Navigating Staff Turnover

Dr. Kineka Hull:	00:03	Welcome to Elevate Youth Programming, a podcast for adolescent pregnancy prevention programs and other youth-serving agencies. In each episode, we will discuss best practices, tips and strategies to strengthen your programming. Each episode will cover a specific topic discussed with experts in the field. Listen along as our guests join me to discuss these relevant topics.
	00:28	I'm your host, Dr. Kineka Hull. In this episode, we sat down with APP grantees Jill Gwilt and Melissa Ballard from the Mission West Virginia's Teaching Health Instead of Nagging Kids or THINK program to discuss program management and navigating staff turnover.
	00:48	Ms. Gwilt is the THINK director and has 14 years of experience implementing and managing youth programs, including healthy relationship education, positive youth development and adolescent pregnancy prevention. Ms. Ballard, a licensed social worker, serves as THINK program manager and has worked at Mission West Virginia for over a decade implementing and managing youth programs.
	01:13	Welcome to the Elevate Youth Programming podcast, Jill and Melissa. How are you?
Jill Gwilt:	01:18	We are doing well.
Melissa Ballard:	01:20	It's great to see you today, Kineka.
Dr. Kineka Hull:	01:22	Thank you for joining me today to discuss program management and the wonderful things that your agency does to prevent and navigate staff turnover. With that, let's jump in.
	01:34	I'll start with you, Jill. Can you tell us a little bit about your organization, your focus and some of your history when it comes to APP programming?
Jill Gwilt:	01:45	Sure. We work for a nonprofit called Mission West Virginia. Mission West Virginia started in 1997 doing a little bit of everything, but really working with youth and families in the state to bridge gaps between service providers and churches and the community. We have about 40 to 42 employees now, but we started off really small with about five, and we've always been geared towards helping families and youth in West Virginia. The THINK program, which is an initiative under Mission West Virginia, started in 2007. It stands for Teaching

		Health Instead of Nagging Kids, and it was actually a group of high school students that came up with the name for us.
Dr. Kineka Hull:	02:24	I love that name.
Jill Gwilt:	02:26	The THINK program, that is where all of our adolescent pregnancy prevention programs lie. Like I said, we started in 2007 with one federal grant, and we've blown up since then, and now we have four grants which is two federal, two state, but we serve about 13,000 kids across West Virginia.
Dr. Kineka Hull:	02:45	That's phenomenal. I had the pleasure of visiting Hurricane, and so the Southerner in me wants to call it Hurricane, but I know that's not the-
Jill Gwilt:	02:45	Yes, most people do.
Dr. Kineka Hull:	02:56	I know that's not the correct pronunciation. This is a tidbit for all your grantees who are listening. As you are having your wonderful site monitoring visit, your TA provider and your federal project officer may note certain things that your agency is doing well. As a result of the THINK program site monitoring visit, we were able to see some wonderful things with program management and staff retention that the THINK program and Mission West Virginia were doing and wanted to share those things with you.
	03:29	Melissa, with that, I will ask you to tell me about some of the things that your organization does for recruitment and retention, specifically your training. I was very impressed with your training plan.
Melissa Ballard:	03:42	We have found that, because of the success of our program and how energetic our educators are in the classroom, we are super fortunate to have word of mouth probably being one of our best recruitment tools because folks are so impressed with our program. They love the curriculum that we use. They love the interaction that our educators are able to do with the students, and so, as far as the recruitment piece, it's more word of mouth, I think, than anything, which has been wonderful.
	04:15	The training piece, the retention part was a trial-and-error for us, and it's evolved into what we feel like is a really great system. We have a process where educators, they get trained on the curriculum, they get trained on the processes of Mission West Virginia. They get a lot of trauma-informed care training.

Then they get to go out and observe every lesson taught by different educators.

