

# Transcript of Let's Talk! Engaging Parents with Be Strong Parent Cafés

Tiedra Marshall: Good morning. I am Tiedra Marshall along with Rijelle Kraft with the Pennsylvania Family Support Team based at the Center for Schools and Communities. We will be your moderators for today. It's our pleasure to welcome you to today's webinar session, "Let's talk: Engaging Parents with Be Strong Parent Cafés."

Rijelle Kraft: Good morning, everyone. This is Rijelle Kraft and I'm going to do a bit of an introduction before we get started with our panel here. Many of you on the call today on this webinar are familiar with the model of using cafes to encourage parent conversation among one another for a variety of reasons. Today we're going to be talking specifically about the Be Strong Parent Café model. As I mentioned, there are several different models, but we're going to focus on the Be Strong model today. One of the reasons why we're doing that is because the Family Support Team here at the center through our Strengthening Families Leadership Team has gone through a training process so that we're able to offer training in this Be Strong Parent Café model.

Now many of you have probably seen the cards, the deck of cards, that are associated with this Be Strong model, but the purpose that the Be Strong organization has stated for these café conversations are to elicit change and inspire families and communities to be agents of change. They also provide an opportunity for intimate conversations that nurture the spirit of family among the participants, as well as strengthen each individual participant's families from the inside out through these conversations. Participation in cafés can help parents to build meaningful relationships with other partners, as well as authentic partnerships.

Those partnerships interesting enough and I think you'll hear this from our panelist today, not only are partnerships between parents, but also partnerships between parents and staff members that are involved in the Parent Café process. Most importantly and the foundation of these cafés are that they build Protective Factors and they help to promote healing among families. Anyone can participate in a Parent Café and really see the benefits of having a meaningful conversation around parenting and Protective Factors, which is the next slide. We're going to take a look here. I know most of you are familiar with the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework, but just as a refresher, these five Protective Factors are really the recipe.

They're the ingredients that help to keep a family strong and children safe. We know that when parents build these five Protective Factors in their families, that children have great outcomes and parents feel supported and able to provide a caring and nurturing environment for their child. Just to go quickly over these as I know most of you are familiar with them, parental resilience is really that idea of being strong and flexible as a parent. Being able to face life's challenges, as well

as challenges directly related to parenting while still buffering your child from toxic stress. Social connections really boils down to we all need friends and parents especially needs friends as well.

Not just folks that they can go to vent, although that's very important because we know that parenting is a stressful job, but also folks that support their parenting. Knowledge of parenting and child development. We know that when parents know what's going on in their children's lives in terms of their developmental stages, that they feel more equipped and able to raise their children. Having some knowledge around what's going on developmentally, as well as parenting techniques for their toolbox is an important Protective Factor for families. Concrete supports in times of need of course are those ... What a lot of you are for families.

Use support and provide links to needed service when families are in need whether they're struggling with something like housing insecurity or food insecurity, or it may be that they need support for a child that they're raising that has some special needs. A lot of concrete supports often come from those agencies that you all are a part of. The final Protective Factor is social and emotional competence of children. We also think about this one as communication and how do we help our children to develop the social and emotional skills and the communication skills to navigate their world.

How do we help them learn how to describe their emotions and what they're feeling, so that they are able to build nurturing relationships and the parents are able to build nurturing relationship with their children. Then those children are equipped to go out and build relationships with other kiddos. These five Protective Factors again are this recipe for a strong and safe family. The Be Strong model actually came out of Be Strong Illinois. I'm sorry. Not Be Strong Illinois. Strengthening Families Illinois. There was a group of organizations that were coming together to figure out how can we support parents in building these Protective Factors. Be Strong took this idea of having conversations around Protective Factors and develop that deck of cards.

You'll notice that the images that are along the side of each of the Protective Factors, that's what shows up on the cards that we use in Parent Cafés. The conversations that happen during those Parent Cafés are rooted in these Protective Factors. One more introduction slide before I turn it over to our panelists is to just to kind of give you an idea of what a Parent Café looks like. Actually we don't have a polling question for this, so I won't do it that way, but if you would be willing to type into the question box, let us know have you ever been a part of a Parent Café or Community Café?

If you can just type into the question box now if you've been a part of one or you've seen one, just so we have an idea of who is in the room and maybe who has had some experience with cafés. While you're doing that, I'm going to over the anatomy of a Parent Café. Every café is a little different, but looks the same and that's part of the fidelity to this model. Every café there's a welcome. Parents

are incredibly instrumental in the carrying out of Parent Cafés. Parents can act as café hosts, as table hosts, which we'll talk about in just a second. They help with the planning process. Your parents might actually be the folks that are welcoming the participants to the café.

There are agreements that we go over at every café that help to keep the space safe for all participants. Those agreements are things like don't interrupt, silent your cellphone, things like that, excuse me, because that helps to have everyone feel comfortable participating. Each café has a theme and the theme is not only based on maybe something fun, but it's also based on those Protective Factors. Then there's a one-on-one, and the one-on-one is an opportunity for folks to practice active listening. Then they move into café conversations. Typically, a Parent Café has at least two different conversations, although many of them will have three. The thing about these café conversations is they're led ... Led's the wrong word.

Facilitated by a table host and those table host can be parents. You'll have a group of five folks, a table host and four participants, and they pick out a question from those cards that they're going to discuss that's related to the theme and based on the Protective Factors that are the focus of this particular Parent Café. They have about 15 to 20 minutes to discuss and then we ask them to move around and go to another table with another table host and hopefully a new group of participants and they'll repeat that process one or two times. There's either two or three conversations. After those conversations we do something called a commitment card or letter and I just love this. This is probably one of my favorite parts of a café.

