

Supporting Secondary Students with Intensive Needs During the Pandemic: Check and Connect

[Slide 1 – Welcome to Part 1 of our Webinar Series: Supporting Secondary Students with Intensive Needs During the Pandemic]: Caitlyn Majeika: Hello and welcome, everyone. My name is Caitlyn Majeika and I'm part of the National Center on Intensive Intervention team here at the American Institutes for Research. Today we are going to present webinar one, which is part of a three webinar series on Supporting Secondary Students with Intensive Needs During the Pandemic. The National Center on Intensive Intervention and the Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports have partnered to present this webinar series, and we really want to focus on providing educators with the tools they need to support secondary students during virtual learning and the return to in-person learning. This series is intended for educators at the state and local level to work with students with intensive behavioral needs in secondary school settings.

[Slide 2 – Webinar Series]: And as you can see, today we will be presenting on Check and Connect: Implementation and Adaptation in a Virtual Environment. Our next webinar will focus on Early Warning Systems and using data to plan for the 2021 – 2022 school year. This will occur in March and we do have a live registration link available. Our third webinar in this series focuses on intensive intervention and ways to support secondary students with intensive behavior needs. This is tentatively in April and the registration link is TBD.

[Slide 3 – Disclaimer]: We also want to add a disclaimer. We are very happy to have our folks and our partners from the Check and Connect team with us today to talk about their intervention. And we just want to note that both the National Center on Intensive Intervention and the Center on PBIS are federally funded centers, but the views represented here are not an official endorsement of any of the programs that we will discuss today.

[Slide 4 – Panelist Introductions]: And I would like to start with our panelist introductions, who will be leading us today to talk a little bit more about the Check and Connect program. I would like to start with Eileen Klemm. She is the Check and Connect Program Manager at the University of Minnesota, The Institute on Community Integration. Ms. Klemm provides leadership for Check and Connect training and the development of resources that support the implementation of Check and Connect across the country and internationally. She is also a Co-Principal Investigator on several grant funded projects related to Check and Connect, including a Stepping Up Technology Implementation Grant from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs. Technology tools and resources that support the implementation of Check and Connect are being developed through this grant.

Next, we have Ann Romine. She is a Check and Connect National Trainer, also with the University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Intervention. Ms. Romine provides training nationally on the implementation of Check and Connect for mentors, school administrators, and state-level trainers. She is a co-developer of the Check and Connect Online Mentoring Guide.

And third, we have Elaine Miller. She is a Check and Connect Program Director at the University of South Florida. Ms. Miller provides statewide leadership for Check and Connect implementation through the Florida State Personnel Development Grant. She is a state-level type Check and Connect trainer and oversees training, implementation support and program evaluation for the program in Florida.

So, today you will have an opportunity to hear from each of these three panelists as they provide an overview of the Check and Connect program and some considerations for adaptation and implementation in the virtual environment. We are going to save time at the end for questions and answers, so if you have a question throughout, please enter that in the questions box you are provided and we can read those at the end. I would also like to let you know that we will be posting a captioned recording of this webinar along with a PDF of the slides and some linked resources on our website with the National Center on Intensive Intervention after this webinar is over.

[Slide 5 – Check & Connect]: I'm going to hand it over now to Eileen and she will kick us off.

Eileen Klemm: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone.

[Slide 6 – Agenda]: All three of us are honored to be here to share information about Check and Connect and our response to the pivot to distance learning for many students across the country and restrictions regarding in-person training. I will start off today by providing an overview of Check and Connect and describe the training and support modules we have developed for an online environment. Ann Romine will then describe the online Mentoring Guide, which we developed to address issues related to mentoring during distance learning. And then Elaine Miller will go into depth how her team is providing training and implementation support during the COVID-19 pandemic in Florida.

[Slide 7 – Check & Connect Overview]: For those of you who are not familiar with Check and Connect, I'd like to provide a brief overview. Check and Connect is a structured-mentoring intervention, which was developed in 1990 to address the disproportionate number of students with disabilities who did not graduate on time with their peers. However, the model has expanded and is now used with students from elementary to high school who are at risk for disengagement or dropping out of school. Check and Connect is structured but not scripted. There is flexibility within the structure to meet individual student needs and adapt to local context. The model intentionally promotes student engagement at school and with learning, and there is a focus on school completion rather than just dropout prevention.

[Slide 8 – Evidence-Based Intervention]: Check and Connect is an evidence-based intervention that is recognized by the What Works Clearinghouse. In 2006 and in 2015, when the What Works Clearinghouse reviewed dropout prevention programs, Check and Connect was found to be the only intervention that showed positive effects for the subcategory of staying in school.

