

Transcript of The Effects of Poverty on Parenting

Rijelle: Good morning. I am [Rijelle 00:00:01] Craft, Family Support Technical Assistance Coordinator with the Pennsylvania Family Support Team based at the Center for Schools and Communities. I will be your moderator today. It's my pleasure to welcome you to today's webinar session, "The Effects of Poverty on Parenting."

Our presenter today is Sharon Leon. Ms. Leon is the Employment and Education Director at the Union Snyder Community Action Agency. She has worked with Community Action for 17 years. Throughout that time, she has worked extensively with family literacy and adult education in the state of Pennsylvania and has served as Division Chair for Family Literacy with the Pennsylvania Association for Adult Continuing Education.

Ms. Leon has worked with the PA Children's Trust Fund Initiative in providing parenting and family support education to teens, young parents, and families. She is also a strengths-based family workers instructor, offering professional training to family workers grounded in the family development principles and aligned with the Strengthening Families Initiatives of Pennsylvania.

Currently, Ms. Leon serves as a board member for the Snyder County Coalition for Kids and is actively involved with the Early Care and Education Coalition and the Union Snyder Children's Round Table, serving as chair of the Education Success and Truancy group.

It is my pleasure to welcome Sharon this morning. Please be patient while I pass the presenter privileges to her. Sharon, thank you for joining us. The microphone is now yours.

Sharon: Okay. Good morning, everyone. Thank you Rijelle and thank you all for joining me today to talk about such an important topic. As Rijelle said, I work with Community Action. I've been there for 17 years. I currently supervise different programs including Work Ready in Pennsylvania, Family Literacy, and a parenting program which is funded through the Pennsylvania Children's Trust Fund Initiative.

We utilize the Nurturing Parenting curriculum in our program, in our parenting program and our family literacy program. We have also, in the past ten years, utilized Guiding Good Choices and Staying Connected with your Teen as some of the other parenting curriculums that we've used. I'm also a Strength-Based Family Worker Credentialing Instructor and Coach, and I'll talk about that a little bit later in the presentation.

If you're familiar with any of the programs I mentioned or with Community Action in general, you may realize that much of my work involves educating families and individuals that are living in poverty and are dealing with the effects of poverty every day.

Today we're going to focus on the effects that poverty has on parenting within a family. Let's look at the ... Let me get the next slide. Let's look at the learning objectives that we're going to talk about today. Hopefully today we'll look at some statistics so you can be aware of the statistics and needs of families in poverty. We're going to listen to some real-life stories from parents living in poverty in Pennsylvania, and we're going to look at some strength-based strategies to support families experiencing the challenge of living in poverty.

It's good to listen to and hear why families are in poverty, but I think it's very important that we get to some solutions and maybe some things that you can do as individuals working with families to help them move out of poverty. Let's start by listening to one family who lives in Pennsylvania and her story.

Adrielys: I grew up here in Redding, went to Redding High for maybe two years. I didn't graduate from Redding High. I got my GED from Arbor Career Center. I thought I was going to be in college. I was always those type of kids that wanted to go to college, but I always wanted to be running around, too. I had my son, I had Manny at 15, so there crushed my whole dreams.

Go, read your book.

Manny: I got math and I think two spellings, is that it.

Adrielys: Growing up here, I was always out in the streets, pretty much, running around, being a kid. It was ... Saw a lot of things happen here, a lot of bad things happen. In some ways, it affected a lot of people, where they did the same things, and then to me, I didn't want to do the same things. I didn't want to continue, or my kids to see that, or me do that. I've had friends with parents on drugs, I've had friends with parents that are in jail for life. One of my friends ended up in foster care that I haven't seen in years.

Today I start at Walmart. I'm going to be making \$8.20 an hour as a cashier, and it's only seasonal for right now, which the manager said if I did a good job, they usually keep you. It pretty much all depends. I was customer service at Lowe's for four years.

Manny, I thought you said you weren't going to do it, and it's 7:53, so you got two minutes.

Actually the day I left Lowe's, I had to leave because my son was having an asthma attack in school. I pretty much got fired. They're always being sick. My son takes like four meds a day. My other son was just diagnosed with ADHD, so he was always being kicked out of daycare. Hopefully they're good now, I can keep a job now, hopefully.

Manuel's seven and Nassir's four.

When I worked at Lowe's, I had health insurance for a little bit, but then I told them to discontinue it because it was \$100 out of my paycheck a month, \$100 I

could have used for something else. I was paid \$10.65 at Lowe's, and then now at Walmart I'm making \$8.20. It's a big difference. But I have to adjust to it, because it took me two months to find a job, so I can't just not take it because of the pay. It's better than nothing right now.

Right now I'm basically living day to day. There's a lot of stresses. The county right now is funding my daycare. If I didn't have that, it would be about \$50 a week. It all depends on your family size. Right now I pay \$5 a week. That's important, because if it gets taken away from us, it's an eight month waiting list, so if we get a job and we need our child in daycare as soon as possible and that's not there, we can lose our job because we don't have any childcare.