04:43   We have 11 educators right now, and so when a new person comes on board, they get the opportunity to see how the lessons are presented in different ways so they can find like, okay, that person is very energetic. I'm a very vocal and very energetic person, but then the new educator may be a little bit more subdued, and so I might turn them off in my delivery, whereas they might go watch another educator, Kim, for instance, who is more calm and more chill and able to transmit the same message, but in a very different style. That's helpful for new educators to come on board, see the different styles that different educators use, and then they're able to come back.

05:27   Jill and I talk through as the process goes along. It takes about two to three months for an educator to be ready to go teach. We don't rush that system. We've learned the best way to make them feel prepared is to let them see how the whole process works from beginning to end. We do assessments, the enrollment forms, all the things that are required. We make sure that they've been taught on all of those different things. We have an actual checkoff form that we go through. How did you get this information? Where did you learn it from? They're not going out into the field until they're prepared.

Dr. Kineka Hull: 06:03   I like that. I know we spent a lot of time learning how important role playing, shadowing and mentorship is for students as they're learning the techniques and the skill building through our programs. It makes sense that, as educators or adults, we need that as well, which I think sometimes we forget when we're trying to make sure that people are prepared.

Melissa Ballard: 06:24   We always remind them that students can smell fear, and so we just need to go in there and feel very confident that we know what we're doing and that we're prepared and we respect them. That helps our educators feel more equipped and ready to be the confident educator that they are.

Dr. Kineka Hull: 06:40   Another thing that stood out to me during your site monitoring visit was the software that you used to record and track your training as well as some of your fidelity monitoring. I know that doing a lot of our TA requests, other grantees are looking for ways to track training, to recommend training, to monitor fidelity. Can you tell us a little bit about what you do?

Jill Gwilt:	07:05	Absolutely. We have a couple of different things. To track our reach and our classes, to let us know if anybody's teaching out of sequence or there's an issue with fidelity with a certain lesson, maybe an activity is not being completed for some reason, we have this system called the Online Participant Tracking System. It's done through our evaluators, AMTC. It's really easy to use. It's a web-based online platform where we literally go in and enter all of our classes. We set them up. We enter all of our students' demographic information, so their sex, where they live, what grade they're in, their age and things like that that we're required to report on. It's all tracked in this system. We can also track any referrals that we have given the student and then also track if we followed up with the student and what the outcome of that referral was. This system is just a really good data tracking system that helps management keep on top of program goals and successes or any issues that we're having with maybe a school or a site or even a lesson in the curriculum.
	08:09	Then there's another website that we use for training purposes. We use the Reproductive Health National Training Center. That is a mouthful. We use their website because you can actually set up a training platform for free on their website. What we've done is gone through and every training that we require through our grants or through our organization for our staff, we are able to upload to that training platform and then mandate all of our staff go through these trainings, and we can watch and see if they complete them. Did they watch the entire video? Did they stop halfway through? There's classes that we can recommend that they take, and then we get a report at the end of every month, every quarter, whatever we decide we want. That shows us the progress of all of our staff on their training needs. We give them a deadline of, say, you have to complete all of these online trainings by July 1st. In that way, we can log in and see how they're doing, what issues they're having completing those trainings, and then we have proof that they actually did them as well.
	09:13	That's just one way that we get some of the same messaging and training out to all of our staff, because we're so large that sometimes it's hard to give the same message and the exact same training. We do professional development obviously out in the world, but just starting back up now though since COVID, so this was something else that came to fruition because of COVID was how can we train staff when they can't go anywhere and make sure they're getting quality information? We use this site. They have trainings on their site that you can upload, but you can upload outside trainings as well.