[Slide 9 – Fit with Existing Initiatives]: This mentoring intervention is utilized at the targeted and intensive levels in schools, also known as Tier 2 and Tier 3. The flexibility of the model allows for use at both levels. Check and Connect can be implemented as purely a targeted intervention, purely as an intensive intervention, or a combination of both. And we have many schools who use it as that combination and kind of flow between levels.

[Slide 10 – Check & Connect Core Components]: I spoke about the flexibility of the model and that the model is evidence-based. While there is certainly room for flexibility and adaptation for local context, there are four core components necessary to achieve fidelity of implementation and be able to expect the student outcomes that were shown in the evidence as in evidence-based. The first core component is the mentor who works with students and families for two years and focuses on relationships based on mutual trust and open communication. These are nurtured through a long-term commitment and focused on promoting student's educational success.

Next is the "Check" component. On a weekly basis, mentors check on data regarding a student's attendance, behavior, and educational progress course performance. The third component is "Connect." Mentors then connect with the students to provide timely interventions driven by data to re-establish and maintain a student's connection to school and learning and to enhance students' social and academic competencies. So, that's really at the core of what the intervention is, the connect part. Engagement with families is the fourth component and is what I think uniquely identifies it from other mentoring interventions, is that there is a family engagement component. Mentors engage with the student's family and strive to foster the family's active engagement in their child's education. And all four of these together form that fidelity of implementation.

[Slide 11 – Online Training and Support Modules]: So, what we do at the University of Minnesota is we provide training across the country, and as I said, even internationally, for schools and districts interested in implementing Check and Connect. We also have nine states that we support with the trainer model, and you'll be hearing from Elaine Miller from Florida today. So, we provide a lot of mostly in-person training. Either we go to sites across the country or they come to us.

However, in May of 2019, we began providing live online trainings on a monthly basis. And based on the high demand for this training and feedback from participants, we began converting this training to a self-paced online training. And, coincidentally, this conversion process coincided with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. So, we were in the process of converting our live online training around March, April and then the pandemic hit, and so we really needed to ramp up our efforts. We were able to launch the self-paced online training in September of 2020 and it was met with tremendous success. Schools were still and maybe even increasingly interested in implementing Check and Connect and needed an online option for training. And we will also be launching a self-paced online mentoring training later in the spring. So, that's our training and there is a fee associated with it. However, I mentioned that, or Caitlyn I believe mentioned that I'm involved in a Stepping Up Technology Grant and we're

developing some online support modules to support the implementation of Check and Connect, and these are available at no cost.

So, we have, right now we have one module for each of the core components of Check and Connect, and we are in the midst of developing several more modules as well. And we're going to take a peek into one of the modules so you can just kind of see what it looks like. So, if we could look at the How Do I use the Mentor Practice Profile. This is an online module that really delves in deep of what it is to be a Check and Connect mentor. We developed a practice profile so mentors who are implementing Check and Connect understand what their role is and how it contributes to the kind of expected outcome of this evidenced-based module. So, they can go step by step through this module. There are examples and application activities. There is also, it's fully accessible, there's a read to me component to it. And this, like I said, is available on our website and you can just click through the various slides within the module. And at the very end of the module, there's also extended activities of how to learn more.

So, I would encourage you to go to our website and you can find our links in the PowerPoint PDF that will be available after this webinar. You'll be able to, I've provided links to where it says online support modules, you can go right to where they are all listed, as well as learn more about our online training. At this point, I am going to turn it over to Ann Romine, who's going to go into deeper about our most recent online Guide that was developed.

[Slide 12 – C&C Online Mentoring Guide]: Ann Romine: Thanks Eileen and good afternoon everyone. I'm going to be walking you through the online Mentoring Guide, which I will be linked in the chat here for you and also will be shared with the recording after this webinar. So, this is an exciting newer resource from Check and Connect, which was developed thanks to the support from the Florida Check and Connect Team, but also from insight from so many mentors in the field who have been in touch with us. And this guide is a response to the needs we were hearing from those mentors in the field, but also just knowing that COVID didn't seem to be going away. Like, if this is something that the support needs to continue to exist now and in the future.