The only bill right now is my rent. I haven't been able to pay it. When I got my 401(k) I gave them money. I mean, right now, I don't know how my paychecks are going to look this job around. I'm wondering how I'm going to pay it. I'm actually trying to work something out with my landlord to not get evicted.

All of my friends, most of them have their dads, the kids' father with them still. Some of them are like me, their fathers are in jail. I want to go back to school. The highest thing I want to do is be an RN, but I know that's hard, so I want to take baby steps, like do medical assistant and then once I get that ... I mean, I just want to be able to get by.

To be honest, I don't have any hope. I'm basically looking at everything day by day, because I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, if something's going to go wrong, if I'm not able to make it to work what's going to happen, anything.

If I had my dream come true, I'd have a car, a working one. I'd live in a good neighborhood with my kids. I'd have a job. Even if I didn't have a spouse and it was just me and my kids, I'd be perfectly fine with that as long as I had a good-paying job and all that. Basically the dream anybody would want.

Sharon:

The video that you just saw is a YouTube video, and there is a link on your PowerPoint to see that video if you'd like to see it. It was a little choppy, but you can go in and look at that again if you'd like to.

Some of the concerns that the mom addressed in the video are concerns that we're going to discuss today. They are employment, lack of employment, and making a living wage, having health insurance, having reliable daycare and affordable daycare, having reliable transportation or a car that's ... Or any type of transportation, or even public transportation access, having medical issues with your children, living in affordable housing, safe housing, looking at education and having career goals, and just the day to day stress of living in poverty.

Let's look at some of the statistics of poverty. In 2014, the official poverty rate was 14.8% in the United States. There were approximately 46.7 million people in poverty. These statistics are based on the US Census Bureau. The poverty rate in 2014 for children under age 18 was 21.1%, so nearly one out of every four

children in America are living in poverty. Those statistics were pretty consistent from 2011 through 2014.

Let's look at the next slide, which is families that live below poverty with children under 18. A lot of people might believe that the majority of children living in poverty live with a single parent, which is not true at all. Most children under 18 that live in poverty live in a two-parent household. That could be married or cohabitating two-parent household. That is 66%. Children living with a single parent who's a mother is 26%, and a single parent who's a father is 8%. Based on the programs that I am involved in in our four-county region, I would say that's very accurate for the families that we serve. We are seeing an increase in the amount of single fathers that are coming to our programs, but we will talk about why sometimes the single fathers, we don't see as much of the single fathers in our programs because they aren't living in as much poverty as the single mothers.

I do know, I have participated in some webinars with Pennsylvania Children's Trust about doing fatherhood programs, because we're seeing more and more fathers come to us for services. We are seeing that increase a bit because unemployment across Pennsylvania is somewhat high, and a lot of parents are living in poverty, as we just saw in the statistics.

Some of the reasons that you may see that the single parent dad households are a little lower is because typically men make more money than women. We may see that that percentage of single fathers, on average, is a bit lower. From 1960, where there were only 300,000 single parent households with fathers, that number has risen in 2011 to 2.6 million. You can see that that's a big change. Eight percent doesn't seem like a lot, but in actuality, it has increased well over the years, and probably we will see an increase as we continue to look at those numbers.

In married families, we see ... Now, these numbers are for the total population of the United States, of parents who consider themselves parents. It could be for children that are over 18 as well. That's why these percentages don't actually add up to the pie chart. About 14% of two-parent married households are in poverty, for parents that have any age of child, and 37% of cohabitating unmarried parent households are living in poverty. You can ask, "Why is there a difference?" Typically that is because in a cohabitating household, you see a higher percentage of poverty because many of those households are younger parents, they have less education than married households may, and that may be because some families don't commit to getting married until they do feel that they're more financially stable to have children and enter into a marriage. Those are some of the reasons you may see that number a bit higher.

In our area, we serve primarily central Pennsylvania, we're Union, Snyder, Mifflin, and Juniata. We're required as part of our Community Action to complete a Community Needs Assessment every few years. That's part of a federal funding through the Community Services Block Grant. If you're familiar with Community Action, if you're part of one or you know that there's one in your area, you are

probably looking at doing some type of needs assessment every few years in your area and asked to fill one of those out. We did one with our community people and the Community Needs Assessment, let me go back a little, is something that we do. First we assess families in the area, we take the demographics of the families, and then ask them certain questions, and then a few months later we look at professionals and ask them the same questions and see if things add up. Then later on, we put together some groups and we try to come up with some solutions to the problems that we're seeing.

In the fall of 2015, we did the Community Needs Assessment. The demographics for the people who completed the survey were 47% of the participants who reported in the survey reported being in a single-parent or parent in a two-parent household. That was pretty high, almost half, and 56% of those households that were parents assessed reported that their income was almost \$16,000 or less.

Based on that, we did find most of these families through the food pantries in our area, so most were low income families that we were targeting. Welfare offices provided some of the assessments for us, Headstart, Early Headstart. Those were some of the areas that we went to. The top regional concerns from the parents themselves were the following. Drug and alcohol abuse was something that they considered was the top regional concern in our area, in central PA. If you're watching the media right now, especially in Pennsylvania, one big thing that is being talked about a lot is the heroin epidemic in Pennsylvania and across the nation.

