomes, economic mobility outcomes, improved program tools for the field as a whole, and also systems and policy change. This is done so that we can design and test and share improved new ways of helping families move out of poverty. And for the past six years our work has been very much informed with executive functioning framing. What Donna talked about was of course how executive functioning is compromised or challenged when individuals are under stress. So these key critical skills are definitely affected by the kind of stress that an individual is exposed to. And this stress can actually cause challenges in three basic categories: challenges to being able to manage thoughts, memory, organization, learning; challenges to be able to manage behavior effectively, emotions, interpersonal relationships, persistence, resilience, follow-through; and also challenges managing health and well-being. So, the ability to maintain and recover from illness, to maintain health and to maintain an even keel in life. And what we know about the families that we're working with is that in order to move out of poverty, in order to get better

jobs, get education, maintain their families, follow through on training and juggle what is a very, very complex set of challenges of keeping body and soul together, improving skills, and moving ahead in career, managing money. All of these things have to be managed simultaneously. And to do this and to optimize all of these things is an incredible organizational challenge. And it's an organizational challenge that requires a focus and direction to be maintained in the face of what are daily, um, what we call the stress de jour or the crisis de jour. Daily kinds of problems that are ... that beleaguer individuals who don't have enough money, who don't have enough resources, who don't have enough time. And, of course, unfortunately the very stresses that are inherent in poverty are also the very stresses that compromise the decision making skills most needed to get out of poverty. And so if we as practitioners are going to fight against these challenges, these stresses, the kind of chaos and craziness that so many of our participants deal with and live with on a daily basis, we have to develop frameworks that allow them to strengthen their organizational skills, to strengthen their navigational skills. And this means that we have to create frameworks that are hyper-organized, that allow a consistent ability to be able to focus on goals and persist on goals in the face of a lot of challenges. The basic building blocks of this kind of programming that can help our families push against the stresses in their lives and maintain focus and build skills and move ahead, basically have, in our experience with our own work, four building blocks. The first building block is executive functioning informed program scaffolding. The second is coaching and mentoring which works one-on-one with individuals to help them persist toward their goals. The third are what Donna talked about, incentive systems that allow for rewards to be given for achievement that are interim steps toward longer term goals. And the last is very, very robust and consistent outcomes measurement systems that allow for again, what Donna was talking about, that ability to set a goal, to set steps towards that goal,

and to assess whether that goal has been achieved and revise and plan again. At Crittenton Women's Union, what we have developed is an executive functioning scaffolding that we call "the bridge to self sufficiency." And basically this is the framework in which we work with all of our adult families. I know this framework is hard for you to see in detail. It is available more clearly on our website. But basically what this postulates is that getting out of poverty, moving to economic independence basically requires that five cylinders have to be firing together at the same time. The family stability, one's well being, one's education and training, one's financial management, and last but not least career. And the assumption is that families are going to have strengths and weaknesses in all these areas but that if we just work in one of them, if we just focus on training and we don't think about it in the context of the job market or the person's prior work experience or work skills. If we just work on a person's health to try to overcome or help them overcome health challenges in order to help them resolve those issues but we don't think about the health, how they're going to maintain their health with their home situation or their family stability. Any one of these areas in isolation from the other basically doesn't allow the person to be able to resolve their life issues, set priorities and plan effectively. And so what we look to try to do is, we try to set up an environment in which the problems and the strengths in all of these areas can be analyzed in the context of each other so that families can set plans as to what they want to tackle and how they want to move ahead with a full understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and all of them. Now this is something that's an executive functioning challenge because it requires folks to be able to think about what's going on in their money management, in their work, in their schooling at the same time. Their family situation at the same time. And often times it's hard to keep all of the focus on all of those things together. And so as you'll see at the bottom of this scaffold, what this piece of paper, this bridge to self

sufficiency allows families to be able to do is to think about all those things and plot them together at one point in time in relationship to each other and for the coach to do that with the family as well. You'll also see that this framework lays out a very clear forward or future oriented decision making process. It basically shows the families what steps they need to take in order to reach economic independence in all of these areas. And in our family's experience, what they say to us, is "Oh my gosh. I finally understand why it is that I haven't been able to get, stay in my job, or why it is I haven't been able to deal with my money." Because they can begin to see how the other areas of their lives are complicating their pathway forward in one particular pillar of the bridge. They can also see why their lives are so challenging because they can see how far they have to go to reach a level where they're really at economic stability. So, although it looks complicated when you first look at it, our experience with literally hundreds of families that we have worked with in this framework, is that there's an "ah ha" moment where they begin to see their life suddenly organized on one piece of paper and the potential for how they could move ahead starting to present itself. Priorities starting to be set, a focus on where to tackle things and how to move ahead, that helps to organize their problem solving, their goal setting, and their decision making, in a way that wasn't possible before. You'll see a little bit later that we also use this framework for helping families measure their progress. So you need to have a really clear framework for where your families are setting goals, what their strengths and weaknesses are, and what steps they want to take to move ahead. When the families actually then, after they've assessed where they are and they get going to move ahead and start setting goals, it's really important that they set those goals and that they assess with a coach framework or a mentoring framework as opposed to a training or an authoritarian or an expert kind of framework. Now when we talk about coaching and mentoring, what we're talking about is a

