Accessible and Inclusive Events and Trainings Video Module Transcript

Hello and thank you for taking the time to watch this video today. My name is Sarah Butcher. I am the Co-founder and Director of Roots of Inclusion. Roots of Inclusion is a partner organization of the Family Engagement Collaborative. We have developed this training module for the Washington State Inclusionary Practices Professional Development Project. The purpose of this presentation, is to provide you with an overview of what you need to consider when planning and hosting accessible and inclusive events and trainings.

At the end of this module, you will have built a stronger understanding of what makes an event accessible and inclusive. You will also understand why accessible and inclusive events matter. And, you will be able to identify what is in the Inclusionary Practices Project Community Conversation Toolkit to support planning and hosting an accessible and inclusive event. So, let's begin with a reminder of what a community conversation is. A community conversation is an event that brings a diverse set of community members together to listen, learn, and collectively brainstorm strategies and resources that can be used to address an adaptive challenge facing their community. The Inclusionary Practices Project Community Conversation Toolkit was designed and developed to support you in planning and hosting your own community conversation on inclusive practices.

We know that families and communities hold great wisdom and resources. Their input and involvement should be used to inform decision making, and build the relationships, and understanding needed for inclusion to be successful. To meaningfully engage your community members in a community conversation, it is essential that your event is accessible and inclusive, so that all attendees feel welcome and feel a deep sense of belonging. Now we are going to hear from Sara Sanders Gardner. Sara is a trainer for Autistics at Work, and she works at Bellevue Community College for the Neurodiversity Navigators Program. Sara is going to explain why accessibility matters, and the different elements of Universal Design, and how those elements help make an event accessible and inclusive.

Hi. Welcome to creating accessible events for Roots of Inclusion. I'm Sara Sanders Gardner and I work at Bellevue College for the Neurodiversity Navigators Program. I also do training for Microsoft's Neurodiversity Inclusive Hiring Program. And I'm autistic, and I also have some physical disabilities as well that makes it hard for me to get around, walk upstairs, things like that. So, let's talk a little bit about how you can create an event that's accessible to everyone. The first thing I want to talk about is the picture that we have here on the front page of our PowerPoint and that is a meeting room that has a ramp for wheelchairs, people who have other mobility difficulties, and it also has a couple of stairs. And one of the things for you to keep in mind when you're thinking about access for people with mobility concerns, is that you want to make sure that the ramps and elevators, etc., are in the same general area as the stairs or other entrances. So, that the person who is using a wheelchair, who can't use the stairs, who has a walker, etc. does not need to go way, all the way around the building, or some other place simply to enter the building like anyone else. So, that's something to keep in mind when you're thinking about what venue you're going to use.

So, let's think about why we want to create accessible events in in the first place. First of all, inclusion is the right thing to do. It's um just something that we want to consider everyone and what they need, and what uh will make them able to attend the event. Also, it's the law. Providing accommodations for people with disabilities is something that we are required to do, by law, whenever we have an event. And last, but not least, more people will be able to attend and receive your information, and they'll be able to contribute their ideas. And so, your event will be more successful, will come away with a lot more ideas from everyone who needs to be there.