As schools closed last March and mentors were looking to us, kind of, for what now, our office last spring was sending regular messages to the Check and Connect community to have mentors really to work to maintain that connection with students as much as possible while reaching out consistently. That's a word that we frequently say. But, in that consistency also demonstrating care to their students. But it was becoming clear again that we needed something more structured to offer mentors, as it looked like the virtual world was going to be continuing for many of our students. So, this guide was developed to help both existing mentors who were trying to go from in person to virtual, but also those new mentors coming and adding Check and Connect as a new support for students because they know students were needing this more intensive intervention in this virtual environment.

So, this Guide has three focus areas which you'll see here. They follow the trajectory of support for Check and Connect mentors. So, that first focus area in the guide is about fostering a relationship. So, building just that relationship online in creative ways and even some ideas that

you can foster the relationship safely at a distance. And then secondly, is the structured conversation. Which is kind of like the connect session. What can it sound like when we don't have data that's available or reliable for the students that we're supporting? And then the third focus area is on interactive interventions. So, when you need to supplement, kind of, the basic intervention and support students more intensively. We want to have other interactive strategies that mentors can use as well.

[Slide 13 – Creative Relationship Building]: This is just a snapshot. If you click and you go into the PDF, you'll see that several pages on creative relationship building where you'll find easy links and quick resources for getting to know students in fun ways, while on the computer or, again, I said safely, at a distance, in person. And I'd like to just point out that page three on the left-hand side is a virtual background that a mentor in Georgia shared with us. And she wanted to make the environment feel safe and inviting for her students since their meetings had to shift from in-person to virtual.

[Slide 14 – Structured Conversations - Students]: Alright, so the second focus area then moves to these sample structured conversations. And I just wanted to give you a snapshot that there's a sample structured conversation at each level: elementary, middle, and high school students. And in Check and Connect we consider this the basic intervention, which is, or this can kind of sub in for that, which is what we want mentors to provide consistently, weekly for every student receiving Check and Connect. And with Check and Connect being a data informed intervention, we wanted to offer sample questions for gathering self-reported data from students when, again, there's an absence of data or unreliable data available on the student. And then each sample conversation then also begins with this kind of SEL suggestion to encourage the creation of a safe routine for a mentor's weekly connect meeting.

[Slide 15 – Structured Conversation - Parents]: And then in addition to the structured conversation with students, we provide a sample structured conversation with families as guidance for connecting regularly with parents. As many of you probably know, Mentors have been relying on the support and communication with families more than ever. It's kind of one of those silver linings with COVID. And so, we offer here a framework for conversation that encompasses Check and Connect family engagement strategies that seek to build a partnership by creating a feedback loop with open-ended questions. That's what we call that two-way communication and Check and Connect.

And then we have ideas for validating the parents' efforts and concerns. Encouraging Mentors to share honestly about how the student is doing while remaining hopeful. And then also including parents in that problem-solving conversation. So, because parents, you know, being the experts on their child and are seeing their students learning at home. They can provide quite a bit of insight on both those barriers that are existing and also the supports that are available in the home environment. So, all of these are samples again to build up partnership with families.

[Slide 16 – Interactive Interventions]: So finally, here is the third focus area in the online Mentoring Guide, which provides interactive interventions that supplement that weekly meeting. So, these are commonly known as the intensive interventions in Check and Connect.

You can find linked in this Mentoring Guide a new graphic organizer for problem solving, which includes those five problem solving steps that we talk about in Check and Connect. And then as well as a new smart goal setting sheet, which you'll see on page fourteen on the right. And again, as I said, both of those are linked in the online PDF.

[Slide 17 – Interactive Interventions]: And so, then the other additional interventions you can find in the online Mentoring Guide include ideas around self-regulation, increasing motivation through a values activity that even has it's all ready to go on a Jam Board for you that you can go ahead and copy and make your own and work with students. And then also activities to brainstorm future planning with students. So, that's just a quick preview of the Guide. And we hope you can find this Guide helpful as you continue to navigate mentoring in the virtual world and even as you transition students back. We hope you will find this as a valuable resource in your work. So, now I'd just like to pass it over to Elaine to talk about how it's been going in Florida.

[Slide 18 – Florida Check & Connect]: Elaine Miller: Thank you, Ann. And good afternoon everyone. I will be sharing some information today about how we've adapted Check and Connect training, as well as our implementation support here in Florida during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Slide 19 – FL State Personnel Development Grant]: First, just a little bit of background on our project so that you guys have some context. The Florida State Personnel Development Grant, which I will probably end up referring to with its acronym, SPDG, at some point, is also funded by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs. We are currently supporting implementation of Check and Connect in fifty-two secondary schools across the state with roughly three hundred mentors. In addition to the structured and sort of intensive support that we provide those districts and schools, we also provide some level of training and support to non-participating schools and districts statewide.