person who is expert at helping another individual assess their own problems, prioritize their own problems, think about their choices for how they would move ahead, devise ... set goals that are meaningful to them, that are motivating for them, that they really want to accomplish. Set realistic pathways for how to achieve those goals and then to help consistently reinforce the problem solving and priority setting skill sets that are necessary to persist and move ahead. So it's critical in these instances that the goal setting be individual, the assessments are done on an individual basis and goal setting is individual. That the participant themselves drives the process, that this is not something they're being told what they have to do, but they're instead being coached on setting their own priorities. The coach serves as an advisor, not as a director. The goals have to be specific, meaning they have to be clearly understood and very, very clearly seen. They must be measurable. In other words they have to be something where the person will know when they've attained the goal. They have to be seen by the participant as something that they can obtain, that are realistic, that are relevant or meaningful for them and they have to be set in a way that is time bound so that you know when you're supposed to be able to achieve it, because that time constraint serves as the contract for when you're going to go back and measure; have the steps been taken? The goals contract should ideally be written. We know that when it's written it is something that is reinforced and the commitment to it is reinforced by the very nature of writing it. It also says what the coach is supposed to be following through on as well as the mentee and it's very important that both sides have clear sets of expectations. The goal, of course, of this whole process is for that process of assessment, problem solving, planning, goal setting, and following through and measuring and reassessing for that actual process of going through those steps to be something that when repeated become much, much more natural for the participant so that ultimately they no longer need the paper documents or the

presence of the mentor. They're able to mentor themselves or execute these kind of thinking processes on their own. This is where the coaching becomes a scaffolding to new skill building. Reward systems are hugely important. It is very, very challenging for families to maintain focus and to persist in the face of what we know are overwhelming stresses in their lives and so it really is critical that interim steps that are taken, um, interim goals that are achieved, interim steps that are taken are consistently measured and rewarded. But rewards don't have to be just financial. Rewards can be a whole host of different types of things like congratulations or celebrations; access to special privileges. They can be points earned. If, however, if they are going to be formal incentive systems it is really crucial the incentive be set at the time of goal setting so that the individual knows, "If I achieve this goal this is what I'm going to be achieving in terms of an incentive." Those incentives must be quickly and dependably administered and it is also really, really critical that the incentives be not something that's perceived as a gift or a bonus or something that's awarded by staff, but instead be seen as something that was earned and is the payment that the participant earned for themselves by what they did. The last building block I want to talk about is consistent outcomes measurement. As Donna discussed, what we're talking about is trying to build a process of assessment, goal setting, problem solving, setting down an achievable pathway to the goal itself or a clear pathway to achievement and in order for us to have this happen in a way that is consistent, the measurement of the achievement to date, interim measurement, routine measurement of whether goals have been achieved is really critical and it's not just critical for the participant, it's critical for the organization and for the staff to be sure that they too stay on track and maintain the organizational frame that helps consistently reinforce the behavior of the participants and helps them achieve their goals. We have to help them push back against the chaos and the craziness that happens in their lives, the difficulties,

and the challenges that they're facing when they're trying to maintain focus. So the goal is, of course, for ... to create this positive participant change where they see themselves achieving something and this then reinforces the behaviors. But for us to do this we have to have a routine assessment where goals that were set are measured and we look at why they weren't achieved and what the Plan B would be to achieve the goal in the face of the challenges that have been set and where they did achieve, what the next step should be in the process of iteratively over time building on success. As you can see from the bridge diagram that you have there, the way that we do this is by taking initial assessments of where folks are setting goals in all those areas and then incrementally measuring the gains that they've achieved. And we do this with the families themselves, but we also do it as an organization by scoring systems and data capture that allows us to not only understand where we have worked positively with one particular individual, but also programmatically over time what's the aggregate impact that we've been having. Are we having as much impact as we wanted to have and if not how do we begin? How do we work more effectively with families and improve our interventions? Now I just want to quickly say that we have found in the years that we've been working on this with families in this way that we have had huge impact on our own outcomes. We've drastically altered the outcomes we as an organization have achieved with families. You can see here, this is examples of 730 goals that were set, that were completed last year, with the families that we serve and you can see the successful percentages of goals that were set that were successfully completed or closed out. So, of the 730 goals that we closed last year, you could see that the successful goals completion rates are triple and quadruple what are the normal averages for goals attainment in many areas such as family stability, healthcare changes, and stopping smoking, completing school or semesters of schooling, paying bills and saving, and also getting new jobs and sustaining the jobs. And you

can see that these are statistically significant outcomes that are just really beating the averages, not just of what we've achieved, but the community based averages that are comparable. I can just say over all goals attainment for the population as a whole for most areas of health, training, finance, and employment have a tendency to be successful goals. Attainment and maintenance have a tendency to be in the 15 to 25% range for most areas for the general population and you can see that we're doing far higher than that with this high risk, high need population that we're serving. And an example of what that means when you do it over time is that with one of our mentoring programs which we've been doing ... working with low income public housing residents for more than three years, you can see what the kind of outcomes are that you can achieve with these folks over time. And in particular, I draw your attention to the fact that 38% of these families with an average household income of \$11,600 per family per year earned income at the start are now in the family sustaining wages where they're earning \$50,000 and more in our particular population. So we have never as an organization achieved outcomes like that in the past and these are for us, you know, just drastic improvements in what's been happening with our families. Finally, there are many resources that you may find useful. You can find them on our website if you look at [liveworkthrive.org](http://liveworkthrive.org) and I'm happy to answer any questions that you may have as well.