Dr. Kineka Hull:	09:45	That piggybacks to what Melissa said, the consistent messaging. If you notice that something is not going according to plan, that there may be some fidelity issues or some discomfort, you immediately address it. Make sure that person is retrained, re-observed, and make sure that they feel supported in moving forward. I think that's very important with decreasing and managing staff turnover, because that's why a lot of people leave. They don't feel heard. They don't feel valued. They don't feel ready or prepared for their jobs. They don't feel appreciated.
	10:17	You guys have mentioned so many ways to show that that's one of the reasons why you're so successful with keeping your staff, that you're listening to all of your partners, especially your internal partners, to make sure that you have everything to be successful, so let's talk about how your organization builds capacity.
	10:37	Something else that stood out to your project officer, Cherie, and I as we were doing your site monitoring visit was how you use information gained from your stakeholders, and your stakeholders being your educators, your Mission West Virginia colleagues, your partners that you have on your advisory boards and your youth to do quality improvement for your programs, and so that can be, from some of the things that we noted, changing the curriculum that you're using, creating or expanding new positions. Can you tell us a little bit about your process and your successes with that?
Jill Gwilt:	11:14	Absolutely. That's actually one of my favorite parts of my job that I didn't know that I would love is the capacity part. When I came to Mission West Virginia and started with the THINK program, I'm one of the original founders I guess you could say of the THINK program, I was an analyst, and so I got to see the program from a different side than the director side. I got to watch the educators teach. I got to do the surveys and observations and a lot of the data tracking. When I became the director in 2015, one thing I noticed within just our program itself was we had a lack of infrastructure to really support our educators who are on the front lines teaching this curriculum, who are getting re-traumatized themselves with some of the information they're hearing from the students. They're getting triggered.
	12:02	We just did not have that full support system in place for our educators to begin with, so one of the first things I did as the director was create management positions under me. I would be like the overall yes-person or no-person and just the overall

compliance, but I needed someone to work one-on-one with these educators because, as the director, I couldn't do it all, and it wasn't fair to my staff to try. We created a management position for our TPP side of adolescent pregnancy prevention, and then we also had one for our sexual risk avoidance side.

12:38 It's funny because we go in thinking we have this great plan, it's going to work, it's going to be amazing, and it did work, but not the way that I wanted it to. I think grantees need to take that into consideration. You might try something and it might not work, but that's okay. Take a step back and, okay, what does work? What doesn't work?

12:58 The management side worked great. That helped me out a lot to build capacity within the grant to really think outside the box of how can we reach these youths better, what stuff can we add, but the educators were getting different information from different managers, so we changed it. We had one manager under me that oversaw every single educator so they got to know every single grant that we worked on. They had to know every single curriculum, all the ins and outs just like I do, but they directly work with the educator, which is Melissa's position. She works one-on-one with those educators, and it's made a huge improvement, just morale boosters, too, of every educator's getting the same information, the same type of training, the same type of support. There's no confusion of like, well, that educator is doing it this way, but I had to do it this way. Everything is streamlined.

13:47 That's one big change that I made, and then a couple others. What I'm probably the most proud of is our youth resource coordinator position. One thing I do, I look within our program, I listen, like you said, to our youth, what are they not getting from our program and what can we do better, because even though we have a great program, we can always do something better. What we noticed, as our educators were getting bombarded with trauma from our students of, "Hey, I'm going through this," or, "I've been abused," or, "I'm in an abusive household," or, "I've been sexually assaulted," just so much trauma going on with our youth that our educators, they're teaching eight classes a day, they don't have time to work one-on-one with these youths and still be able to teach, so how can I support that?

14:32 We can train them better in trauma-informed care. We can train them to be more trauma responsive, but that doesn't fix the problem, so I created a youth resource coordinator who actually works one-on-one with these youths who have

experienced this trauma and helps them navigate that trauma and start to heal. They're not a therapist. They're not diagnosing the student. They're just creating this safe place. It's private, away from other people that the student can talk through their problems or even talk about what a great day they had. They don't have to focus on the problem every time. That has helped to alleviate so much pressure from my educators because now they have that person they can refer the youth to and they can focus on education. There's just that support system, and really listening to not just the youth, but what do your staff need that they're not getting. That's a couple of ways that we've built capacity within our program itself over the past, what, eight years.