Our team is comprised of four dedicated staff members. And we utilize a cadre of fifty-one certified trainers. Most of those trainers are either school district employees or who work on, kind of, statewide Department of Education projects that we collaborate with. And the trainers assist us and will help to serve and to sustain implementation after our grant ends.

So, in our project, we provide Check and Connect training, technical assistance, and implementation support primarily at the district level. And then, we work closely with the district and school level coordinators who provide administrative teams and mentors in their school's more direct support.

[Slide 20 – Timeline of Shifts]: Okay, so I wanted to walk you guys through sort of a timeline of how we've responded to the pandemic over the past year because it's really been something that's evolved over the course of the year. So, the first thing that we did was just send out a memo to all of our implementers with the key message that related to implementing Check and Connect. The top priority was really to just at the very basic level maintain a connection with their mentee whenever possible. And then as feasible to attend to the other core components that Eileen

described. You know despite how important implementation fidelity is to us, which you know for Check and Connect is much more than just the mentor relationship, as Eileen shared. We really felt that at the end of the day that was the most the most basic need that the students probably had which was just to have support from that one caring adult. We also wanted to let implementers and educators that we support; you know, that we were there for them. And so, we did not have all of the answers at that time and still don't. But we just wanted to let them know that we are kind of all in it together. So, that month we also changed our monthly support call for coordinators to focus on virtual mentoring.

And then by April, we had put together a COVID-19 resource repository. Where we kind of just compiled various guidance documents that were starting to come out from national groups, such as Mentor.org or the National Association of School Psychologists that gave guidance on how to talk to kids about the pandemic; what mental health needs they may be experiencing; and even self-care tips for educators. It was around this time that we also began adapting trainings, which I'm not going to talk about now. I'm going to go into more depth about that here in a minute. And we also revised our program evaluation plan just recognizing that if we really couldn't ask our partners in education to collect data that we normally use during that time because of the increased demands they were facing, and also because it probably wouldn't accurately reflect, you know, successes or barriers of the program at that time anyways. Then, really up to that point because things were so hectic, we were not hearing much or having many requests for implementation support. So, we really wanted to try to get a better grasp on how people were doing and in some cases, even if Check and Connect was being implemented at all during distance learning right at the get-go. So, we would have loved to have sent out a survey, but again just any new demands really didn't seem appropriate at the time.

So, we had some resources and sent out a supply order form to all of our mentors where they could request things like postcards that they could send to students or families to engage with them during distance learning and over the summer. And on that order form, we sort of snuck in two open-ended questions to try to gauge how things were going. And then also what help they needed from us. And what we learned from that was that mentors really felt like they needed more support. Which as I mentioned has been typically the way that our grant has worked. It is provided by the school employed coordinator. But of course, at that time the coordinators were sort of in the vortex like everyone else in the school. And then they also reported that some were having a really hard time getting in touch with their mentees at all. And there were concerns about that. But across the board we were starting to hear about several silver linings of having increased success and connecting with families. So, we were encouraged by that and encouraged that, you know, in many cases sites were really trying to keep up with implementation. And we ended up using that information to revise implementation support, which I'll discuss a little bit more as well.

And so then by the summer of 2020, which summers can be a kind of a quieter time for us, we were really surprised that we saw a huge demand for trainings. We did lots and lots of trainings across the state and continued to adapt to them almost every time we did a training as we learn new lessons. And I'm going to talk about that more as well. We, in the fall, we recognize that

implementation support needs had shifted. So, beginning the 2021 school year, we rolled out some additional supports.

[Slide 21 – Adaptation of Trainings]: As an evidence-based program, Check and Connect trainings are standardized and they're also really pretty interactive and can be as long as twelve hours depending on which training it is. Honestly at first, when this first kind of rolled out we really did not expect that we would even pivot them to being delivered online. It was just sort of on hold until we could be back in person, which I think at that point, we were like preparing ourselves for being disrupted for what it was fourteen days to stop the spread or something like that.

But, pretty quickly, reality set in and we knew that we were going to have to change our trainings to be delivered virtually. And we got the blessing of our partners at the University of Minnesota and started working really quickly to adapt the trainings, which was really a big task to take on and I'll say it was time consuming and it was somewhat difficult. But, and this certainly is not comprehensive either, but some of the big things that we learned over time and from doing them and having lessons learned as well as advice coming out from the field on best practices for virtual professional development.