Because what we do is we ask participants to think about what is something important from this café that they want to remember. Often we'll have a prompt. For example, if the theme is taking care of yourself, the commitment letter might be "write down two things that you're going to do in the next two weeks to take care of yourself." Then we get those commitment cards or letters back out to participants in one way or another. Each café also has a harvesting or a debrief. That is an opportunity for participants to bring forth their sort of aha moments. What resonated with them in this café that they want to tell others about? One of my favorite questions for harvest is what did you hear at one of your tables that you think the whole group should hear?

Now of course, we also want people to be respectful of confidentiality because folks might share things in these café conversations. We often will say, "Without telling anyone's story, what was an aha moment for you?" Then we wrap up these cafés with a one word closing, which is just a really great way to close out the café and have a last opportunity for folks to give a word that describes their experience. Then as we do with everything, we always want to have an evaluation because we want to know how can we make this opportunity better for others for future events. We do ask folks to do an evaluation and we always want to remind people about when the next café is. That's a basic anatomy of a Parent Café.

I will say that again all cafés look a little different and they all look the same. They all follow this structure, but the themes, the questions, what the focus is, changes with each. Now I'm taking a look at some of the answers that came in and I'm happy to see that I would say the bulk of you have been a part of a Parent Café process. Now there are some that have not been and that is perfectly cool as well. You're going to learn a lot today from our panelists about how they've implemented cafés in their communities. The purpose of this session today is for us to give the opportunity for some folks that are already implementing to talk about their experiences.

I want to say one more thing and then we'll move on to our panel. I do see that some of you are already implementing and that's wonderful. Some of you maybe implementing without having gone to our two day institute and these cards are available and there's information on the Be Strong website on how to do cafés. We certainly know that that's available to people. What we hope that you'll see by the end of this call today is that it maybe beneficial for you to participate in a training institute to get more information about this model, how to have fidelity to the model, et cetera. Everyone on our panel today has actually gone through an institute. I'm going to turn it over to Tiedra now and she's going to introduce our first panelist.

Tiedra Marshall: Good morning. It's my pleasure to welcome the first of our four panelists today who will be sharing their experiences relative to the Parent Café. First we have Kari Copeland, who's worked for the Pottstown Family Center for two years. She specifically works with all of the teen and young parents in the Parents as Teachers program. She attended Messiah College where she received a bachelor's degree in human development and family science, with a minor degree in Spanish. It's our pleasure to welcome Kari. Thank you for joining us. Please be patient as we pass the presenter privileges to Kari. Kari, the microphone is now yours.

Kari Copeland: Thanks, Tiedra. Like Tiedra said, my name is Kari Copeland. I work with the Pottstown Family Center, which is a branch of Family Services of Montgomery County, which is located about 45 minutes outside of Philadelphia. We're a nonprofit serving children, seniors and families in the Western half of Montgomery County. Parents as Teachers is one of about 10 or 11 programs that our organization offers. Part of our Parents as Teacher program we do use Parent Café as our group connection and it's really been one of the most fruitful local connections that we've offered. We chose this model about two years ago because we knew our families just really wanted an opportunity to gather and talk with other parents more in depth.

We all know it's incredibly valuable to talk about your experiences with somebody that's going through something similar. We had a great turnout so far in each season or series. It keeps getting better and better. We just didn't have quite as great of an understanding of how the model is meant to be implemented, and so we went to the training. I attended the training in Harrisburg this past January. We went for two days. It was a really, really fruitful experience. My coworker Ava

Sykes and I learned so much more about the café than we ever thought we knew. We had implemented three series of the café. Each series we try to have four to six in a series, but we changed a lot once we returned.

The Café Institute helped us understand the reason each aspect of the café is so valuable and really how to properly implement the program. We were given the opportunity to watch the Be Strong family staff implement a café for us. Then we practiced planning one on our own. It was really helpful to have the advice and the critique of the Be Strong staff while we practiced. I would say that was probably one of the most valuable things about that training was watching them deliver it and how they framed it, how they welcomed us in, the way they were table hosts for us. When we first started our café, it was difficult to not have a lot of guidance as we started because I mean we're just reading about it and trying to implement it.

Tiedra is our TA or technical assistance there and she's kind of walking alongside of us as we try implementing it in a different way now. We were also given a handbook that gives you a very detailed step-by-step of how to deliver the café and that's been really helpful when training new staff members as well. Just leading back to the planning process of when we are trying to implement this without having Tiedra or without having the training, I think we just didn't understand the reasons, the value that each part of the café really holds. We were doing parts of the café, but really not to the entirety of how it's designed. I wish we would have had been able to attend a training before we probably started.

It probably would have made it a lot easier, although I was really able to understand the training more since we had already tried to implement it. Overall since the training, I think we just really understand the value of each step down to just having even fidgets on the table. We really see how the entire formation of the Parent Café is designed to ... It just really brings everything all back together. I think we just have a really, really good in depth understanding of the café model now. It was a really, really beneficial training that we attended.

Tiedra Marshall: Thank you, Kari. That was a wonderful explanation of your experience. Just a follow up, I have a few questions that I wanted to talk through with you. I noticed you said you changed a few things, even having the fidgets on the table. What exactly did you change and what did you learn from those changes as a result of attending the institute?

Kari Copeland: Yeah. Basically before we attended the training, we kept adding ... We did about three series with six cafés in each one. We had done a lot, but each café was kind of designed around ... We have dinners for our families and then we would kind of have somebody present. Then we had our three rounds of discussion. We did do commitment cards. Since the training, we just learned about all ... I guess we didn't quite comprehend the value of each specific step. Now we've implemented using the one-on-one, which is to promote active listening with our

families. We designed it so that every parent on their name tag has some sort of symbol where we can match them up for the one-on-one.