Dr. Kineka Hull:	15:26	Wonderful. I like that, and I like the fact that you are the example of career progression that's available to your staff.
	15:35	I'll toss this to you, Melissa. What are some other things that you think have been helpful when it comes to keeping your turnover low, because the THINK program in Mission West Virginia has one of the lowest turnover rates in some of the APP programs that I have heard of? What do you think are some key successes to being able to retain your staff?
Melissa Ballard:	15:56	I honestly think that people need to feel equipped and encouraged and heard and supported. We obviously have rules. When you run a company, you obviously have to have rules that govern your business as a whole. Everyone is human, so when you have a situation that pops up, that comes up, there's no panic. I try to remind our educators, "It's okay. Take a deep breath. It's okay, whatever is going on. First of all, we aren't doing brain surgery and we're not heart surgeons. We don't risk hurting anybody's physical bodies today, so we're all good. We can take a deep breath and recognize we can reassess what just happened or if something happened and how can we go about this the next time?"
	16:45	I think they feel supported and heard if there's a situation at home. We'll work around whatever your situation is. We try to accommodate folks as best we can. Still, we obviously have to get our jobs done. I'm a big proponent of, if there's a situation that comes up that you're maybe not doing exactly how it needs to be done, then we're going to work on that now. Through observations, we find out, okay, this needs a reteach.
	17:12	When people do an observation, if I'm not doing it, somebody comes and says, "Hey, listen, this happened. I'm not sure if that's how it's supposed to go," I'll talk to that person. We'll

have a little sit down and discuss what went on. Instead of waiting for our annual evaluation, we work on it now. We try to discuss and redirect and make people understand there's no power trips here. Everybody works together. We have a very team-like atmosphere and, hopefully, it's because we make people feel seen and heard and they belong here. We're invested in them. If they have ideas or opinions, it might turn into something like, "You want to head that up, because that sounds like a great idea?"

17:54   We have a program called the Bridge Program where it was an educator who saw a gap, and she had been a counselor by trade before. She felt like there were kids that were slipping through the cracks, and she designed a mentor program that was one person for six years, and now we have six, eight mentors now because of that several years ago. That was just an idea that someone had. We listen to people. We hear their ideas. We allow opportunities to grow.

Dr. Kineka Hull: 18:22   I like that you said sometimes it can take 90 days for someone to feel properly equipped to go into the classroom. That's something that we hear from a lot of educators like, "I'm a little nervous. I don't always feel ready." Sometimes you don't have the time to devote to some of that training, but as you said, it's evidence-based, that people need that opportunity to maneuver through that.

18:50   As we talk about some strategies that other agencies who may want to replicate some of the wonderful things that you're doing can keep in mind, I'm going to come back to that, but I also liked how you said, "We have a good camaraderie in the office," and I could feel that whenever I visited your agency. Everybody was enthusiastic about their jobs. They were ready to chip in and just spoke so highly of your leadership as the director and the program manager, that they felt supported and empowered to do their job, and that they felt that they were able to bring suggestions to you that have manifested into wonderful things for young people.

19:29   One of those wonderful things that I would like to highlight that I think not only helps with staff retention because, as you said, everybody has the same process, the same procedure, the same messaging, everyone has the same training that's great for staff, but also this thing that I'm going to, I think you know it's leading to this wonderful app, has a place for young people to also see consistent messaging, a consistent way to keep in contact with people. For me as a educator, I think it would feel important and empowering to me to be able to say we are releasing a

consistent message that is not only internally seen, but externally seen.

20:15   Can you tell us a little bit more about your app, how you engage young people, partners, and have infused this wonderful coordinator and resource and outreach positions to make sure that youth and your staff feel supported?

Jill Gwilt: 20:30   Absolutely. I've been wanting an app for a very long time, but when COVID hit, that's when I really got my executive director on board. Because most of the nation, our schools closed, there was lack of access to our youths, so how can we reach them? What ways are they communicating with people? As we all know, they're always on their phone. They can't put that phone down, so let's do that. Let's get them through their phone, so let's create an app where they can reach out to their educators and talk to their educators, because we've also had a lot of educators come to me, and Melissa would be like, "I want to follow up with our classes. Can I go back in six months and see my kids again and talk to them and see where they're at?" We're like, "Absolutely, if you aren't teaching another school," or whatever the case may be.