Some of the adaptations that we made included just first thing off the bat we had to get trainings into more manageable chunks. We knew that we couldn't have people sitting in a webinar format for, you know, two consecutive full days, so we have chunked them. We've settled into about three hours maximum at a time seems to be working well for us. We found that preparing for virtual trainings and even just delivering them can take a little bit more work. So, we really like to have at least two trainers per training, if not three, as well as a facilitator that can kind of help manage the technology aspects. We provide more frequent and shorter breaks. We provide an orientation to Zoom and then we ended up revising training norms to include things like, you know, staying engaged by keeping their cameras on as much as possible, as well as muting themselves whenever they're not speaking, etc.

We found that things typically take more time online than they do in person. So, you know whereas discussions sometimes would occur simultaneously, now they cannot. There's more transition periods or tech issues that will pop up and kind of slow things down. So, because of that, we've made some minor content revisions. Sometimes just going a little bit less in depth on a certain topic or in some cases assigning more pre-work or homework in between sections on things where we feel like they're important but maybe less critical live, where we want to be able to gauge their understanding.

And we've used various technology and online sites such as Padlet for pre-work and homework. I would say that adapting the activities was probably the hardest thing. So, when we trained in person, we did a lot of small groups or gallery walks or what we call like shoulder partner activities, which all really had to be adapted. We now do activities using breakout rooms, which people really seem to like. We'll end up doing jigsaws where we have the various groups sort of review a small amount of information and then come back and do a group teach out. We use polls and annotations to check for understanding, since it can be trickier to sort of

scan the room and get a feel for how people are feeling or are doing with the content. We did initially try to limit the number of participants and probably feel that that is best. But because of the increased demand we've seen, honestly, we've had a hard time adhering to that. But you know, like I said, all of these changes that we've made have evolved over the last year and continue to evolve.

We've been super fortunate to have the support of the University of Minnesota and their training director, Joe Angaran, who has really provided support along the way. And I have to give a big shout out to my team Sheila Ward and Sonya Eorio, who are very creative, much more creative than I am, and are continuously coming up with new ideas to make our trainings really the best possible experience for participants.

[Slide 22 – Implementation Support]: Like I said, using that information that we gathered informally and then just in discussions with districts and coordinators we felt the need to reorganize our implementation support for this year. Which you know was just as crazy as it seemed like as the spring ended last school year. So, we found that you know, I think it goes without saying, but people had less time and more stress than we've truly ever seen. And so, we felt like we really needed to increase our support and reduce our demands.

We decided that we wanted to do a little bit more for mentors directly than we typically have in the past to try to make sure that they felt supported and to lighten the load for coordinators, which, you know, we put a lot of time and thought into doing that just because we do feel it's important for sustainability purposes for sites to sort of be as independent as possible. But we ended up developing a mentor toolbox and several other guidance documents for mentors to serve as succinct resources, such as like a Mentor Quick Start Guide and a monitoring forum tutorial. And as Ann mentioned, we partnered with the University of Minnesota to develop the online Mentoring Guide. Which we thought was really important. We had previously pulled from other sources and gave our best advice, but felt that something developed from the University of Minnesota would be the most helpful. And I'll say, so far, we've received really positive feedback.

I would highly encourage anyone implementing to check it out, implementing or not I think it's a great resource. And then we also began convening quarterly support calls for mentors during months when coordinators had increased data collection responsibilities for the grant. And then the shift that we made for coordinators included: we reorganized their toolbox; we created a monthly checklist to help them kind of keep all of the pieces on track; and we shifted our monthly support calls to alternate between an hour-long live session and a shorter recording with information and updates to save coordinators time but ensure that they receive critical resources every month.

All of our supports are housed on a Base Camp Project. So, we have one for trainers, one for coordinators, and one for mentors. We use Base Camp, which is an online project management site that kind of houses information and also serves as a communication tool between us and partners and across partners.

[Slide 23 – Preliminary look at impacts]: So, at almost a year later, we have started collecting data again, and we're starting to assess how our implementation of Check and Connect has been impacted by the shift to the virtual environment. I want to give a caveat that we are working with our external evaluators to clean this data now, so what I'm sharing is preliminary. But overall, we are seeing that we have been able to maintain student engagement, which we're very encouraged by. We use the student engagement instrument, which was developed for Check and Connect and there's a hyperlink that you will receive if you're interested in using it. There's some guidance and reference materials on the University of Minnesota website, but we use that.

And so, when we compare fall of 2019 to the fall of 2020, if you look at individual subscales, you'll see some gains and some losses. But the overall average has been maintained. Then we have also received, like I mentioned, higher training attendance, probably most likely due to removing the constraints of travel or even just being away from the classroom or school for extended periods of time. We are seeing, you know, after every training we do an end of session evaluation and we have received very positive feedback on what we are providing.