**Damon:** Thanks Beth. We have quite a few questions, but I'll get to a couple of them. A couple of them had to do with the incentive and the rewards. "Can you provide some examples of the types of incentives and rewards that you've seen as successful?"

**Dr. Babcock:** Yes. Well, of course celebrations are very, very important. Public celebrations, hanging of banners. We run a lot of housing facilities, supported housing and transitional housing for homeless families and in those facilities you know we have banners on the wall of

successful achievements. In those particular facilities we also have point systems for privileges that people would like to have. We also use, you know, coffeeshop cards and things like that of those ilk. (*Chuckle.*) But in our really heavy duty intensive coaching programs, we do provide cash based incentives for goals achievement and those cash based incentives are typically calibrated to the difficulty of the particular goal and how hard it is to achieve it. So they can range anywhere from \$25 for, you know, taking a step toward investigating or filling out a FAFSA kind of form to get ready to try to go to college all the way to \$250 for completing a semester of college full time. Graduating with a new degree we will reward with \$500. So it really ranges all the way from very, very light touch and non-cash incentives all the way up to and including cash incentives in our organization for the programs that are most intensive.

**Damon:** Thanks Beth. There's two questions about the evaluation of your program. "What types of evaluations have you done to measure the impact of the program?" and "How do you test the success of your program and its executive functioning activities?"

**Dr. Babcock:** Well, first of all we're really, really geeky. As you can see from what I'm talking about with outcome measurement being so critical, we capture a ton of data about the status of our families when we first start working with them. We assess them in a number of different frameworks and then we also then track all of the goals-kind-of related work that they're doing and their outcomes. So we're measuring everything from earnings and education gains and savings and debt reduction to actually measuring their psychological profile, their life satisfaction, and how they're feeling about themselves as they go through the process. This information allows us to do longitudinal comparisons of individuals and their changes over time and also to compare large populations of individuals against each other in different settings and with the different types of interventions. We also have had an arm's length evaluation for return

on investment that's been done by Brandeis University of our work and that is an ongoing analysis that's showing that our work is quite promising and is likely to be proven to be efficacious in terms of the costs of our service delivery versus the costs of public subsidies our families are receiving if the service delivery weren't in place. We're moving to a brand new evaluation with MDRC. We hope that it's going to actually be starting within the next six months where we'll be doing a randomized control trial of 500 new participants receiving mobility mentoring services against a 500 person control taking place in the Boston area and we are doing executive function framing in the evaluation of our work with a new intergenerational project that we're doing with the Harvard University Center on the Developing Child which is going to have some EF measurements components built into that. So that's a little bit about our evaluation.

**Damon:** Okay. I will save the rest of these questions until the end. What I'll do now is turn it over to Kate and Boyd from Ramsey County.

**Mr. Brown:** All right. Thank you very much. We will go ahead and get right into it. First is a little bit about what we will cover today. First today we'll provide a historical perspective. Specifically, we're going to talk a little bit about our Families Achieving Success Today Program which is a program serving families with disabilities on TANF. This program has informed some of our thinking on the use of executive skills in our general TANF program here in Ramsey County. Next Kate will provide an overview of Ramsey County's overall system change and discuss executive skills informed tools that we have piloted here in Ramsey County with our TANF population and here in Minnesota. We call it the Minnesota Family Investment Program or MFIP. And lastly we'll discuss an enhanced coaching pilot that we will begin September 2015 this year which will feature a comprehensive model of executive skills,

informed intervention strategies, and tools in Ramsey County. So first for that historical perspective. I want to talk a little bit about Families Achieving Success Today, a program that was serving ... specifically tailored to serve families with disabilities. So what were our challenges; why did we decide to do this? In Minnesota we have a program entitled Family Stabilization Services or FSS which is a state funded program for TANF participants that have documentation that they're unable to work 20 hours or more per week for a variety of reasons. It could be due to major mental illness, chronic health conditions, low IQ, or it could be family members that have serious disability including mental illness, chronic health conditions that are eligible for this program ... And at that time Ramsey County was concerned about the growing number of families that were in FSS. It was currently half the caseload and also they know many of those families that were in Family Stabilization Services went on to be in our long term extended population. In Minnesota we have a 5 year limit, but families can be extended based on criteria, including criteria of disability. So we're concerned that these families would be continuing to live in poverty long term. Additionally, we also found ... part of our motivation was that many of these families, even though their documentation said they can't work, through our transitional work or supported work models we noticed that even with this documentation many were willing and able to work and showed abilities to do that. So FAST is a ... was a collaboration. (*Whispering in background.*) FAST was a collaboration—sorry about that (*chuckle*)—of five organizations providing an integrated model of service including adult and children's mental health. It included TANF employment counseling services, a health navigator, and probably the biggest or primary component which you see here on the slide is Individual Placement and Support. IPS is an evidence based practice in the mental health field and it has shown to increase placement retention outcomes for individuals with serious mental illness. So