Our café is always bilingual. My coworker Ava always designs it so that she make sure that you're matched up with your proper language. That's been a big change. Families really are drawn to that because it kind of makes them feel a little bit more comfortable and relaxed. We also now always have our fidgets on the table. These usually include like clay, paper, markers, pipe cleaners, things that people can just doodle with and parents really utilize these. We also offer childcare for our specific café. When it's time to transition, I talk to somebody about having a transition song, which has really, really helped the kids move into childcare.

Then we lead into our three 15 minute rounds of café conversations really focused around the Protective Factor of the day. We also implemented the harvest and the one word. We kind of tweaked our commitment card design a little bit more. I think the biggest change of what we've implemented is making sure that the Protective Factor is very evident throughout each café. We always had a theme, but I don't think the protect ... It related to a Protective Factor, but I don't think it was as obvious throughout the entire café. We also ensure now that even if you do have those pack of cards, each of those ... The cards that you put on the table really need to be connected to the Protective Factor of the day.

We now ensure that we pre pick three cards to put on the table that relate to the Protective Factor or the theme of that day that we're talking about.

Tiedra Marshall: Awesome. You mentioned the name tag as one of the considerations that you think about when you're working in a bilingual situation. I've had the pleasure of visiting one of your cafés and it was like a science, as well as an art to how you all delivered your café. What other considerations did your planning team give to implementing a bilingual café?

Kari Copeland: Yes. In our Pottstown community, mostly about half the families that we serve are bilingual. Now our family center tries to make almost every single one of our events bilingual. We have the wonderful luxury of out of our nine person planning team for Parent Café, four of those staff members are bilingual. We used to have a host and then an interpreter for our host, but now we'll be able to have a bilingual staff as the host each time so they can kind of interpret for themselves, which can be challenging, but it's really, really beneficial to have that. We make sure that all of our handouts, our survey, signage, slideshows and most of our resources are bilingual too. We try to have a resource table there so families can get connected there.

Since we offer childcare as well, we make sure that our babies and toddler room is also bilingual.

Tiedra Marshall: Wow. You also incorporate your community partners into your café from your venue. What are other ways or what are all the ways that you have incorporated your community partners into the implementation of your café?

Kari Copeland: Yes. We specifically partner with our PEAK organization, which is short for Pottstown Early Action for Kindergarten Readiness, which is a part of the Pottstown School District where we're located. It's funded and equally promoted by family services, which is our company, and then the Pottstown School District as well. We also encourage our community partners through the high school or just different organizations that we partner with to come and experience the café as a parent and then promote it with the families that they serve. We had a lot of community partners come and just enjoy it themselves. We also have a resource table where we put out information about services in our community that could benefit them.

We've also talked about this series having a sponsor board because we've been asking for some donations from different organizations and in return we were talking about having a sponsor board where they could put some of their information there.

Tiedra Marshall: Thank you. Thank you, Kari, for sharing all of that information. If for anyone who's listening, again if you have questions or if you want to contact this program, please contact Eve Bieber who's the director for the Pottstown Family Center or Kari Copeland who's a family development specialist who is taking her time to share with us the experience that they've had and all that they've learned. Thank you for sharing, Kari.

Kari Copeland: Welcome.

Tiedra Marshall: Next up, we're going to switch it back over to Rijelle to introduce the next presenter.

Rijelle Kraft: Okay. Our next presenter is from Union-Snyder Community Action Agency and Elizabeth Marshall holds a bachelor's degree in interpersonal community from Bloomsburg University. She's been working in workforce development, as well as family-based therapy. She is the early childhood education coordinator and parenting teacher at Union-Snyder Community Action Agency. Elizabeth, I'm going to go ahead and turn it over to you for you to introduce your agency and how you've used Parent Cafés.

Elizabeth Marsh: Good morning, everyone. As stated, I'm Elizabeth Marshall and I am the early childhood education coordinator, as well as parenting teacher here at the Union-Snyder Community Action Agency. Our agency, the specific office that I work at, is located that Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania. We also have recently acquired another location in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. Our agency has different programs for the community such as employment and education, which is the component that I'm in, AmeriCorps Community Service, Veterans Affairs, and community outreach, as well as we also run four food pantries in our area.

Why our organization chose this specific model was because we thought it would be cohesive with the clients we serve and the services that we provide to our clients. I actually had to go to someone in our agency because they had planned on doing the Parent Cafés before I had actually started this job, which is over a year ago. She was telling me, "We wanted to make sure that we could have everybody come together." We have clients who are here everyday for things like our WorkReady program or our GED classes. We have some people that come in once a week depending on what they're coming from or sometimes people are just coming to us on a one time basis for assistance with their electric bill or rent or something like that.

We want to use the Parent Café model as well now with another agency, which is SUMCD who will be also presenting, Brooke will. We're actually going to try and get our agencies together because we serve some of the same counties and definitely try to have everybody put together so that all of our populations are being served. To talk a little bit about my Café Institute experience, I felt like it was very helpful in the work that I do in our agency, as well as a huge way to network with individuals from all over the state and that work in different areas and populations than I do. It was also great to be there. I went with a coworker, as well as we were able to take two of our clients.