I did want to mention that if anyone watches 20/20 on ABC, they did a couple weeks ago a report on ... It's actually called "Breaking Point: Heroin in America." You can Google that and find that video on line. It's an hour long video talking about the epidemic of heroin use in the United States and it talks about family. That's something I think we do really need to look at more closely. I know in our area alone in the past, since January, we've had over seven overdoses and deaths of young people because of heroin, so it's something that's really becoming a big regional concern for us.

The other top concerns were community safety and crime, working but not making enough to get by, finding jobs that provide a living wage, and parents having problems managing the family. Much of our focus today will be on these issues and the effects of poverty because of those.

Now I want to take a few minutes to talk, to have you listen to a family that participates in one of our programs in central Pennsylvania. She's a wonderful parent. She comes to our Family Nurturing program and has participated in our Family Literacy program in the past. She's actually completed the program, but continues to come because she feels like it's a support to her family and she also likes to come to help mentor the other parents who are coming to the programs.

She struggles to be counted as a part of her family, because her situation can be something that you might see in your counties as well. She lacks a Social Security number because she doesn't have a birth certificate in the United

States. She was born in Great Britain, but her family lived in the Middle East. We have been working with her to try to get a birth certificate for many years, and it's taken a lot of time to even track it down, and so she doesn't have citizenship here. Because of that, she lives in a family of six, but she's not counted as part of the family. They aren't able to count her so she can be provided some services, like county services, if they would need help with food stamps or housing. They don't count her as part of the family. You may see that in some of your families, so I'd like to have you listen to some of the things she talks about and some of her concerns as being a low-income family.

Interviewer: Okay, can you tell me a little bit about you and your family?

Speaker 6: Yes. I'm 37 years old. I'm married to a wonderful man. We have, I have four kids, three of them are with him. We have three girls, age three, seven, and 18 months, and then I have a boy from a previous relationship who's 16 years old.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you consider yourself to be part of the lower income population?

Speaker 6: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay.

Speaker 6: I would say we're in between middle and low.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you have enough money to pay all your bills every month?

Speaker 6: Yes, that's about it. Make sure all the bills are paid.

Interviewer: And you don't have much left over at the end of the week.

Speaker 6: No, not really.

Interviewer: Okay. Living on low income can be hard. Are there things you do without as a family because of it?

Speaker 6: I think my husband and I, since we're adults, we do without the necessities that we need. As far as the kids, sometimes we can't do things with them that we would like to. Yeah, I think we do without.

Interviewer: Do you utilize resources in your community to help with things like that? What things?

Speaker 6: Oh yes, absolutely. I know during the summer they have \$4 movies, with popcorn and a drink. We definitely take advantage of that. We take advantage of the pool. We get free family passes. Swimming lessons are \$20 for a whole week. There's a lot of community resources that I take advantage of, definitely.

Interviewer: How do you learn about those resources?

Speaker 6: Word of mouth, talking to people, looking on the internet.

Interviewer: If you're in any programs, you've been in our programs, do you learn about resources through programs like this?

Speaker 6: Oh, absolutely, yes, definitely.

Interviewer: Okay, and it's helpful for you?

Speaker 6: Absolutely, yes.

Interviewer: I know you mentioned you utilize the diaper program and some of the other programs like that for emergency things that you might need.

Speaker 6: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you talk a little bit about that?

Speaker 6: Yes. There's a diaper pickup in [Sunberry 00:20:46], it's the beginning of every month. They give you a week's supply per child. Sometimes they give you wipes and they have baby food, baby formula. I do that once a month. It's a great, great help.

Interviewer: Okay, great. Do you feel any stress from living with low income or living paycheck to paycheck?

Speaker 6: Sometimes. Sometimes, you know, there's always that thought, "What if something happens to my husband?" He's the breadwinner, you know, we don't have any savings, what would we do? We're working on that.

Interviewer: What do you do? Do you have family support to talk through that?

Speaker 6: Not really. My husband is my main support, you know, and we rely on each other a lot.

Interviewer: You look to some of the community programs?

Speaker 6: Yes. My two youngest girls, they go to Headstart, so they have a lot of family dinners. Family events, even here in Parenting, that I come to. There's monthly family events, so we really enjoy that as a family.

Interviewer: Great. What goals do you have for yourself or for your children?

Speaker 6: For my children, I want to prepare them for the future. How to live on a budget, how to save. Education, so they make something good of themselves so they won't have this problem that we are having. Yeah.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Speaker 6: Thank you!

Interviewer: All right.

Sharon: Let's take a look at some of the myths versus facts of families living in poverty. Think about the individual that you just heard from as we're looking at some of those things.

One myth of the culture of poverty is poor people are unmotivated and have low or no work ethics. In reality, and as you just heard from the mom that we were listening to, she's in a married family and her husband works full time. In reality, 83% of children from low-income families have at least one employed parent. 60% of those parents work full time.