And who are these people that need accessible events anyway? It's actually everyone. When you create an accessible event everyone who attends, benefits from it. So, accessibility needs aren't limited to disability. A lot of times we think about access as only for disabled people, but in reality, a lot of people benefit from it. So, it might be the um person who didn't get a very good night's sleep the night before and they're just, their brain is feeling a little foggy. Or it might be the single mom who is just running on empty, doesn't know what to do with her children, maybe didn't have time or money to give them dinner or lunch that day. uh It might be the person who's just um, they broke their glasses that day and they are having a hard time seeing the board or the, the PowerPoint. So, considering vision problems that maybe even aren't a disability, it's just something that happened in that person's day. So, there's lots and lots of different things that can be going on for people that we just never even think about um and so, thinking about you know the size of the font that we're using in a PowerPoint, or using a dark marker. So, you can see on this picture here, this the person has a really light-colored marker, and she's writing small, so not everyone can see that most likely. And um also making sure everyone's using a microphone. A very interesting fact is more people than we know read lips, which we found out since a lot of us are wearing masks, and things like that. So, making sure you have a microphone and people are always using it, even the ones with loud voices. So, you can make sure that everyone feels included and no one is sitting there thinking, oh I just can't participate because I don't understand what they're saying, or I can't see the board, or I can't read that, or I can't hear that. It's up to you to make sure they feel included. So, how can you do that? Well first of all, Roots of Inclusion has provided you with a really lovely checklist that you can use, and so let's take a look at the different kinds of things that are on that. Make sure you use a checklist because it's hard to keep everything in your mind. But you're going to want to think about the venue. Where is the place you're going to have this event? What kinds of decorations are you going to use? um If you're going to serve food, how will you make sure that you mark things that people might be allergic to, or make sure you have food that are free of allergens. How will you provide directions and make sure that people can understand those directions? Maybe include pictures, maybe uh different things, maybe have someone standing outside to help people find the venue if it's hard to find. um If your parking is far away from the building or the room once you get inside things, like that. How will people actually get there? um Thinking about sensory things, some people are allergic to scents, so consider having a no um, a no uh perfume event or a scent free event. Not allowing flashes or things like that. Definitely not having a disco ball or something, because people with seizure disorders can really have a problem with that. um If you have the space, consider setting aside one room, or even a

corner of a room, as a quiet space so people can go, and just relax, and kind of get away from it all. And then think about child care for people who really, really need that. And your communication, where I'm going to talk a little bit later about how to be really clear in communication, but consider that for all of your communication. Get interpreters if you can. um Sign language interpreters, um definitely make sure you tell people that they can ask for that. Make sure that you're using captioning, even if people don't ask for it. That is a 100 percent need to have captioning available. I'm going to tell you a little bit later how you can do that. Make sure you're using mics, that I talked about. um Be sure your communication is clear even in your thank you notes. So, you can also use a timeline for how, when you should be working on these things. Make sure your speakers also know about accessibility. You want to talk to them ahead of time and help them understand exactly how to provide accessibility, why it's important. um In your advertising, in your invitation, we're going to talk about that a little bit later. um During your event make sure you get there in enough time and have enough people to help you set things up, so you can check things ahead of time. Make sure that there's spaces for the wheelchairs. Some people say three feet, some people say five feet, you want to make sure that motorized wheelchairs have enough room to turn around. You also want to make sure that there's seating throughout your venue for people with different access needs, so that they can sit with their family and they aren't all shoved up front, where they're like hello, this is where the disabled people sit. You want them to feel like they are part of the group and included with everyone. You want to sit in different places of the venue ahead of time and check for visibility. Can people see from different places? You want to problem solve ahead of time and make sure your registration stations are ready, or your checking stations are ready when people get there, and there are enough people to point people in the right direction and let them know where to go. And we like to have people that are wearing like a pin or a shirt that says questions, ask me. You know make sure the staff or the people who can answer questions are clearly, um somehow people can tell who they are, so they're not just wandering around lost and don't know what to do. So, the concept of Universal Design is something that's really important to think about when you're designing an accessible event or creating an accessible event. Think about all the different kinds of people that might be there and how you can incorporate what you're doing to provide access for everyone, instead of just one particular person, after the fact that you find out that they need it. So, for example, we have a picture here of a person sitting at a table wearing dark glasses with a dog next to them. We can assume perhaps this is a blind person with the guide dog, but we don't know. um But make sure that you're leaving space for people who may need to bring a service animal with them. Make sure you know the laws around service animals and what you can and can't ask them. You can, you can definitely look that up online, but the only thing you can ask them is, is this a service animal and what service does this animal provide for you? And that will help you know how you can support them. Make sure you're thinking about mobility. People who need different mobility helps, make sure that you're thinking about sight. For example, someone who has low vision or is blind, you don't want to have barriers just suddenly in the way, so think about that. Someone who is deaf or hard of hearing, or has auditory processing disorder, or even is a lip reader, you want to consider those people. Make sure you have some places up front. Make sure you have the captioning so that they can read or make sure you even have those sign language interpreters that we talked about. Make sure you've got digital materials available of everything

that you're going to be handing out, so if someone is using a screen reader they can use that. You want to have good lighting but you also want to be able to have some areas where you can dim the lights for people who are very, very sensitive to light.