One of the clients that we took was in our GED program and then our client that we took was actually an AmeriCorps member who was in their second year with us. He was actually in the early childhood education classroom with me. I think so often we get lost in ourselves when we're at work and we may not get as much time as we would like to interact with clients and coworkers just to see ... For me it was just to see our clients how they flourished at this training was the most refreshing for me. One of the clients in particular was a completely different person after attending the training and being able to become more confident in herself. She's a young lady who is married and she has two children, but she is at home a lot.

She's not out interacting with anybody really unless she was coming here to our GED class. The Café Institute Training was three days of fun and excitement. I never got bored because of the interaction of the training and being able to speak about experiences I have had in my own life, as well as in my career. I never felt as though when I asked a question that it was invalid or that you should already know the answer to the question that you ask. Everyone was very welcoming when we were there with ideas and opinions on how to run your café and what may work best for your agency. Our agency also we were able to as well provide childcare because we do have a childcare classroom here. That's been a huge help with getting people to be able to come.

It was especially nice to have time to meet with our mentor, which was Rijelle, who would work specifically with our agency for preparing for the Parent Cafés, as well as aiding and preparing for the Parent Café that we conducted while at the training. My most valuable experience at the institute was being able to conduct a Parent Café with another agency, as well as attending a Parent Café

that was conducted by my colleagues. On the last day that was definitely my favorite part where we were with another agency and we conducted our café in the morning and then took a break for lunch, came back and then two other agencies came together as well and then presented their Parent Café.

I thought it was a great way to transition yourself into getting ready to prepare for your first Parent Café that your agency was going to join your own. You felt comfortable because you knew the other people were having the same nervous feelings as you were and you're not being judged. My personal opinion is I think that sometimes as individuals when we have to speak in front of people, we think that they are judging us or hanging on our every word in order to see if there's a mistake made, but that is not the case and especially not in the Parent Café that was conducted by our agency at the institute. The final would be something that I wish I had known before the café that I know now is definitely not to sweat the small stuff.

Not everything needs to be perfect as far as your presentation. You may forget things and that is okay. No one's perfect. I also wished that I would have known before not to anticipate the amount of people coming that say they're coming. Our cafés were conducted over like late winter, early spring, but there had been some bad weather. Schools are canceled or anything like that. We also didn't think about people about sick children. There was times that I thought that we were going to have like 15 people come into our café and it would be down to four. I would be so bummed out because you're just so excited and Rijelle's coming. I'm like, "She's going to be so proud of us," and then there's five people.

You can't account for that and that's okay. Your café can be just as good with five people compared to 20 people. Those cafés sometimes I saw were actually the more enlightening. You really got to know the people that were in the cafés, the clients and my coworkers as well.

Rijelle Kraft:

All right. Well, thank you, Elizabeth. I really appreciate you giving that introduction. I think I really like your last point. These cafés can be done with small groups or large groups. I think that's a really good point to make. Like you said, sometimes those small groups are really meaningful for the folks that are there. I appreciate that. We're going to look at just a few follow up questions and some of these were probably going to combine, so we might not answer every single one of these. One of the things that I thought was really interesting in the cafés that I attended with you was that you had a lot of staff participating. In part, I think that was because you wanted them to get a feel of what the café is.

I'm wondering a little bit about what were impressions that staff had of the café and then also how did you ensure that they sort of kept their parent hat on during the café because that can be different for professionals sometimes?

Elizabeth Marsh:

We did try to invite every staff member to at least one of our Parent Cafés. At all of our Parent Cafés we did have at least ... I believe it was probably at least two staff other than Caroline and myself who went to the training. Their impression

was they loved this experience. They thought it was great especially you get away from the office and you are in our building still, but it was just a totally different atmosphere. You're in the building that you work in, but you're there in this café speaking to ... They're speaking to clients that they have never met or maybe it is someone that they have met. We would send out thank you emails to anybody who attend the café and ask for feedback or any positive or anything that we should work on for our next café.

One of our grant surveyors actually specifically emailed back and her email said, "I was glad to be able to participate and see how the Parent Café actually works. Elizabeth, Dorian and Carol executed the Parent Café project just as it was intended. What was really interesting to me is that family support technical assistance coordinator connected to our children trust fund grant participated in the café," which is Rijelle. "This person helped create the café concept and is well trained in the techniques. I thought that she brought a very positive and supportive stance to the café.

Having a grant rep attend may have be nerveracking for staff coordinating the café, but staff really did a beautiful job, with each taking responsibility for pieces of the café and helping it to flow smoothly. Great job, education and employment." I mean I think the staff and I believe there were not any staff that were able to attend more than one of the Parent Cafés at a time, but we would always have feedback, "This was great. We were so glad to get to actually meet with clients in our community not just because for five minutes or 20 minutes to have them fill out an application to get assistance with their electric or their rent or anything like that.

We actually really got to know our clients and how people in our community are feeling about different things that they're having to deal with parenting." One of the ways that we ensured that our staff kept on their parent hat as opposed to the professional hat was when we sent out the invites for the café, staff got a little bit of a different invitation than our clients did. We made sure to put in the invite that they were there as a part of a family and not a staff person. It also mentioned at the beginning of the café when you are explaining the process that everyone is there as an individual of a family and not as whatever their professional maybe and no one is judging.

It was great to see how staff opened up with this process and interacted with clients in a way that they may not be able to regularly. At all our Parent Cafés like I said, we have at least two staff people there and every staff member was invited.

Rijelle Kraft:

Okay. Well, thank you. I think that was one of the things that I saw at your café that staff were grateful to have that opportunity to interact with parents in a little bit different way. Speaking of parents, thinking about what their reaction was to the café and I definitely saw over the course of your cafés that you had some parents that attended every single one, what are you doing or what are you

thinking about to capitalize on that enthusiasm and keep parents coming to cafés? What do you think that'll look like?