Another positive impact is that we have fifty-one trainers across the state and in some cases, it was difficult for all of our trainers to get opportunities to train because of those same sort of time or travel restrictions, constraints that they had. So, we have seen that our trainers have had a lot more opportunities, which will be awesome for sustaining the program once the grant is over. When we look at fidelity, we have seen a slight dip in three out of the four indicators. So, about a two percent decrease which to be honest is much better than I would have guessed, so I'll take it. And we saw a big improvement, like we were starting to hear really sort of informally at the beginning, we saw a 16.8 percent increase in fidelity for family engagement, which we felt like was a huge gain.

And then lastly, we have been comparing student attendance, behavior, and course performance from fall of 2019 to fall of 2020. And we have seen slight improvements across the board, with the exception of course performance or student grades, which we are concerned about but sort of fits with what we're seeing across the state and across the nation.

[Slide 24 – Biggest lesson learned:] And so finally, I just felt like I had to share that in reflecting on how we've had to adapt our work during the pandemic, that truly the biggest lesson that I've learned and my partners at the University of Minnesota have shared that same sentiment. It is just how important it is to always give grace, both to those that we're supporting and to ourselves. We have to continuously remind ourselves what extraordinary circumstances we're in and adjust our expectations accordingly. We are all doing our best and that is good enough, whatever that means on any given day. So, thank you so much. I believe we have some time for questions. So, I will turn it over to Caitlyn.

[Slide 25 – Q & A]: Caitlyn Majeika: Thank you. And thank you again to all of our great panelists who provided that wonderful overview of Check and Connect, the training, and then how you've shifted your training methods in the state of Florida due to the pandemic. We are now going to open it up to the audience for some questions. And I just want to remind everyone, everyone is muted but you can access the question box and you can type in a question for

our panelists and they would be happy to answer. So, I'm going to kick us off with a couple questions, but if you think of some please put them in the question box. A question came in asking; my school as a whole does not use the Check and Connect program, but as an individual teacher, I'm interested in implementing it with one of my students. What can you recommend for first steps I should take to help kind of get me familiar with the program and to be able to implement it with my student?

Eileen Klemm: So, I can jump in here and answer that. That's a great question. We have, I mean certainly we encourage people that you can implement, you know, strategies and interventions from Check and Connect. And you can certainly get started at a teacher level. We have lots of information on our website. There's our Check and Connect Manual, the Virtual Mentoring Guide that we developed, talks you through, you know, many of the strategies you can use in a virtual environment. However, as you're starting to use some of those strategies and seeing how they work with your students, this is an intervention that really needs buy-in from the staff and support from other staff members to be truly successful to implement it as it was designed, as a structured mentoring model.

But you can certainly get started with some of those strategies as you work with students. And then that you can use that information and some of those maybe early successes to get the rest of your team at your school on board and then look into information and potential training options.

Caitlyn Majeika: Great, thank you. And we have another question and this one is directed towards Elaine. The person would like to know what types of resources or materials are included in the mentor toolbox? And then also wanted to know if the support calls are an individual call or a group-based call?

Elaine Miller: Yeah that's a great question. So, the support calls are statewide. They're open to mentors anywhere in the state of Florida. We would welcome outsiders as well. But I'm pulling it up now. So, we have all of our recorded support calls and the documentations with that. We have the Quick Start Guide that I mentioned. We have a reference on emotional check-ins and then we have resources, like tons of different resources for each of the four components. So, we have resources for Check, Connect and Family Engagement. And then we have a resource section for self-care for mentors. And then that distance learning or COVID-19 section as well. And so, anytime we, I would say maybe quarterly, we kind of go through and make sure everything's up to date and organized well. But we're continuously as things come across our desk if you will, adding to those.

Caitlyn Majeika: Great, sure. We had another question just wanting to know a little bit more information about how you gather data at the state level.

Elaine Miller: Okay so, well we have with OSEP, with the way that our Grant is structured we have an external evaluation, external evaluators at the University of Kansas that we work with, excuse me at Kansas University. But we have a SPDG Data Portal so I won't go into all of the details because it's a lot. But we have primarily coordinators are the biggest avenue for data collection. And so, three times a year, they go in and give us data on fidelity and student

outcomes for every single student mentor pair. We have the students take the student engagement instrument twice a year in that portal. And we also do a couple of different types of practice profiles.