Another reality is that poor working adults spend more hours working each week than their wealthier counterparts, and that may be because they make a lower living wage. Another reality is that the severe shortage of living wage jobs means many poor adults must work two, three, or four jobs to make ends meet.

Like that individual that we just heard from, that's their situation. They're living paycheck to paycheck because they're a large family and he has a good job, but just enough to make ends meet. She had told me after we were finished talking on the video that basically they have about \$20 left at the end of each week after they pay their bills, but they do pay all of their bills. But they only have that \$20 left at the end of each week.

Now I'm going to ask you a couple questions in the myth versus reality aspect of it. What do you think? Do you think poor parents are uninvolved in their children's learning largely because they do not value education as much? Quickly you can answer yes or no on your computer. Okay, great. Thank you for answering that. Nine percent of you believe that that is true, and 91% of you believe that that is not true. In fact, that is a myth. Let's look at that.

The reality is low-income parents have the same attitudes about education that other parents do, but the reality is that low-income parents are less likely to attend school functions and volunteer at their children's school because they don't have the access to the school as much as other parents may. They may work multiple jobs like we mentioned, and they may lack flexibility to have evenings off. Some of our parents would love to attend the parent-teacher conferences that their schools have, but they don't have a vehicle to go to those conferences, so they just have no way to do that. They would also like to have their children participate in more educational activities, but again, they don't have the transportation. Many of them work second shift jobs, they work two or three jobs, so they're just not able to do that. If they do have a vehicle, the partner or spouse may be the one who needs the vehicle for work so they can't attend those things.

I'm basing a lot of what I say on the fact that we live in a rural area, but Pennsylvania, for the majority, is a rural area. We do have some urban areas

with transportation readily available, but that's not the case in most counties in Pennsylvania.

Let's do one more. What do you think? This is another polling question. Poor people tend to abuse drugs and alcohol more. Yes or no? If you want to take a minute and choose yes or no.

As you answer that, I just want to mention that as ... I'd reviewed this webinar with one of my coworkers, and I asked her this question, and her answer was "Yes, I think that's true." I'm seeing most of you ... It's a little different than the last question. Right now we're at about 33% of you believe yes and 67% of you are saying no to that. The reality is that poor people are no more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol than any other income-based population. You may say, "Well, that's not what I see," and really, that's not what I see in my profession either, because we work with some individuals who I know come to us for support. They share a lot of their personal information with us, so we know that they are struggling with some of those issues.

The reality is, drug sales are typically more visible in poor neighborhoods, but drug use is equally distributed among the poor, middle class, and wealthier communities in our nation. Reality shows that a history of research shows alcohol abuse is far more prevalent among wealthy individuals than it is among the poor. I know I mentioned earlier about the heroin epidemic, and we're seeing that a lot more in our nation, especially with some of the individuals that we work with, but like I said before, it's because a lot of the families do talk to us about their issues. You may know personally some people who struggle with drug or alcohol abuse, and it really has nothing to do with their income. They may not share those things with people as readily because they're not involved in programs or we don't hear about that as much. That's where the myth comes from, because we're not hearing as much about wealthier individuals who are abusing drugs and alcohol.

Just a quick statement. Poverty is not a static state. Families can move in and out of poverty at different times. I'm sure if you're working with families, you see that very often. Rijelle and I were talking earlier about poverty and families, and it can be a situation where you have an emergency happens within the family, and your whole family situation changes. Now you went from living in middle class to a low income population.

We're going to look now at ... We looked at statistics, so now let's look at reasons why families are living in poverty and the effects that that has on parents and children in the family. What are some of the reasons why families experience poverty? That could be lack of employment. The family may have had a layoff. They may have health issues. They may not have the education to get the employment they need. We're living in a society now where a bachelor's degree isn't good enough. A lot of times you need to have a master's. I have a daughter looking at college, and our first thing is, "You have to get your master's degree if you want to get employed." The working poor now is a high percentage of individuals who have a bachelor's degree but can't find employment.

Other reasons why families could experience poverty, they have a sick or disabled child that could cause them to have to leave their job, could cause a lot of health costs. They may be a teenage parent. They don't have the education, the maturity, or the knowledge to move out of poverty. They may have had a major change in the family dynamic. There could be a divorce in the family, death, injury. There may be mental illness, which is still not really recognized enough as a cause of poverty, but it is, and there needs to be more done about this. Then another reason could be domestic violence.

Let's look next at the poverty effects on parenting. Of course there's stress to parents and children when you're living in poverty, and we're going to address these quickly, separately, as we go ahead. There's also the effects of your environment and your neighborhood, and there are effects to the barriers to your employment.

We're going to look at the effects of parental stress because of poverty. Number one would be, and this is what one of the ... The mom that you had just heard from, had mentioned. They lack some of the everyday necessities that they need. She mentioned that they utilize a diaper program in one of their counties. It could be diapers, hygiene things, laundry detergent, paper items that they can't buy with food stamps. A lot of those things, they are lacking.