Elizabeth Marsh: I mean it speaks about retention, how did we get these clients to come back, but honestly it was because they wanted to. It was because the café model worked and did what it was supposed to. I feel like it speaks for itself. It was just them coming and having that experience and wanting to come back. People truly felt as though they were part of something when they were there and there's a certain gentlemen specifically that I worked with in parenting who attended all three Parent Cafés and was so happy to see that he was not the only one going through the issues that he was and that everyone has been through similar situations as well.

We tried to make everyone feel welcome when coming to the cafés and wanted them to leave with learning something that they did not know before. People may have been apprehensive at first to attend the cafés, but those people who were that attended more than one café realized that there was no reason to be. One way I would say that I have personally capitalized on the enthusiasm of our participants was one of my participants in particular is actually coming and speaking at the parenting course that I run. He is coming and talking about his café experience, as well as he's not doing café, but he's just letting people know his story and what he's been through so people know that they're not alone.

It wasn't an easy journey for him to get to where he is now, but he is where he is. We want them to speak freely with their experience with the Parent Café and how it has helped them, as well as them speaking about their story and letting other parents know that they are not alone. Whenever I've asked parents to come and speak at a parenting class about these subjects, they're excited that they finally get to be the teacher for someone else.

Rijelle Kraft: All right. Well, thank you, Elizabeth, for answering those questions. Now we did have a question come in. Elizabeth, I want to see what your answer is to this. Is there a best time of day for parents to attend? What have you found in terms of daytime versus after work, what do you think made sense for the parents in your program?

Elizabeth Marsh: Okay. Specifically for our program, a lot of our clients we already here during the day. We would do it like around 10:00 in the morning and we also transported clients to the café if they needed that and our classroom is always running during the day. That was the easiest time for us. Late morning up until about lunch time the kids would then be in the classroom and the parents were coming. We did have some parents who weren't able to come due to working, but there would only be one or two of those. We are going to try and have those people come to the next step.

Rijelle Kraft: Well, thank you so much, Elizabeth. I just wanted to open that question up to our other panel participants. Anyone else want to comment, Kari, Brooke, Katie, about time of day that seems to work best? You will have to unmute yourselves,

but if anyone else wants to respond to that and thank you again, Elizabeth, for sharing your information from Union-Snyder.

Brooke Pennepac: This is Brooke.

Kari Copeland: Go ahead, Brooke.

Brooke Pennepac: We find that evenings have worked best for families. We do have a lot of working families that we work with throughout all of our programs. We do find that evening, sometimes we'll start like 5:30, sometimes 6:00. We do the evening event for them. We do provide transportation as well as long as it's not super far away. We do try to bring them in in vehicles, as well as people need that transportation piece.

Kari Copeland: This is Kari now. Can I go?

Rijelle Kraft: Yeah. Go ahead, Kari.

Kari Copeland: We have found as well, I agree with Brooke, that we definitely get a bigger turnout in the evening. Like our last series, we had six. Each month we had one in the morning and one in the evening. Three months long. Our morning ones was about 10:30 to 12:30 or 10:00 to 12:00. Typically, we pick that time in the morning because it's after parents drop their kids off from school, but like before lunch time when maybe they're non school aged kids might take a nap. In the evenings, we would start as well at around 5:30 to 7:30, which is ideal. At least we offer dinner as well. It's nice for parents to come with their kids, have dinner together so that they didn't have to plan it and then their kids go into childcare.

They're only in childcare for about an hour then. We've had a lot of success with that. We do get a much bigger turnout in the evenings though.

Tiedra Marshall: Thank you, Kari, for responding to that question. We're going to move on to the next presenter. Next up we have Katie Gullone. She's the program associate for the educational project for the Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children. Katie, the mic is now yours. All right. We're going to forward to the next presenter until we can get Katie's sound up and running. We're going to move through to the next presenter and we'll come back to Katie.

Rijelle Kraft: Brooke, we're going to move forward to you. We're just going to move forward to your slides. Brooke is from Snyder Union Mifflin Child Development. She has an associate's degree in human services from Harrisburg Area Community College and a bachelor's degree from Bellevue University in human and social services administration. She started at Snyder Union Mifflin Child Development as the Healthy Families America Program family and community resource specialist, but now she works as the enrollment and outreach manager. I'm going to advance the slides to where you are Brooke, but if you want to go ahead and start talking about how you brought Parent Cafés to your organization.

Brooke Pennepac: Okay. I'm with the Heavy Families America Program. We went to a national conference for that in Florida I would say about four years ago. We have a day that we participated in a Parent Café down there. At that point we had decided we wanted to bring that back to Mifflin County. Our Healthy Families America Program for our agency is only in Mifflin County, so we kind of just starting with Mifflin County. We have not done any Parent Cafés that you had in Snyder or Union Counties, but that is in our future plans. At that point we had ordered the cards and then we found community partners. We actually partner with the Mifflin Juniata Human Services, which is located on our courthouse.

There's a lady there that participates with us, as well as the Success By 6 program from the United Way, the Mifflin Juniata United Way. They participate with us. Our Children and Youth in Mifflin County is very supportive. They actually even provide some funds to help us with this. They are a participant that supports us and they also give out invitations to their families to attend this. We kind of brought it back to Mifflin County. We've had probably 10 to 12 Parent Cafés, somewhere around there. We just kind of tried to start running them off with that one day training that we had.