the objective of this project was to utilize this intervention with TANF families with disabilities. And placement staff followed these core principles; this core program helping participants find competitive jobs in the community that fit their needs and interests; fully integrating employment with their mental health services in designing plans based on preferences, strengths, and experiences and abilities of the individuals that were being served. Some of the key components were that job search is participant focused and paced. That we worked with employers from diverse fields offering broad options for employment for the folks who are serving. Placement staff were expected to make regular employer contacts, maintain relationships, and develop new contacts and the use of vocational profiles so that we really developed a really strong understanding of a person's passions, abilities, work skills, and deficits. So the IPS model has eight core principles. And we find that many of these core principles very much relate to the executive functioning skill principles that we've been discussing today. And we saw that with this ..., how these relate to each other that could we take executive functioning skills and look at it much more broadly with the entire TANF population and not just with those that have disabilities? So some examples where those core principles actually relate is one ... is eligibility is based on individual choice. So in IPS, the participant decides when they're ready, willing, and able to work. Similarly in executive functioning, personal agency or that person really truly drives what they're going to do. They drive the goal setting process and where they want to go. So there is a connection there between IPS and executive functioning skills. Additionally, another example is individual preferences are important. So in IPS all job search is based on the individual's passions and abilities and it's using that information to really find that right job match. Similarly, in executive function it's really based on client driven goals where they want to know what they're committed to and ability to reach those goals through coaching and

facilitation. So, what are some of the lessons and policy implications that we learned? Well, one thing we found is that this works. We did see success in increasing the employment outcomes of the folks that we are serving in this project. It was a randomized controlled trial with MDRC doing that work for us. And that we really wanted to see how could this translate to the broader population beyond just disability and we really felt that what we were learning around executive functioning principles would help inform that path forward with our families.

**Ms. Probert:** So with that said, Ramsey County has about 10.5 thousand people go through our system at any given time. So for us it's a huge system shift and we started the pathway about three to four years ago where we started implementing our FAST, Families Achieving Success Today program, as well as doing a system wide assessment. We recognize the fact that running the traditional \*\*\* (*unclear* - 53:21) has not produced a lot of employment outcomes for us. We are still in about 30 to 35% employment and that is where we have historically been in the last five years. We also recognizing that we are struggling with deficits in our cultural ... with our African-American and American Indian families. They are traditionally low in being successful in obtaining and retaining employment. As well, we recognize the fact that we really believe being an expert as staff members and rightfully wanting to help families, we've been creating more a transactional system where we're giving bus cards and gas cards and getting job (*unclear* - 54:03) back, but we're not really sure if we're really making an impact on true, so to speak, lives of families and others truly were leaving our system with jobs that they can sustain. Recognizing all of that, we hit a perfect alignment of stars. Department of Human Services put a lot of work in creating a two generational approach where they start talking about serving a whole family and really putting family in the center and believing that person has their own abilities in driving the employment plan and building on their own goals. Ramsey County Board

of Commissioners proclaims one of our goals being an assertive, so to speak ... one of our goals is really combating poverty and investing in our communities of color and American Indian communities more heavily to ensure that we bring equal distribution of resources across the system. And being an ... and Department of Human Services really believes and supports the idea of education in an outcome driven system. They promised that they invest in the County if we meet our employment outcomes. Consider all of that together, we recognize the fact that we have to do something different. And we started thinking about creating a family centered system that really believes that families have to engage and stay engaged, obtain and sustain education, as well as continue on employment pathways. We believe that this work has to be done in individual manner. But with that we need to continue to build on in reducing isolation that our families face and support creating of (*unclear - 55:54*) communities. One of the biggest shifts is really putting families in charge of their own goals. Families, actually family members and participants will be telling us what their goal is. And counsel roles become secondary in intervening and supporting families to achieve that specific goal. We're also recognizing the fact that investing in our community based organization and families on, so to speak, the same slot base as we allocate our money is not right. Families have different needs, different goals, different struggles. And we want to create a system where we invest money and support our providers and our counselors by literally having plenty of cashflow to help families to move forward. And we really want to be evidence based and evidence driven; so everything we do is really rooted in either goal standard evaluations that we had with FAST or the rapid cycle evaluation that we get in help and consultations from multiple evaluations firms, as well as looking and thinking goal standard evaluation across the country to see if any of our pilots stumble into ... We also employed 1.5 evaluators; so we do a lot of internal evaluations. And we