One thing, and this could be a solution for your agencies or programs or things that you could do in your community. Our agency started a program called the Linen Closet, and so we collect items, those types of items. Diapers, hygiene, personal care items for women. Laundry detergent, paper towels, toilet paper. All those things that you can't buy, or you may not have the money to purchase. We have community programs collecting those things, and then we keep those in our agency and parents can come to us, much like they go to a food bank, and ask for those items. They would come to us, they fill out a paper. We do ask for income, but we're not going to turn somebody away if they don't have deodorant or shampoo or things like that, or toothpaste. We ask them to fill something out. They then could come on a monthly basis, if they wanted to, and get a bag of those things that they may need. That's maybe something that you could look at in your community or see if you already have something like that that does exist.

The second parental stress would be childcare. Being able to choose your childcare. The first video we saw, the mom said thank goodness that she had help with childcare, but if she didn't, it could be very expensive. That is a problem for a lot of parents. Also, being able to choose where your children go. Some of us have the luxury of doing that, but parents living in poverty may not. They have certain slots that are being funded for childcare for them, so they have to take that daycare and put their child in that, regardless of whether they feel that it's probably the best situation. But if they want to work, that's what they have to do, and that could cause a lot of stress as well.

There may be restriction on their social activities, isolation because of that. They don't have transportation. Another stress would be that they don't understand the benefits system. Some parents just don't know that there are things out there to

help them. As we're going to mention later, that's part of our job, to try to find resources for them and give them the knowledge so that they can access those services. Holidays can be a huge parental stress for families. We just finished Christmas and now it's Easter. Kids get lots of things. One thing we do, we have a church sponsor all of our families at the holidays, and they do an angel tree and help our families with that. They have been doing that for about ten years. They love to do it, and it really helps our families with some of the stress of the holidays.

Other stress could be debt, medical and living expenses, family relationships, lack of support. Some families don't have anyone to go to. Health insurance. We do have options available now. We have Obamacare, good or bad. I'm not going to get into that. There is still the cost of accessing healthcare. Somebody may have a full-time job, but if they add their children to their healthcare, that can mean that they pretty much lose over half of their paycheck because they're paying so much in health insurance for their family. Some jobs require that, or now, legally we are required to have health insurance for ourselves and our children. That could be a huge parental stress for families.

Finally, educational and job-related goals. Many families want to do more, many parents want to do more with their education, but they're restricted because they need to go to work. Some don't have a diploma, but they don't have the option to go do that because they have to work, so they may have to take a lower-paying job just to get the income.

The effects of stress in children because of poverty. Again, lack of everyday necessities. They may not have the things that they need, and we're not looking at just young children who lack diapers, milk, things like that, but also children in school. They may lack the things that they need. Even young children need deodorant and shampoo and things like that to take care of their needs.

The lack of stable and safe housing. Many children are moved multiple times because of the housing that is available to their parents. Also a lot of children are given adult responsibilities at a young age because of the stress of poverty. Many children are treated as ... Parents treat their children as individuals or friends or their support because they have no one else to go to, so that makes them grow up a bit faster. Children are unable to participate in school activities, like we mentioned. They're isolated, and they're stressed because of conflict and tension in the home.

There's a couple quotes there from a doctor in our area who works at Geisinger and has talked about the effects of poverty with children and toxic stress, so I'll let you look at those in your time.

Key stress symptoms in children. These are important things to recognize with kids, and to teach our parents to recognize with kids. A lot of parents may not realize, they may think that these are health issues and that they could take their child to a doctor and have these things fixed. We're seeing a lot more kids go on medication. They may say, "Oh, your child has an ulcer." But what's causing the

ulcer? It could be stress, or your child can't sleep at night, so they give them medication. We need to educate our parents as to what are the reasons why the children are having these symptoms. Some may be stomach aches, they can't sleep, they have headaches, they have compulsive behavior disorders, and you're seeing behavior changes. All things that we should help parents recognize in their children.

When they're hearing their parents' stressful days and living paycheck to paycheck, that's a hard thing for a child. It's hard for us as adults, but can you imagine if you're five, ten, 15 years old and you have to hear that every day? That can be a huge stress on a child. We have to help our parents understand and recognize that.

Some other poverty effects, as we mentioned earlier, the environment and your neighborhood. You're limited to housing choices. Housing may not be up to code. Some housing assistance programs require that you have fair market value rent, and that's hard to find sometimes in different communities, so they can help. Safety in the neighborhood is a concern. There's a stigma to low income housing, and available housing may lead to isolation.

I'm going to ask you a quick question. What might families say is the major barrier to employment? If you could choose A, B, C, or D, what do you think? If you were asking families that you work with right now in your area, which would they choose? Okay, great, everyone, thank you for answering that. We're seeing different answers here. Transportation, 48% of you say that's one of the major barriers to employment. Childcare, 29%, lack of jobs, 13%, and lack of job skills, 11%.

What's the right answer? That really depends on where you live. It could be any answer, actually. For our area, transportation would be number one for our major barrier to employment. If you're more of a rural area, that's probably why you answered transportation. If you're not, it could be some of the other reasons. It really depends on where you're living and the situation that you're seeing your families in. All right answers.