Since we've had our Parent Café training with Rijelle, we have learned there are a few things we were doing that we needed to change such as we were writing the question to the card, one little fold out sheet that would go on the table, but actually the cards go on the table. There are some different things that we found that we were going to tweak for our next one, which will be held later this month. The training that we went through for the Parent Café was wonderful. The two days were great and I feel like we really got a lot out of it. It started within our agency. They were only three of us really working in the Parent Cafés, but we had 18 trained last month. I really look for this to take off more and I look forward to that.

I know our parents very much enjoy the Parent Cafés that we have. There are some parents that haven't missed one of them. We have parents that look forward to being the table hosts. We've had some that are very small. We've had as small as four people come, but we've had as big as I want to say about 25 come to the Parent Café. We really try to get the invitation out into the community. We work with other childcare providers. We send out invitations to them as well for families to be able to come and participate in this. We also do provide childcare. We run a couple of childcare facilities across the counties.

In Mifflin County, we have one called the Lewistown Children's Center and that is where we've been holding our Parent Cafés because we have the childcare rooms here. We have staff volunteer to do the childcare piece, but it's nice because we have an infant room, we have a toddler room, we have an older room as well and staff that are trained to be able to have the children there in the childcare while the parents are participating in the café. That's just some of the things that we found. A lot of our families need the childcare or else they aren't able to attend, so we decided that's something that we really needed to offer. The other one is we're very rural, so we do try to provide transportation.

We've had maybe one or two that we couldn't provide transportation and we found that the attendance was lower. We really found that that is something that we need to provide for this, so that we can have the families be able to get to the café to participate.

Rijelle Kraft: All right. Well, thanks Brooke for that introduction. I know you've touched on several of these questions already in your introduction, but I know you mentioned in some of your responses to me that one of the reasons why Snyder Union Mifflin decided to have all the staff trained was to have everyone on the same page. I was wondering if you could talk about in case there are any other folks that are on the call that have a similar type of organization, can you talk a little bit about the teams kind of that are in different counties based on your organization?

Brooke Pennepac: Our organization is pretty spread out. It sounds simple, Snyder Union Mifflin, but between Mifflin and our central office, which is in Mifflinburg, it's 50 minutes. You're thinking almost an hour to get out to our Lewisburg site. It's about an hour and 10 minutes. We have teams. We kind of have a team for Union County. We kind of have a team for Snyder County. They can work together. A lot of our services, Snyder and Union they join together to do events anyway. Mifflin County is kind of off a little bit from them because it is a little bit further out. Then there's a team in Mifflin County as well.

Like I said, we've only done this in Mifflin County so far, so it was nice to have the people in Snyder and Union to understand the Parent Café so that this can be moved in that direction as well because lots of the agency staff really would like to use this.

Rijelle Kraft: Okay. Great. You did talk a bit about your institute experience. I want to skip to this third question about parent involvement. Josie, the parent that attended the institute, was just so excited about the Parent Café model and have been really involved and participating in a lot of your cafés prior. How do you think parent involvement might change since you participated in the institute? Do you see parent's roles changing at all?

Brooke Pennepac: I do. One thing we do have because we have Early Head Start and Head Start, we have a policy council that is something that's set by the federal government. One of the goals Josie has is to take that to the Parent Café to the policy council because they're kind of like the voices for the other parents in the agency. That's one of her goals. She would like that to be taken there and for them to be able to participate as maybe table hosts, as well as get the word out to other families that they really need try to attend the Parent Cafés. She's a very good voice for the agency and I know that she has very high hopes for this.

Rijelle Kraft: All right. Great. Well, I think we're going to go ahead and move on to Katie. I believe she's back on. I'll turn it over to Tiedra.

Tiedra Marshall: Katie, are you able to hear us?

Katie Gullone: Yes. Hi, I'm here. Can you hear me?

Tiedra Marshall: There you go. Yes, we can hear you.

Katie Gullone: I apologize about that, but thank you so much. My name is Katie Gullone and I serve as the program associate for educational projects at PAEYC, which is the Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children. We work to support high quality care and education for young children by providing advocacy, community resources, as well as professional growth opportunities for the needs and rights of children, their families, and individuals who interact with them. At PAEYC, we were asked to participate in the Be Strong Parent Café Institute last year in September of 2016 by Marjorie Anderson from the Office of Child Development and Early Learning. We at PAEYC are also Community Innovation Zone grantee.

That was a piece of the ask for being a part of the Parent Café Strong Institute. Our leadership team at PAEYC consisted of me, a staff member, her name is Cynthia, and two parent leaders from the Homewood community. Our facilitator that we had at the institute when we went it was very ... She was very engaging, very inviting and she shared a lot of really valuable information to us to help set up and host a Parent Café. I enjoyed, I know our group all enjoyed that she was able to really connect with us about her personal experiences and information that was presented at the institute. As we've mentioned, it was a two day experience.

Our group was actually able to meet and engage with individuals across the state to share knowledge and ideas, which was really great because we got to meet people from all over the state that do similar work to what we do at PAEYC. In addition to the Café Institute, they actually had time built in where we could plan for upcoming Parent Café sessions, which was very valuable as well. I think one of the most meaningful and valuable pieces of experience at the institute that I wanted to share was that our group was able to actually be a part of a mock Parent Café and host one as well.

We have that experience of the power of a Parent Café session, while having the facilitator who was at the institute was also available to help answer questions and support with the transitions. When we left the Café Institute, our group felt really confident about planning and hosting our Parent Café experience because we're actually able to practice that mock session in a supportive environment. Actually one of our parents on the leadership team, her name is Danielle, and she had really taken charge of the planning and the preparation for the Parent Café.