engage our families in providing and incorporating focus groups, and asking them what they would like to do and how they would like our services to look ... So, we have been running focus groups and our participants have been telling us that being asked what do you want to do and being really given a chance to recognize what they can or can't do and what they want to do is a new experience for them. We have been rethinking from the beginning everything we do, our watch jobs and our interruptions and using the Crittenton's Women's Union too, their bridge and Department of Human Services employability measure assessment which is a real assessment that assesses families in 11 different areas of strengths and weaknesses, anywhere from work history to criminal activities to social, so to speak, networks. We created the tool that you will see in a minute where we simplified and we really start a conversation using that tool, we call it my Bridge of Success. And we're having families to really circle where they are right now and where they would like to be. And then that tool creates a very ... goal that the family and the counselor develop. And then we stay on this pathway of developing and achieving the goal and we are rewarding behavior as person ... making success. We have dedicated a lot of resources and time to motivational interview. It has been incorporated into core programming. Every single agency we work with including County itself has motivational interview coaches and we're running motivational interview groups all the time to ensure that we enhance our counselor's abilities to continue to be motivational interview experts. And we are pursuing right now a development of coaching techniques to elicit information which will be an add-on technique to our use of motivational interviews. We just solicited a firm that will be working side-by-side with Ramsey County in developing an in-depth curriculum that is advised by our staff as well as by our families. And we will be embarking on the year training of beginner, intermediate, and train-the-trainer circles. And we are going to be implementing that change

throughout the whole system anywhere from top to the bottom, meaning we will be changing how we manage and supervise our staff. We will be changing how my director manages and supervises me. And then in return we will be expecting changes in how our staff are working with our families. And we're developing a lot of pre-imposed surveys as well as we're going to be looking at different ways in terms of how we write caseload and case notes, and how we are communicating to our families. So as you see this is our Bridge for Success of the Crittenton Women's Union and employability measure from DHS that has been incorporated by involving frontline staff and has been discussed with our families and gotten their feedback; so it's still a changing mechanism as we move forward. And family identifies where they are at and which specific streams of goal they really want to work on. And then that translates ... a very detailed goal action plan through a smart goal setting. And we stick to the goal for at least a couple of months to three months before we start changing the goal. We may change it only once, but the key here is we have to see the follow-through and follow-up on the goal. And we would never work more than three goals at any given time so we don't overwhelm families. And of course we continue pursuing expansion through the whole system. Again, we have 130 to 150 people in the system, 130 of them being counselors. We work with five different organizations including Ramsey County itself, and ten-and-a-half thousand people. So we really will be taking that goal action plan and the Bridge system wide around April. Implementing our coaching training and watching really hard with Goodwill-Easter Seals, our partners in creating an enhanced coaching pilot. What we're going to be piloting ... multiple changes as well as tools before we start implementing them across the system. And our next stop after the enhanced coaching pilot is our young adults and teen families, because we believe we really have to enhance that programming as young adults and teens, so to speak; ... our future and we want to divert them to

going on to long term MFIP. So enhancing coaching pilot will be resulting in testing comprehensive model that incorporates \*\*\* (*unclear - 1:02:26*) form of intervention, skills, and strategies. We want to really closely examine all of the intervention and tools and create a very specific measurement of engagement, employment, and retention, as well as education outcomes. And we are recognizing that we need a lot of help in doing so. We will be soliciting a couple of firms to help us with that.

**Mr. Brown:** All right. So our ... so, on this slide you'll see some of the features that we were hoping to include in enhanced coaching pilot. And from Donna to Beth you heard a lot of the things that we talk about here are a lot of the things they have already talked about; so you can see there are some similarities and we're learning from each other. So for our enhanced coaching pilot we'll feature strategies that will ensure a culture change to ensure leadership, management, and direct staff are on board, knowledgeable, and proficient in this new service model. We really believe that actually this culture and systems change is probably one of our biggest challenges. Those of you that are in TANF organizations or work in TANF systems I'm sure can relate ... to—with—what's being talked about here is very different than the rule bound bureaucratic systems, especially the work participation rate and what that causes us to do. It's very different than what we're trying to do here with coaching and executive functioning informed programming. So what we have done is that we are creating some tools first. We have created right now—they are drafts, but they're executive skills and informed practice principles which guide how our executive skills services will be implemented. We also have an executive skills sustainability model to sustain this change over time. And we're also going to be really closely looking at job roles and expectations of our staff to ensure they align with this culture shift, ensure whoever we and who we hire in the future have the skills and abilities and behaviors