As we go, I want to get the opportunity to answer questions, so I may skip through a few things because we're already at 10:45. But I do want to get through the strategies, so we will answer some questions at the end. Like Rijelle said earlier, if you have questions and we don't get to those, we will address them and send those out to you soon.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about you and your family?

Speaker 7: We are low-income. I have a spouse and two children. We are not married.

Interviewer: Okay. So you do consider yourself to be part of the lower income population?

Speaker 7: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you live in low income housing?

Speaker 7: Yes, I do.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you're limited to where you live because of your income, because you had to live in low income housing?

Speaker 7: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Ultimately, what would be the place that you would like to live in?

Speaker 7: I would love to own my own home with a big backyard and a white picket fence.

Interviewer: So you don't have those things right now.

Speaker 7: Yes, I do!

Interviewer: You have the yard and everything right now?

Speaker 7: I do, but it's ... We have neighbors, so it's like we share everything.

Interviewer: Okay. Living on low income can be hard. Are there things that you do without because of it?

Speaker 7: Yes.

Interviewer: What are some of those things?

Speaker 7: What we do without, sometimes we ... We don't have a vehicle, and that makes it hard for us to get to either doctor's appointments, school programs, meetings with the teachers, grocery shopping.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, we do live in a rural area, but is there public transportation for you to use in this area?

Speaker 7: No.

Interviewer: Okay. But sometimes you do utilize transportation for medical appointments, is that right?

Speaker 7: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, so there is that.

Speaker 7: I'm nervous.

Interviewer: Are you? Do you find resources that help you with every day...

Speaker 7: Yes.

Interviewer: What kind of resources do you use in our area?

Speaker 7: The food pantry, which is the food bank, and they give out food. What's that, twice a month, the beginning of the month and I believe the end of the month.

Interviewer: How do you get to that?

Speaker 7: I walk.

Interviewer: You walk to that?

Speaker 7: Yes, I do.

Interviewer: How far away is that from your house?

Speaker 7: Probably about half an hour away from me.

Interviewer: Okay, but you walk twice a month to get that.

Speaker 7: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yes.

Interviewer: Okay. And like you had said earlier, you walk to the grocery store, to doctors appointments. I know you live in a town, but are all those things really close to your house? How long does it take you to walk to the places like that, especially if you have your kids along?

Speaker 7: Oh, yeah. The grocery store, if I have the kids, it's probably about 15 minutes away. The doctor's, that's about probably 45 minutes to a half an hour.

Interviewer: Wow, okay. And you say you use resources. How did you find out about those resources, about the food pantry?

Speaker 7: Word of mouth, and actually, I did my own research and found things that I was in need of.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you get support from the programs that you attend here?

Speaker 7: Oh, yes.

Interviewer: What are they helping you to do?

Speaker 7: As far as my GED, they're helping me with that. Obtaining my drivers license. Emotional support, mental support. I love everyone here, they're a big help.

Interviewer: Great, great. Do you have family support at home?

Speaker 7: Yes.

Interviewer: Family, friend support. Okay, good. Do you feel stressed a lot from living with a low income budget?

Speaker 7: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. But do your kids understand that, or do you try not to let them know your financial situation?

Speaker 7: They don't ... Well, I try not to let them know.

Interviewer: But you had told me before that sometimes your older daughter who's in school will ask to do activities and things.

Speaker 7: Yes.

Interviewer: But she can't.

Speaker 7: Yeah. She understands that we don't have a car and we're working hard to get a car. She understands that part.

Interviewer: What goals do you have for yourself and for your children for the future?

Speaker 7: The goals I have for me is to stay in this program, obtain my GED, no matter how long it takes, as long as you guys let me stay, obtain my drivers license, continue my career in the nursing field so I can be a better mom and a better role model for my children.

Interviewer: Okay, great. You want to be a nurse?

Speaker 7: Yes.

Interviewer: Awesome. Okay, thank you for talking to me.

Speaker 7: Thank you for having me!

Interviewer: Sure thing.

Sharon: Let's look at strategies, because really, that's what I want to get to today, so you can take some of these ideas with you and maybe put them into practice at your place of work, and in your community and work together to hopefully help families move out of poverty.

Strategies to support parents. Provide parenting and skills and education programs. Many of us are doing that. Many of you may have a Pennsylvania Children's Trust grant, so you're already providing parenting skills and education. Some may provide adult education programs, if you're listening today. You're listening probably because you see the need for some strategies to this, and so you're already doing some type of education.

Also, educate yourself about class and poverty. I'll mention that a little bit later. Educate yourself on available resources. Share resources with family, coworkers, communities, schools. Adopt a family development approach, and I have some information about that in the next couple slides. Help families and colleagues recognize the misconceptions of poverty, and reach out to low income families even if they're unresponsive. Don't assume that they don't care. There may be lots of other reasons why they're not coming to your program or they're not returning your calls, so just try to keep reaching out to some of those families who you see may have the need for your help.

Strategies to support parents with parental education. Offer parent programs. We do Nurturing Parenting, we use that curriculum. I know a lot of programs use parents as teachers. We also have a Strengthening Families program for parents and youth, and the Centers for Schools and Communities are offering a lot of training in that area. You can put in the little questions section if you like what curriculums do you use in your programs, if you want to just mention some of those, but I'm guessing a lot of you are familiar with some of these curriculums that I'm already mentioning.