Really know why PAEYC chose to participate and learn about hosting cafés was to provide opportunities to really enhance some of the programming that we're already doing for families in the Homewood community, which is located in the City of Pittsburgh. We really desired to create meaningful conversational experiences for adults in the community, as well as an open space for the adults

and parents to really connect with one another in a supportive welcoming environment. We felt that this model really met that need. We also received a lot of positive feedback from the family members that did attend. As you can see in some of the photos that were captured during some of our Parent Cafés, and some of those feedback that we had received was this experience was ...

This was listed on our surveys, was that it was awesome. It was amazing, but it also was an opportunity. It was rewarding for them to have conversations with a diverse group of parents in their community. Actually one parent has stopped me as I was leaving and said that they realized that they weren't alone and that they really didn't necessarily been wanting to attend the Parent Café that night, but that they were so thankful that they did because it really opened their eyes to them.

Tiedra Marshall: Thank you, Katie. You mentioned that you have parents who are currently highly engaged in your program. How did you build on the strength of their engagement to move the café implementation forward?

Katie Gullone: Well, I think really at our organization we have already an established community space called the PAEYC Homewood Early Learning Hub. When we were planning the Parent Café sessions, we actually approached those families that were already attending current programming and invited them to attend the cafés. I feel that the relationships with families that have already been established at the hub. With our staff members at the hub, as well as the parent leaders on our leadership team I think really made that difference because some of our staff at ... I mean they are really connected, deeply rooted to the community.

Tiedra Marshall: Thank you. Parents as you said are sharing a lot of their personal stories and staff are sharing stories. Through that process of sharing, there maybe some challenging information that may surface as a result of having that conversation. How do you prepare for that when families are sharing that information? How do you handle that?

Katie Gullone: Well, one thing that we really wanted to be intentional about, which was actually the facilitator at the instituted recommended, was to have somebody in the room or somebody available during a Parent Café that could help support any parents that something might come up for them and they might need to talk to someone or just have somebody that would be certified in counseling or social work that they could approach and be prepared. We intentionally asked certain PAEYC staff that are also part of our Family Support Center to be a part of that event, so they could just be available.

Tiedra Marshall: Thank you. I noticed in your pictures that you had a mixture of both male and female participants. How do you intentionally include fathers or father figures in your cafés?

Katie Gullone: I will say that we actually had invited a father who is also a parent ambassador to be a part of our leadership team. He's a well-known father in the community. Since he already supports some other programming, we asked him to help participate and be on the leadership team. He was able to really support that implementation process. We were able to build on those experiences as well. Then when we did ask families to participate, we asked the whole family to come, and we knew that there would be families that would need childcare and support with children. We did offer that as well at our café.

Tiedra Marshall: Thank you. For those of who may not know, there are additional cards that can be purchased if you wanted to have a café specifically for fathers. There are cards just for that purpose that focus on topics that are specific to fathers. It is also an option as well. Thank you, Katie, for sharing that information. There have been a few questions that have come through and I'm going to open it up to all of the presenters. One question being how often are you having your series of cafés? We're going to open up the mic for all presenters to share about the frequency of cafés.

Kari Copeland: I'll go first. Should I go?

Tiedra Marshall: Yup. Go, Kari.

Kari Copeland: So far we have done a series in the fall and the spring. We try to do two a month. We were doing one in the morning and then one in the evening each month for three months long. This series actually though we're going to do four this fall. Again we'll do one in the morning and then one in the evening each month.

Tiedra Marshall: How far apart are those cafés?

Kari Copeland: Every other week typically. One in the beginning of the month and one in the end of the month.

Tiedra Marshall: Brooke, did you want to chime in?

Brooke Pennepac: We do ours quarterly at this point, but we are considering doing them every other month. Having them a little bit more frequently happen.

Tiedra Marshall: Katie?

Katie Gullone: We actually want to really partner to continue the Parent Cafés with our Family Support Center. We are in the process of that.

Tiedra Marshall: Elizabeth, if you want to unmute yourself. There you go.

Elizabeth Marsh: We did ours on a monthly basis as well and in groups of three.

Tiedra Marshall: I don't see any other questions coming in, but if you have questions for anyone of the four panelists, now is the time to send those questions. As you send those questions and we are going to entertain one final question for all of our panelists,

and we're going to start with Kari to ask this question, what is one piece of advice that you would offer to an organization that is considering implementing the Be Strong Parent Café model?

Kari Copeland: I would really recommend having someone or have Tiedra or Rijelle really be a TA for you. I think that's been really helpful to have somebody walk alongside you and help you implement these steps and help you understand the importance of each step and try to really focus your café around a Protective Factor of the day. Something else that I would recommend is just really watching another program table host. I think it's pretty specific. It's just helpful to really watch somebody else do it and then try doing it and have somebody particularly doing it. I mean going to the training is very, very beneficial for that reason. I would also recommend assessing the clientele that you have that would be interested.

We have the luxury of ... We're a little bit more of a somewhat urban town. We have a location where most of our families can walk to. I think that has been very beneficial for most of our families.

Tiedra Marshall: Thank you, Kari. Elizabeth, if you can unmute yourself, we would love to hear your response to that question as well.

Elizabeth Marsh: Okay. One piece of advice that I would give to any organization who's considering implementing the Be Strong Parent Café model would definitely be to go into it with an open mind. It may not be what you are expecting or what you have preconceive notions maybe and that's okay. It is a wonderful experience and amazing way to bring people in a community together and have people meet who may have never crossed paths before, but are now due to the Parent Café. Parent Cafés can make more of an impact than you realize on the clients and people that we are dealing with everyday and the café could be one positive thing that they look forward to coming once a month or however often they're coming.

Tiedra Marshall: Thank you. Katie, what's one piece of advice that you would offer?