necessary to carry out this new service model. In addition, other features of course that we will include is a methodology; Donna mentioned the 11 executive skills that Dawson and Guare have developed. We actually will be using that as part of a practice manual that we want to develop to describe the behaviors associated with these skills and an intervention that we can use to increase the executive skill or accommodate for any deficits in that executive skill. So that's one piece we would like to ... we will include. Additionally, we want a coaching model. Beth spent a lot of time talking about mobility mentoring and coaching. We want to take that model and ensure that we have ES-informed principles such as it's goal focused, it's short time horizons on those goals, taking small steps. We are intervening where necessary to build those skills, as well as reviewing and reflecting on the skills or on the goals and goal attainment and where do we need to revise, pause, reflect, and then move forward with goals where we see that they're not meeting their goals. We also want to have a formalized incentive program that incents goal directed behavior to increase goal attainment. All of our groups are being redesigned. There'll be more organized and streamlined information delivered and we'll really try to customize the learning to what's needed in the group. So looking at what goals are the folks—the families—trying to achieve and how can ... customize that in a group to make sure that's what we're really focusing on is those goals that they're trying to achieve. Paperwork is being simplified and environments will be changed to minimize distractions. You also heard both from Beth and Donna about stress reduction. That is really a key that needs to be included in both group and individual formats to really talk about how can we reduce their stress so that they—that families can use the executive skills they have to the best of their ability. And then peer support. And we want opportunities for peers to interact and support each other and provide opportunities to be leaders as facilitators and mentors to others. Other concrete tools and strategies—Kate talked about the goal action

plan as well as the Bridge of Strengths, so we will include that. The other piece we're going to use is an executive skills questionnaire that was developed by Richard Guare, which you heard mentioned, who was also the creator of those 11 key executive skills. That questionnaire will help to assess and engage participants in discussions about their executive skill level, including strengths and deficits. And then last but not least, we want to create self accountability checklists. It is very similar to what Beth was talking about and really working with participants to reflect, review, and revise goals as they move forward. So how did you do toward ... what did you do towards that goal? What didn't work, problem solving, reflecting on that and then changing that path that's needed. So the next slide I'm just showing you our current draft of our practice principles to help us on a system level to describe how we engage and intervene with families we serve. I'm not going to go through those at this time, but you have those in front of you and you can see what those practice principles are. And then last but not least, we have the executive skills informed services sustainability model. This is, as Kate mentioned, this is a very large system. And so we really need to think about from a system level, how are we going to get all levels of the system on board around executive skills. And we're going to start with our pilot and looking at leadership management and direct service and ensuring that they are onboard—they have the skills, abilities, and beliefs necessary to really implement this and implement it well before we go to a system wide effort. And that is it. Thank you and we're ready for questions.

**Damon:** Thank you Kate and Boyd. We have a couple of questions for you. “Are you willing to share various assessment forms and data tracking instruments or do you have any suggestions about how to obtain such tools?”

**Ms. Probert:** I guess once it's developed, being in Ramsey County, yes we're willing to share that, because anything that is developed is, uh, public information by the County. I think we would need a little bit more time to actually get it developed before it's ready for sharing.

**Damon:** Okay. "And what type of assessments do you typically use? Are there particular assessments that you use with your clients? Do you have a list of assessments that other programs should be looking at?"

**Mr. Brown:** Yeah. The particular tool—and I mentioned it—is the executive skills questionnaire that Richard Guare developed. That is the tool we're using. I cannot, off the top of my head, tell you. He has a book that it's in, but I do not have that information in front of me. But we certainly could share that out if there's a way to do that.

**Dr. Pavetti:** Uh, this is Donna. We're working on doing sort of a revision of that—that would be available to anybody who wants it and wouldn't have to be through the book.

**Mr. Brown:** Okay, perfect. (*Chuckle.*)

**Damon:** And any information shared from our presenters will be available through the peer TA website. So we will make sure to upload as much as we can on to the website for people to access. We got quite a few questions about hard-to-serve populations. Could our presenters from Minnesota go into any activities that you've been engaged in with individuals with criminal backgrounds trying to get employment and also those populations from ... that are refugees?

**Ms. Probert:** Yes; so with our population that have criminal backgrounds—and Ramsey County defines criminal backgrounds like anything that can divert you from obtaining a job—we actually have created a pathway group. We have about four to five counselors that have been trained specifically in developing and delivering services to ex-offenders; so people with similar backgrounds. And we have a pathway group which is a peer core support model where

participants start—and go through six weeks plus—together and really build on each other’s skills in terms of figuring out how to present themselves to the employers. Then of course we have a customized job development in helping people to be placed on the job and follow up. We are actually doing follow-up and individualized assistance beyond MFIPs. So we’re maximizing our potential, utilizing improved money for people who have not reached and obtained jobs above poverty level guidelines. So we’re utilizing our funds to provide ongoing support and coaching to that. We have a special new curriculum that we have been using too that really provides a lot of essential skills building to our families. In terms of refugees, we’re actually ... we are lucky. We employ a specific organization through our contract process—they are working with our refugees. We have partners such as \*\*\* (*unclear - 1:12:26*) American Partnership and who have a lot of refugee programming and the Office of ... Department of Human Services also have refugee programs that incorporate assistance, placement, a lot of it, again, customizes placement. Finding jobs for where our participants can be accepted. And working with employees directly in placing them.

**Damon:** Thank you. And we’re actually going to go over to our broader Q&A now. There’s quite a few; so we’ll get to as many as we can, and presenters, hopefully you can be quick with our responses. Because we have quite a few and I want to get to as many as possible. Our first question: “In what ways have you modified the paperwork to streamline the process?” So that’s probably to Crittenton and also to Ramsey County.