And then last, but not least, make sure you're leaving enough time between activities. This is something that people forget about, and they switch from activity to activity very, very quickly, and many people can handle that, but many people cannot handle that. So, you need to leave a good 10 or 15 minutes between activities so people can use the restroom, change a diaper, take their dog out, make a phone call to check on their children if they need to. There's lots of different reasons why people need a little bit longer time between activities, maybe just catch their breath. So, be sure that you're leaving time between your activities so people can just relax a little bit and get re-centered before the next thing starts. I do want to talk about Plain Language because this will help make your event not only physically accessible, but cognitively accessible. So, that's another accessibility we're going to talk about in a minute. So, I've included the link here, and you'll be able to access these slides as well, and go to any link you want to. But Plain Language is a communication that is structured and designed, so it's not just the words, but it's the way the words are on the page, so that the readers can find what they need understand it and use it. So, the picture that we have here is this woman who's looking at a page with all the words just covering the page and she's pretty overwhelmed with that. And then on the next page she has a page that has some white space on the page, and a image on the page, and some bullet points, and she looks much more relaxed and she's saying ah. So, we've had this experience where we don't really want to read that first page, and it's pretty overwhelming, but once things are organized and they, they look better, they're a little easier to access as well. So, let's look at what that might look like so this is, this is an example of an invitation before someone used Plain Language, where they say come to our inclusion event. Everyone is welcome. Bring your kids, we have babysitting available. We can't wait to talk about inclusion with you. We'll meet at the Elberly Center at June 3rd at 3 p.m., we can't wait to see you there. Bring something to write with and all your ideas about inclusion. Super um warm, inviting, sounds like they really want you there, but it leaves me with a lot of questions. So like, um what is this inclusion event about? What kind of conclusion are they talking about? How old of kids? Can I bring my baby? Can I bring my 12 year old? Do I have to pay for babysitting? Where is the Elberly Center? Is there parking there? um What time is this event over? How long does it last? Do I need to bring dinner? Should I eat a big lunch? um And um my handwriting's not really good, what am I gonna do about that? Who can I call to find out about this? So, lots of questions. The people who wrote it probably already know the answer to those questions, so it didn't occur to them to put them in, So, here is the same invitation after incorporating plain language. You're invited. Share ideas about inclusive education. Aha, now we have a little bit of an idea. We put some little pictures here so they can kind of have a better idea. We believe everyone should be accommodated in the same educational environment, so that kind of tells us what is inclusive education anyway. Bring your ideas and help us find solutions. When? Tuesday June 3rd, 3-5 pm. Where? Elberly Center, gives the address. Now in case you're wondering, there really, I don't think, there is an Elberly Center, I just made it up. Parking on site, bus route, and it says how far the bus route is from the building. Who can come? Anyone who's interested in k-12 education. Free child care provided ages one through ten. So, I might