Katie Gullone: I would suggest and recommend really I think being intentional about also taking time to plan the event. I know for us we had to think about creating a theme and a theme that would be meaningful to your specific community and how you're going to set the tone for the event because a lot of what we created for our themes was really relevant to a community need. I just think taking that time to be able to do that planning.

Tiedra Marshall: Thank you. Brooke, your response?

Brooke Pennepac: My suggestion would be like I said, we came back from Florida with a one day training. We took part in a Parent Café there, but we didn't really have the chance to plan one. I would suggest going through this two day training because you really get to be a part of it. You get to plan it. You get to see kind of every aspect

of it. The two day training I think is a very good thing for agencies to do instead of just kind of getting cards and trying to go on your way with it. I really feel that it was very beneficial for our agency. Even though I explained it to other professionals within the agency what it was, people still didn't quite capture what it was until we went through the training.

I really think that that really helped people to understand that exactly the café truly is and what it is used for.

Tiedra Marshall: Thank you. There is a question that came in about childcare. I will leave it open to all of you. Kari, if you want to start again, please talk to us about how childcare was staffed and what type of activities were planned for children who were in childcare?

Kari Copeland: Okay. The location that we have is called Connections on High. It's a coffee shop, but it's also a church. It has a backroom that has a large space where we have the café. Then it does have three childcare classrooms. There's already a nursery, a toddler room and then a big kid room we just call it. It is nice that the babies room does have toys in it already. In the toddler room, there is a lot of toys. We try to have some like very simple maybe crafts on hand, some games. Then our older kids room, we have a couple different things in the community that we've tried to bring in. One's called art fusion and they bring in different crafts that they could do with the older kids. A little bit more difficult crafts for some of the much older kids.

Sometimes we've had a movie and popcorn. We've had group games. I think there have been competition things back there for the older kids. When we have it in the morning, we only get kids that are under five years old usually. When we have it in the evening, one of the things we're running into, sometimes families bring their high schoolers. We are in the process of trying to have like a youth room and try to come up with some activities and stuff. If anybody has any recommendations for that too, that would be wonderful. As far as staffing those rooms, we've done it a little bit differently throughout different cafés. We used to try to find paid childcare staff.

Now we're trying to move into having one paid adult childcare staff with all their clearances and everything and then we actually have partnered a little bit with like the community college and the local high school in their child development programs and having some of their students come as part of their class, getting credit by coming to help volunteer, but there's always a paid person with clearances in each room. It doesn't have to be those students to be like the other two people in the room, but we're trying to find volunteers to go along with the one paid childcare staff in each room.

Tiedra Marshall: Thank you. Any other thoughts about how to staff childcare? Elizabeth, you can go, and then Brooke, we'll hear from you.

Elizabeth Marsh: Okay. Thank you. Sorry.

Tiedra Marshall: No problem.

Elizabeth Marsh: For us I'm actually the early childhood education coordinator, so we have a classroom here that is pretty big. We have a side that's more for the toddlers and then a side that is more for the infants. We only will take children that are five and under. This is just in our daily classrooms. Sometimes we will have a kid in the summer when their parents are coming for their GED courses or anything like that that is a little bit older, but we will never have kids that are over eight years old. Our cafés were always held during the day and I was in the cafés. We would not have GED class that day. Our GED instructor would actually be the person who was in the classroom with the children. Sometimes we didn't even actually have children that came, but sometimes we did.

Tiffany would then be in that classroom with them. Everyone at our agency has all of their clearances. We would be able to utilize anyone as far as who could come in the classroom.

Tiedra Marshall: Okay. Brooke?

Brooke Pennepac: We utilize staff. All of our staff have clearances. When we started the Parent Cafés, we started with our home visitors being the childcare providers because they know the children that were coming in typically. Now we've kind of moved a little bit away from that and we have opened it up to kind of the agency for people to volunteer. I mean we can pay them, but we get volunteers of who wants to do those and then we have payment that we give to them for it. We do have our childcare sites. We do have infant, toddler, preschool rooms. We've never had anybody come with a child over about the age of 10. I think that's the oldest we've had come in, but we always have activities and things for them to do.

Tiedra Marshall: Can anyone give one specific example of an activity? We had a question about particular activities. I heard one of you mention that they were relative to the Protective Factors. You have an example of that? If not, there are two resources that are available to everyone. I put one resource in the chat box. It's [whatmakesyourfamilystrong.org](http://whatmakesyourfamilystrong.org). That's where you can find posters, as well as other ideas. Another tool that many people use is Pinterest, P-I-N-T-E-R-E-S-T. If you just do a search for Protective Factors or Parent Café, there are a lot of pages that have ideas that you can pull from as well. I don't see any additional questions that are coming through.

We're going to say thank you to all of our presenters for all the wealth of information and knowledge that they've shared with us. Thank you all for submitting your questions and being a part of our presentation. For more information, if you want to learn about how to conduct the Be Strong Parent Café model, please send all inquiries to the email that is on your screen and someone will respond to you and talk through the process to see how we can best serve your needs. As we close out our webinar, again thank you all for joining us today. The archive session will be at the PATNCTF websites within the week.

When you receive the electronic evaluation via email, please take a few minutes to complete it as your feedback helps us to offer professional development of the highest quality. Registration information for next month's webinar on "Community PASSPORTs: A way to make connections" presented by Brenda Gaffey, program coordinator from The Guidance Center, will be emailed soon and will be placed on the Parents as Teachers website as well. Please remember you can join Family Support Webinars in multiple ways including on mobile devices such as phone and tablets. Thank you again for joining us and this concludes today's webinar.