**Dr. Babcock:** Well, at Crittenton one of the things that we found through the process of working with families is that probably the most important thing we use for any step in working with families is the bridge tool itself. We actually started out with a whole series of sub-assessments for each one of the pillars of the bridge. We still conduct sub-assessments for those

pillars, but the tool ... we found actually that the tool itself—the bridge tool itself—and families plotting themselves on that tool and then measuring their own achievement on that tool was actually the most effective way that we could actually assess and work with families to help them with their goal setting. So, of all the paperwork that we have, and there are many different, you know, sub-tools that we use, that particular bridge tool is the one that seems to be the anchor for everything that we're doing and simplifies our paperwork and our measurement systems that way.

**Ms. Probert:** And Ramsey County will echo what Beth said. We're finding that using my Bridge of Strengths with a GAP—goal action plan—is becoming something that drives the whole system. Another thing we did is we simplified some of our letters. We really removed, in a very fine print, all of the rules and regulations we have to talk about and put some with our program. So we're marketing ourselves. So what our programs can offer—we put in front all of the incentives, all the money, all the childcare services we can do. We, again, recognizing we need help to simplify some of ... we are very paperwork heavy. So this is something we ... I'm going to look at, but those two things, so to speak, really drove us now.

**Damon:** Thank you. Also for Crittenton and for Ramsey County: “Is there an average length of time that participants are in the program process from start to finish?”

**Dr. Babcock:** Well, at Crittenton, our goal is to keep families engaged and persisting. So our goal is to try to work with families and keep them engaged as long as we possibly can. We work with families in many different settings; shelter, drop-in, as well as then community based settings. And we find that if we can deeply engage with families then we can work with them for 3 to 5 years we can really begin to see substantive changes occurring in their outcomes. So our goal is to engage with them for 3 to 5 years. The length of time we actually do engage with them

really depends on the setting that we're in, whether it's in shelter or it's out in the community. And it can range anywhere from a year to, as I said, five years.

**Ms. Probert:** Being in a tennis program, we really don't have a lot of control in how long families stay with us. It's a highly, highly mobile population. So they go on and off assistance quite often. We do know that, on average, anybody who hits the 24 months mark tends to stay with us anywhere from 2 to 5 years and sometimes going to extension. So as long as we have that information in mind, so once they hit 24 months then we have much ... probably a longer time to work with families up to five years. We don't really want to get families through extension process. But that also puts our population in a lot more, so to speak, barriers to work with and a lot more intensive services they would need from us.

**Damon:** And this is a follow-up to that, for you Kate. "Since Crittenton is a little bit different, do you have any suggestions for how TANF programs with far fewer resources can integrate some of these approaches into their programs and how has your new approach affected your work participation rate?"

**Ms. Probert:** Well, a couple things. So I guess first we really ... it has to be a leadership supported conscious choice. You know, meaning how you want to redesign your funding. We're already funded. And one of the examples is, we are already funding support service dollars. So everybody has it and we know that a lot of people are actually not spending that. So we're capping ourselves. We're actually asking our providers to ensure that everybody has support service budget to spend on families. We do a minimum of 12%. If people can put more ... and we have been using that to build an incentive program. So in essence, instead of support services it becomes an incentive budget. We then again ... we're really looking how we can figure out what that 24 months is, and which population does not need a lot of interruptions from

us. Because then we can actually put a lot of funding into this area and ... concentrating ... move funding over to them towards the end of the spectrum. So we can build ... and ... heavy interruptions. Hasn't affected our work participation rate. Well, in essence, actually what affects our participation rate is loss of work benefit. Right now it has been suspended by the Commissioner. What participation rate for Minnesota has not traditionally come from a lot of employment service related activities, a.k.a. job search and education. Majority of our work participation is coming from employment which been traditionally 30%. So we ... by doing so and really putting people with activities that matter to them such as education, employment, and job search, it's still the same. We really do not believe our work participation rate is going to completely slip down. But again, suspension would benefit for Minnesota which is—was—a program that was funded to enhance our participation rate. That's what's going to impact Ramsey County more than this.

**Dr. Pavetti:** Damon, this is Donna. I have one other thing. We're also working on trying to think about whether there is a way, we believe there is a way, but we're working on sort of the details for people who do group job search, of really changing the way they do group job search to actually use much more of the executive skills principles in it; so that it would not be a complete redesign of the system like Ramsey is doing, but just redoing things that people are already doing, in different way.

**Damon:** Thanks Donna. And we have a couple more minutes. “How does goal setting and executive functioning principles relate to thinking and planning that is more future oriented rather than present oriented and how the demands on poor people's lives are usually viewed and tackled in a more present oriented fashion?” I think that's pretty much for anyone.