So, we have coordinators go in and complete a practice profile to kind of find strengths and weaknesses for mentors. And we can look at that, you know, at various levels, whether it be the school, the district, or the state.

Caitlyn Majeika: Great, sure. We had another question asking about if there is a specific software program that is used with Check and Connect? If so, could you just clarify sort of the training versus the Check and Connect program and what virtual platforms are available for both?

Ann Romine: Eileen do you want to address that?

Eileen Klemm: Sure, yeah. I can jump in for this. So, Check and Connect, I mean the intervention itself is not like, doesn't need technology. Although we realize now in a virtual environment the meeting itself needs technology potentially. However, at the heart of the check piece initially was a monitoring form. So, a form that mentors would use to record the check data, like attendance, behavior, course performance and also what they're doing regarding connect. How they're connecting with students, how they're connecting with families. And then so, that data could be tracked month to month to look at progress, what's working, what's not working. In 2017, we launched the Check and Connect app, which is an online, web-based application, which really takes the place of that monitoring form. So that is available.

Sites do not have to use it to implement Check and Connect, but it's certainly a tool that makes that check piece easier. That it has data visualization features so that you can share information visually with students, it certainly makes program evaluation easier or that coordination. The Check and Connect coordinator can kind of have their finger on the pulse of what's going on with mentors and students. So, it certainly eases the implementation and evaluation of Check and Connect. So, that's the app and then there's online. I think the question was kind of what's the difference, then also with versus training. So, then we also have online training options. Now Elaine was talking about how they've kind of shifted their training to a virtual environment, but they're doing kind of live online training.

So, it's the trainer is on at the same time that all of the participants are. At the University of Minnesota, we launched a self-paced online training so people can, they purchase online training, they have access to these training video modules that they work through. And they have a three-week period in order to complete that training. And that is, right now, that's trainings for leadership teams to get schools and districts or organizations through the planning process of how to implement Check and Connect at their site.

And then soon we'll be having that self-paced online training available for mentors. The additional modules that we have on our website are really kind of more what I consider professional development or review modules to kind of reinforce learning that's been, that

you've gained through training and reinforced some of those on that knowledge and skills. So, I hope that that answered the question regarding the differentiation.

Caitlyn Majeika: Yes, thank you for explaining that. That was great and now we have another question. Someone's curious to know if you all can suggest strategies to help the mentors maintain motivation to keep up with data entry.

Eileen Klemm: Ann or Elaine would you want that one?

Ann Romine: I mean we probably have both plenty to share. But I think for us what we have found is being able to use that data. And so, that's where you know, and I think we're unique in that we have like a Statewide Data Portal. But we and this also I think speaks to somewhat of the importance of having buy-in at the school and even at the district level.

But when we share data reports and there's an absence of data, then that seems to motivate. And when we're sharing data where you know we're able to document the successes, that motivates people to document that on the monitoring form in whatever form that may be. I don't know if you have anything to add Eileen.

Eileen Klemm: Yeah, I would just throw in there this is and the, I think the value of, like you said, actually talking about the data and how you're communicating that data as a group. And you know every Check and Connect site that implements has a goal for implementation. So, it's making sure that all the Mentors know what the goals are and that they're realistic. And so, that you can look at data as a whole, as a group, and, like you just shared, the data on family engagement.

And that increase is like we need to be able to find those areas to celebrate to keep us all motivated. When things are frustrating and when we just look at course performance, it's like those added indicators help us. So, we can find those things to celebrate as well as those things that we can work on. But I think communicating together and having those, seeing that needle move as a group is motivating.

Caitlyn Majeika: Great, so another question came in. There was mention of a resource repository and new product items that might be available. This person is specifically interested in the coordinator checklist by month. So, the question was: is that currently available and if so or when it will be available, where can they find it?

Elaine Miller: Yeah sure, so that was me that shared it, Elaine. And so, it is fairly specific to our grant. So, we, you know, as a State Personnel Development Grant have I guess I would say demands on top of what you may have not implementing through a grant. So, it's specific for us. I would be happy to share it as a template that could be modified for a different site if that would be helpful. I don't know that there's anything like on a national level that's not specific for; for us in Florida.

Caitlyn Majeika: Okay, great.

Ann Romine: We have a number of resources that are available online and I did just share the link. And I'll have to see if Elizabeth can share that out. We have a variety of, we have a readiness tool for implementing Check and Connect, the mentor practice profile is available. We have some implementation options. We have various supports for sample implementation tools that are all available on our website on this resources page.