wonder if I have a babe in arms, can I bring them anyway? I might call Zhe Weathers to ask them about that, or if I need an accommodation. So, it also gives that information as well but at least I have a person I can call and find out about it, right? So, you're also going to want to use this plain language for table signs, directions, emails, etc. Everything that you, every communication that you use, you want to make sure you've got all the information, but not more than all the information, right? You don't want to use too much. So, this is still inviting but it includes the information. So, that's it our Universal Design for cognitive. It helps people understand. You also want to do things like, make sure you've got the captioning there. Microsoft translator, I've got a link for it later on under our resources here. That is a fantastic tool to provide captions in real time on PowerPoints, when you're delivering a PowerPoint slide and it can even if you pause at the beginning, it has a little thing that people can click their phones on and it can translate it into their own language. So, that's pretty exciting. They can, they can read, their own language for what you're saying. um But you also do want to make sure that you are providing translations of materials if you know a good portion of your audience or, or even a few people in your audience speak a certain language, you're going to want to provide some translations for them so that they can also access your materials. Of course, that depends on your audience. You want to make sure things will be understandable by people with intellectual disabilities, or reading disabilities, or writing disabilities. Especially when you're talking about inclusive education, right? You want the people that you're talking about to feel included in your conversation. um So, another thing is you want to make sure that your rest areas include a gender-neutral rest area, accessible rest area, have a place for baby changing, and adult changing areas. So, these are all things that you're going to need to be thinking about. But your most important consideration is to remember that everyone coming to your event is a unique individual, with their own personal story, and their own personal barriers, their own personal needs. And their own contribution to make to your event. And so, you want them there, you want them to feel comfortable. you want them to feel included. You want to create an event that will support and welcome everyone. I know you can do it. You've got the checklists and you've got the Community Conversation Toolkit. You've got a link for it here, if you want to do a deeper dive and look at some more checklists. Learn some more. I've included some other links for you here. We've got the plain language and the Microsoft translator. So, um I'm really excited that you are going on this journey and I'm really excited that you'll be talking about inclusive education. It is such an important topic. So, thank you for listening and good luck. We just heard Sara give us a great overview of accessibility, Universal Design, and inclusion for events. She identified different aspects of access and inclusion to consider while planning an event or training. Now let's spend some time exploring the three specific tools included within the Community Conversation Toolkit that will support and guide you as you plan and host an accessible and inclusive event.

The Community Conversation Toolkit is very intentional about accessibility. Accessibility begins before somebody comes in to a shared space, and continues both during and after the event. The checklist gives planners a guide to think about accessibility for the physical space, the content, and to support meaningful participation. The accessibility checklist also considers how people feel when they are there. It considers how to support people who require interpretation and translation and people who use augmentative communication devices. All of these

components are discussed explicitly in the checklist. Accessibility is core to allowing people who attend to feel that they belong and that their input and participation matters.

This document from the Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds, also known as the OEO, is a great in-depth resource on engaging and communicating with families with language access needs. It includes background information as well as links to numerous additional resources. While this resource is targeted at educators and families, all of the information included is relevant and informative for meaningfully engaging families with language access needs within a Community Conversation. the OEO is also a great resource in general around language access. Don't hesitate to reach out to them if you ever have questions. And thank you to the OEO for allowing us to include this resource in the Community Conversation Toolkit.

When planning a gathering of people who will be in a physical or virtual space together, providing interpreters to ensure effective communication with everyone attending the event will help people feel welcome and included. The Working Effectively with Interpreters Checklist is intended to guide the use of interpreters at your events. The checklist includes items to consider while planning your event, and items to consider during, and after the events. It is important to note that this checklist is focused on spoken language interpreters, not American Sign Language interpreters. However, there is guidance on the use of all interpreters within the Accessibility Checklist. And thank you to Open Doors for Multicultural Families for allowing us to utilize this tool within the Community Conversation Toolkit.

To learn more about the Community Conversation Toolkit, and all the components and tools that are a part of it, you can watch the Introducing the Community Conversation Toolkit webinar. You can find the link to that webinar recording on the FECinclusion.org website.

And please don't hesitate to reach out to us questions arise. While planning your events there are numerous resources and webinar recordings on the FECinclusion.org website related to the Community Conversation Toolkit. If after looking through those items you still have questions, email us at rootsofinclusion@gmail.com. We are here to help and we want your event to be successful.

In addition to the resources around the Community Conversation Toolkit, you can also find links to other resources and information briefs on the FECinclusion.org. We will also be providing links referenced throughout this module in a resource document that will also be posted on the FEC website. And lastly, by following the FEC website you are able to find out about upcoming events, publications, and training series. There are other training modules and webinars that include deeper dives into other aspects of the Toolkit and other issues related to inclusionary practices.

Now as we close this learning module, I want to encourage you to take time to do a personal reflection. Think about one thing in this learning module that resonated with you.

And reflect on one thing that you can take action on based on your learning today.

And once again thank you. Thank you for spending the time to learn more about accessible and inclusive events.