**Dr. Babcock:** Well, this is Beth. I'll jump in here on this one. I think the questioner actually put their finger on something that is an absolutely critical element of this whole process. With the families that we're working with, the nature of being under the stresses of poverty cause the person to really be focused on the near term horizon a lot of the time. You know, this is what survival is all about when you're dealing with the stresses of everyday living in poverty. And the ability to be able to help a person find the bandwidth, find the space in their heads, in their time of day to actually focus on how they would like to have their life be different and if they could change their life what changes they would want to make and what would prove their life circumstances and how could they achieve those improvements? You know it really is a process of finding space, that space, that mentor/mentee space to actually concentrate on that to start thinking about framing goals and to make a plan for how to achieve them. And that future orientation is what's necessary and it is introducing the future oriented thought processes and the space for those thought processes. It's so crucial in helping to get families able to move ahead and make change in their lives. So, it's critical and it's also one of the critical things. Future orientation is one of the critical things that is compromised when one has compromised executive functioning.

**Dr. Pavetti:** And I think another piece is that, you know, part of what I think the executive function sort of allows you to do, is to both really help people to think in the future orientation—which I think the Bridge actually is a perfect tool for doing that, but then I think the other piece of it is really helping people to break things down into steps so that you have sub-goals. And you have short time horizons and you have very sort of much more narrowly defined goals that are on that path. So I think it's sort of thinking about just things in steps. And again, making the

pieces manageable so people don't get overwhelmed and think they'll never get there. But ... can see that there's a path that they're on that they're trying to achieve.

**Damon:** Thank you. And another one pretty much along that same line: "What comes ... what should come first—barrier removal or finding employment?"

**Dr. Pavetti:** I think it's not an either/or. I think it's trying to think about ... you know, I think what comes first is sort of figuring about what are people's goals and then figuring out what gets in the way. And I think you know when Boyd talked about FAST—and he may want to talk about this—is that it's really they are thinking simultaneously about how do you ... when someone is ready to go to work, they do it and you can sort of address barriers simultaneously. So I think it is individualized. That if the barrier is sort of an absolute that they can't make progress, then you deal with the barrier. But in some ways, it could be that it's really simultaneous. So I don't think you always have to be dealing with getting rid of the barrier first. It depends on whether or not, you know, what it ... how it sort of plays out in someone's life.

**Mr. Brown:** Yeah, and I would just add too, and I totally agree with you Donna, it is ... it's a simultaneous effort. And what we find is that once people are employed in a good job match that fits their life, that is in their preferences, a lot of times those barriers just go away. That's been our experience. And I think this also relates to the Bridge, either the CWU or modification of it, is that you need to be looking at all life areas at one time. And looking at how do they interact with each other and how does one ... may get in the way or strengthen your ... or that you can leverage to get where you want to be. So it is a simultaneous effort across the board.

**Dr. Babcock:** I guess I would just want to add one thing to this as well, and that is the one thing we don't want to do is focus only on barrier removal. It is very, very easy to get into a habit of just thinking about what are the obstacles to future change that an individual may have. And

frankly, I think what all of us are talking about is that those obstacles are inherent in poverty. The challenges are always going to exist. And what one has to figure out is how to surmount those challenges and keep a future orientation that allows for those challenges to be surmounted. The challenges our families face in most instances can never be completely eliminated and so to focus on barrier removal first, as a sequential thing to setting goals and trying to move ahead, is not something that usually results in success.

**Mr. Brown:** Right.

**Dr. Pavetti:** Right.

**Damon:** I'm going to try to put three questions into one here. "How do you identify your coaches and are there any specific executive functioning skills curricula for TANF programs and participants?"

**Dr. Pavetti:** This is Donna. On the executive skills curriculum, that doesn't exist. That's part of what Ramsey County is sort of hoping to do. And also, as I mentioned, Mathematica is going to be doing a project where they're going to be doing that. But one thing that I think is available in the short term that actually has a huge number of resources that people can draw on, is the curriculum for the Building Nebraska Families, which was the program that I mentioned that had those huge impacts. That curriculum is available for purchase for a whopping \$25. And it has materials by, sort of, topic. So there are a whole set of materials that you can use for goal setting. There are some for time management. So that really could be a starting place for people who really want to get started right away and don't want to wait for some of these other materials to have available.

**Ms. Probert:** And in terms of identifying coaches, it's really sort of three simple concepts. First of all, a person has to really like people. I mean it has to drive them to the job. Be extremely

flexible and extremely comfortable working in ... sort of the gray area. And active listening. Have an ability to really actively listen. Not to take over ... participant's life and goals, but rather lead from behind and intervene only when appropriate. And really hold themselves and participants accountable, as that is a participant goal. It is also a participant accountability to follow through, which puts a coach in that role to ensure that this accountability is met. So you have to really disengage and not believe that participant goals are right or wrong, but really stay engaged in helping participant to move forward.

**Damon:** And on that note I would like to thank the Crittenton Women's Union, the Senate on Budget and Policy Priorities, and also our partners from Ramsey County FAST program and Goodwill-Easter Seals. On behalf of the Office of Family Assistance, I want to thank all of our participants on today's webinar and also remind you that a quick assessment will be popping up once you close your browser for you to answer some short questions so that we can gather information from you. And on that note, thank you very much.

*(End of Webinar - 1:27:39.)*