

Dear Healthy Start Community,

My team and I are honored to serve as your Technical Assistance (TA) and Support Center for the 2019-2024 grant cycle. As part of our efforts to strengthen and expand the capacity of all 101 Healthy Start grantees, the TA & Support Center has spent the past several months working with the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) and Division of Healthy Start and Perinatal Services (DHSPS) to plan the Virtual Grantees' Meeting. Every aspect of this meeting has been thoughtfully considered, from maximizing engagement in our new virtual setting to ensuring the content is relevant and responsive to grantees' current and emerging needs ahead of us beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Beginning in April, we convened a Virtual Grantees' Meeting Planning Committee consisting of TA & Support Center staff, DHSPS staff, National Healthy Start Association (NHSA) staff, and Project Directors representing new and more established grantees from around the country. This group guided the agenda development process and worked to ensure that every plenary, lunch networking café, and breakout session aligned well with the Healthy Start approaches and benchmarks. We are thankful for their many contributions and for their commitment to making the first-ever Virtual Healthy Start Grantees' Meeting a success. We hope that you will conclude and agree that this planning committee did an outstanding job planning this virtual experience.

We also extend tremendous gratitude to the myriad of speakers – who in the midst of a global pandemic exasperated by racism and unrest gripping our nation – welcomed the opportunity to give their time and share their knowledge with the Healthy Start community. The Planning Committee selected each speaker based on their passion for their area of expertise, their connection and commitment to the populations served by Healthy Start, and their engaging presence as presenters. We are thrilled to have this spectacular group of presenters, each of which contribute knowledge that is helping to advance maternal and child health in the country.

We hope that this three-day meeting provides each of you with an opportunity to connect with your peers, receive tangible tools and actionable information, and reaffirm your passion for the Healthy Start community. In these uncertain and difficult times, we can all be proud of our involvement in a national initiative that has – for three decades – brought communities together to tackle challenges. We can be grateful to be part of a program that knows the importance of addressing the impacts of racism and other social determinants on health outcomes. We can be hopeful about our collective action to save the lives of infants and women and lift up the importance of fathers in maternal and child health around the country.

None of this would be possible without the incredible array of Healthy Start programs around the country, including their dedicated staff who are on the ground, ready to support and lift up their communities. Thank you for your work and your daily commitment to the Healthy Start community. We appreciate each and every one of you. This first-ever Virtual Healthy Start Grantees' Meeting is for you!

All the best,

Kenn L. Harris

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