Strategies to support parents, education for workers, for yourselves. Participate in trainings with other professionals. Today you're doing this, so that can be helpful for you in what you're doing with families. Also, there's the, and I did put the website up there, the Pennsylvania Strengthening Families website, so you can look on that for training and opportunities. Then there's the Strengths-Based Family Worker Credentialing Program in the state of Pennsylvania that is offered through Temple University. I do have in the next couple slides some information on that.

Learn more about your community and families facing poverty. Find resources to share with families. Some ways you might do that is talk to other agencies or employers, look for resource guides. Some places that we find resource guides in our area are through the United Way, our hospitals do resource guides for families, Headstart, Early Headstart does resource guides. We put together some different ones on some of the coalitions that I serve on.

If there is, there is not a resource guide for your families, then start working on one. Create one if necessary. Talk to parents. A lot of our parents say they hear about us through word of mouth, so get the word out there to other parents and help them share resources with families and create a network for parents.

Make sure to inform parents and the public about your resources. I know we're all busy and it's hard to do that, but if you can get out there and do outreach about your program, because that's the best thing you can do so they know that you're out there, you can hear about other programs that are there that you can share with families.

Quickly, the Strength-Based Family Worker Credentialing Program. We do this in our agency. Throughout the state of Pennsylvania, this program is offered. If you participate in this class, it's an 80-hour class for family workers, and you are

credentialed when you finish the program. It takes a look at what a family development worker should do with a family and what your major functions are. Here I have them listed. You're helping a family assess their needs and strengths, you're helping a family look at goals, recognize their strengths. Decide what services they need to meet their goals. You're not deciding that for them, you're helping that decide that for themselves and assist in arranging those services. Help a family coordinate services so they don't overlap, advocate for and with families in agencies and school districts that they work with, and offer a compassionate presence to help those families.

Family development approach is the opposite of the deficit approach, and that's what our society was based on for many, many years. The work that we have done has been based on the deficit approach. It was originated in the welfare system, and family workers took on this deficit approach, where we were basically walking into a home or talking to an individual or family and saying, "This is what you need to do to fix your problem." The family development approach doesn't assume that you know what the answer is for that family. You work with the family and help them decide what their goals should be and what they can work on.

I have a little story here. We use this as part of family development when we're working on this in class. This is a story about a mom, and you probably have seen this situation. I'll let you read this on your own. The first step you want to do with any family is ask the family, ask the parent what do they want to do. Don't walk into a situation with a family and say, "This is what you should do." Like I said, ask them what they will do. Because if they're not invested in what they can do or where they're at, if you're setting goals for them and they're not there and ready to meet them, they're not going to meet them. I'm sure we've all seen that. You need to work with the family.

We do a family goal plan in family development, so they can set their goals and we revisit those goals on a regular basis so they can change their goals as to what's happening in their situation.

We do an exercise in family development, and this is something to keep in mind. It's a good strategy when you're working with a family. You take the family and the situation, and I'll give you an example where you might have a mom who has a young teenage daughter who finds out she's pregnant. We take those two people and we put them in the center of the room. We do this as an example. Then you would say, "What are some services that you could give to that family, or that you could refer to that family?" It might be, "Okay, we'll refer them to nurse-family partnership," because the teenage mom is pregnant. Then you put that individual between them. Then you say, "Okay, we'll refer them to housing because teenage mom might need a house of her own." So you put that person in the middle. We might refer them to Early Headstart because the baby could start with that, or maybe they already have a young child, so you put that person in the middle.

What you're seeing is, it's a visual model that the more services you put in with that family, the further apart mom and her daughter become. It could be a detriment to the family. You really have to look at what services you're referring a family to and make sure that you're not overwhelming them with too many services. That's why it's important to make a goal plan with the family and see what they're able to handle at the time.

We know a lot of families come to us, I have a lot of families who come to me because they're court-ordered to take parenting classes. Right away they're coming, they're involved in children and youth services, they're required to do our parenting class, they're required to go to adult education classes, they're involved in probation, all those things. They're not completing any of the programs that they're required to do because they're already required to do too many and they can't handle everything. You really have to look at that and work with other agencies too to come up with a plan for the family, and make it a plan that they're able to accomplish.

When we're working with children, strategies to support children in the families that we see, encourage, first of all, encourage parents to nurture their children from birth, show them as much love and attention as they can. If they're under a lot of stress, the best thing a parent can do is show their children affection. We see that, and I'm sure you see that. Parents come to our programs, they have so many things on their shoulders, and they don't even realize they're not showing their children attention. You can remind them that that's very important.

Talk to parents about avoiding sharing all the stressors that they have with their children. They sometimes forget. I'm a parent, sometimes I forget little ears can hear, so it's important to remind them about that. And, no signs of childhood stress. I mentioned that earlier, and I did talk about some of those childhood stresses and what you can look for. Teach parents about that. Teach children to manage their stress. You can show them, or you can find programs for them that will manage their stress. Listen to a child and help them in any way you can. Create routines for a child. If you ever watch the show Supernanny, big solution to any problem when she walked in was having a routine for the family, and that is a key. Help families locate free resources and events, and let children be children.