So, I would encourage you to go there for all of the resources that we've made publicly available. So, there's a number of them, and then for those who actually do go through our training we have some of the more specific implementation tools that lend itself to program evaluation, some Excel monitoring forms if you aren't going to use the app and things like that that are available to training participants. And that's even for the self-paced online training. And I think there's a monthly fidelity survey that's part of that as well.

Caitlyn Majeika: Great and as Eileen mentioned, we have put the link for that resource page in the chat. So, you can click on that and access all of those resources that were mentioned.

We have few questions come in asking if there are materials or resources available that are also in Spanish or in any other languages besides English.

Eileen Klemm: So, we have some, Florida may have done some more translations. But we have some of our implementation forms, once again we have a zip file for program training participants that we have some of the parent letters, some a lot of the home communication resources that we have in Spanish. I believe that's the only language that we've had them translated to. I know that Florida has translated a number of their documents to a variety of different languages, is that correct Elaine?

Elaine Miller: Yes, that is correct. They haven't been updated in a while, but I know that we have adapted yours through I believe it was a parent group before my time, but a family engagement or a parent advocacy group helped us adapt for the most common languages here in Florida.

Caitlyn Majeika: Great. We have those available. Yep, awesome. And we have a couple of question, procedural questions related to the mentors. So, the typical number of students a mentor works with and then the weekly time commitment that is usually required for mentors?

Elaine Miller: That's a great question. It's a question that we get often. So, we have two different types of mentors. One type of mentor is what's called, what we call a dedicated mentor. And that's where their only job is being a mentor. And if they're full-time they would have approximately forty students give or take.

They could, and that would be depending at what tier they're implementing Check and Connect at. If they're implementing Check and Connect at a Tier 2, they could probably have a little bit more students. If they're implementing Check and Connect at that Tier 3 or intensive, maybe even less than; than forty. And so, that would be for someone, a mentor who's full-time.

Then there's the other type of mentor, which is becoming more and more common, I believe. And it's what the model that's being used in Florida is. What we call existing staff. So, it's teachers or other educational professionals in the building who have a full-time job and they're taking on the mentoring in addition. And we really recommend when they start off to only have one, maybe two students but to get started.

And then after they really understand how to implement a model, work out any challenges or barriers to implementation, potentially could have up to, you know, three or four or even five depending on what their other role is. And then the average amount of time per week is what we estimate is about one hour per week per student and that's not; they aren't going to be spending an hour face-to-face with the student. But that hour comprises the time that they might meet with a student, which could range anywhere from a brief ten-minute meeting to maybe up to a half an hour meeting, depending on the student's needs.

But then the other amount of time that that hour would take would be that checking on data, connecting with other staff in the building, looking into resources for students, and then also connecting with families. So, an hour per student per week on average.

Caitlyn Majeika: Great, and then just trying to be cognizant of time, thinking we probably have time for about one more. And there is a question you had mentioned earlier, you know, as we're moving to a virtual format that it may be a little bit harder to connect with students or families. In this environment, not being in the school setting. So, this person wants to know do you have any strategies or suggestions to keep mentors moving forward if their mentee or the family is not responding when they've contacted them through email or notes from home or phone calls?

Eileen Klemm: Sure, I can jump in since I know your time is of essence and somebody else can add anything. But we've just seen some great initiatives around, especially early on, is like meeting parents where they are or meeting kids where they are. And so, you know, last spring a lot of it was, you know going to where the food is being delivered or helping support, getting homework packets home to students. So, finding a way to just show up at their front door, at a safe distance just to kind of make that connection and show that additional effort. With families we have heard that has really made a difference. I don't know, anything else you want to throw in there Elaine.

Elaine Miller: No, I think that covers that. I mean just I guess being persistent is something that we really say in trainings. And so, continuously trying and trying in various formats and asking the families how they can best be contacted or what their preferences and availability is. But, and like you said, I mean just trying everything from going where they are, to sending a postcard home or email, call, all of those things.

Caitlyn Majeika: Alright, some very useful strategies. So, we are at the end of the hour with our Webinar and I know we have some questions we did not get to. But we will work to post some additional resources on our website. Again, it's the National Center on Intensive Intervention. We will post the recording of this Webinar, as well as a handout with a PDF of the slides and then some additional resources that you can access if you're interested in training and

resources related to Check and Connect. So, I want to thank our wonderful panelists for being with us today and thank you all for coming.

Eileen Klemm: Thank you.

Elaine Miller: Thanks everyone.

Ann Romine: Thanks everyone.

[End of File: February 25th, 2021 NCII Webinar]