Also, strategies to support school-aged children, and I think this is very important, because these kids are growing up and they're going to become parents. Some become parents sooner than we hope that they do. We want to support them while they're in school so they can become successful, move on to careers, maybe college. Some things that you could do to help families support their school-aged children, make school involvement accessible to all families. You may not be able to do that, but you may advocate for it in your school district. Encourage your school districts to have web-based meetings for their families. Do parent conferences over the internet. Do them over the phone. At my school district, that's not an option yet. I'm trying to help them see that that's a good option, but that's what we have to do. We have to show them. I sometimes help families get to meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and maybe some of you do

too, but why not have them be web-based if they have internet in their home or have them do it over the phone?

Look for programs or agencies that would provide childcare so parents can go to different meetings and events with their older kids or school-aged children. Help teachers see that ... Number two, never assume all students have access to learning resources. We want to work with schools and understand that many of our families don't have internet in their home or computers, yet schools are requiring them to do homework at home on their computer when they don't have that. We as family workers need to help schools recognize that. Work with parents to learn how to advocate for their children. Fight to keep low-income students from being assigned to special education classrooms. Help schools be aware that just because a child doesn't complete their homework doesn't mean they don't understand it, but maybe they don't have electricity in their home and it's the middle of winter, or they don't have heat. There are other reasons why they're not succeeding at school. It may not be because they're not educationally able to do it.

Help them find resources for kids like clothing and hygiene, and provide meal programs. Three of our school districts out of the four that we have in our area do provide meal programs for evening and weekend food for families. They're called Meals for Seals, Meals for Mustangs. The one program has risen ... They started with maybe 20 kids in the program, and now they have over 200 kids that take home meals every weekend, so they have food for the weekend.

Additional resources I would definitely like you to take some time to look at if you have the time. Even if we finish this webinar and you have 15 minutes, each of these videos is 15 minutes. This was on 60 Minutes, it's on Youtube, and they talk to some children living in America who are homeless. The first video is just about 14 minutes, and they talk to some kids in Florida whose parents have basically lost their employment. Good working families who lost jobs and now they're homeless. The second video is a follow up of those families living in ... It's called "Families Living in Cars," and it's a followup eight months later with those families. What you might see in those videos is that a lot of those kids have to grow up very fast. They're very young. If you listen to the one girl, I would say she seems like she's maybe 25 or 30 years old, and she's I think, like 13 or 14. They deal with stress every day, they deal with safety issues. They're just parents living in poverty after losing their job.

I hope today, we're just about out of time, that you have some strategies. If I missed anything, look back over some of the information I gave you. You can always contact me for some of the ideas that I did mention, and I would share some of that. Like our Linen Closet idea, that's been a great, great benefit to our community. We have school districts now coming to us and asking us for information about the Linen Closet because they have kids who come to school and they're buying them deodorant and they're buying them clothing and sneakers.

We also have, and I know in Harrisburg, you have Community Aid. We have a Community Aid in our area now in [Sealan's 00:58:09] Grove, and they give us gift cards for families, and we can give those to the family and they can go and get some shoes and clothing. We have that resource as well, so we can link up with that. We have a lot of ideas for that. If you have some questions, I can help you out with that.

Just to end, Dr. Stephen Bavolek is the Nurturing Parenting founder, and he has said, "Nurturing the positive qualities in each child, teen, and adult in our lives is perhaps the single most important thing all of us can do to live in harmony and happiness." That's what we try to remember as we're working with families and trying to help families come out of poverty.

I know we're right at 11:00. I think, I don't know if there are any questions listed. I can look here to see. Is there a website for Community Aid, somebody asked. There is a website, and I can probably send that information. I know they do have a, if you're on Facebook, they have a big Facebook page and they advertise a lot of what they're doing and where they're opening stores, so you can look for them on Facebook. I'm pretty sure they probably do have a website.

Somebody asked if they get a certificate for the training, and I'm pretty sure they do, yes.

Rijelle:

Okay, we did have a couple questions come in. We'll provide Sharon's email address. She mentioned that she'd be happy to talk to folks about the Linen Closet that she started at Community Action at Union Snyder Community Action. There are a couple questions coming in, and I think they're, yeah, someone just commented reflecting on the idea that poverty's impact is on intimate relationships as well, so it impacts parenting. Absolutely. You can definitely take a look at some of the resources that Sharon shared with us today. That was a lot of information in a short amount of time.

We are a few minutes over, so I'm going to go ahead and just wrap up. On the screen there you'll see our upcoming webinars. On April 13th there will be a webinar on brain development and May 4th on Include Me, which is a program that talks about inclusion of children with special needs in center-based programming as well as home visits. The registration information for those webinars will be coming out. Please don't forget to fill out the evaluation that's coming out.

That concludes today's webinar. Thank you so much for joining us, and thank you, Sharon, for presenting all this wonderful information to us today.