21:17   Sometimes, we're really busy, and they're teaching back to back classes all year, so how can our educators keep those youth engaged? We created this app. It's called the THINK App, and the way it works is anybody that is in our classes can sign in. They have to create a username. They don't have to give any personal information except for their age, their gender, what they identify as just for demographic reasons for us, so that we have some data of like who's actually using our app, is it more males or females or non-binary, and then they pick what school they go to, and it automatically connects them with their educator. They could ask any type of question. It's completely anonymous. They do not have to give their name. They do not have to give what class period they were in or anything like that. Our educator then can respond to them and talk to them throughout the school year, throughout the next school year, however long they want to keep in contact with our educator as long as they're still employed here.

22:13   We do have every single school and every single site in that app, so every single student we teach has access. Now, you do have to be a student of ours to have access to our educator, but anybody in the state can actually access our resources. We do have resource tabs for parents where it has so many videos and fact sheets and just information for parents and caregivers on how to interact with their teens, issues that teens are facing,

anything related to youth. There is information on there. It's a one-stop shop for all these resources, and then there's also resources for youths. Any youth in the state can access these resources. They do not have to be our student. They can find information related to things that are going on with them personally.

| | 22:57 | There's also a crisis section where, if they're in crisis and they need to find information on suicide prevention or they're in a domestic violence situation, they can actually just click a button and it'll either text or call that hotline immediately for them to get help. |

| Dr. Kineka Hull: | 23:12 | I love that it has a component for youth in your programs, but also great information for anyone across the state. With all this great information, let's talk about some things that you would recommend that other grantees do or look out for to maybe be successful when it comes to navigating staff turnover. Let's start with maybe when it comes to managing staff. Are there any pitfalls or lessons that you would like to share? |

| Jill Gwilt: | 23:42 | I think, when it comes to managing staff, you need to listen and not just act like you're listening, but active listening, reflective listening to your staff, especially those that are on the front lines teaching these youths. They know what's needed. Even though we're in a management position, we don't hold the power. They do. They're the ones that have access to the youths. They're the ones changing the lives of the youths. We're there as their support, and I think recognizing that you're there as their support, which means you need to help them, is a big key. |

| | 24:14 | One thing that I love about Melissa, who is the manager of the educators, is she's very encouraging. She's very like, "You got this. You can do this," just very uplifting. I think that is so helpful with our educators who, like I said, are sometimes in the classroom and they just hear all this sad information. They can get really down and upset about it, and so we have an open door policy to come and talk to us about it. Melissa is just really great at being like, "You know what, but you were there for them. They heard you," and just really uplifting them and making them feel better, and making them feel like they matter is a huge part of, I think, keeping staff and managing staff properly. |

| | 24:51 | Something else, too, is we talk about supporting them, but they need ownership of the program. One thing that we do with new grant applications or continuation applications is like, |

"Educators, tell me what's working? What's not working? What do you wish we could do? What is your dream program? Let's see if we can make it happen," and then if I can write in some of their ideas into the application, they now own that. They own part of our program.

Dr. Kineka Hull:	24:51	I like that.
Jill Gwilt:	25:16	I think that's a huge reason why we keep staff, because now this is their program.
Dr. Kineka Hull:	25:20	I also noted during our visit, so kudos to you and Melissa, that your staff said they do feel heard and that even whenever you do have staff who leave that you listen to their recommendations during their exit interview to try to improve what is happening in the agency for the staff who are still there. I think that that is absolutely wonderful. That's one thing that really stood out to me during your visit, that everyone, partners, staff, youth, all felt like they were heard and has some ownership.
	25:55	I know one example that I know that I always cite about your visit was how you spoke to young people and said, "Hey, we have this curriculum that we're going to use. We've tailored it with fidelity. We think it's wonderful," and the young people said, "We don't like it," and so you took that to heart and you went back and you found something that would be more relatable to them, and so, again, kudos to you and your staff.
	26:19	One thing that I would like for you to touch on, if you don't mind, was some of your social media or outreach messaging. In addition to a resource coordinator, I know you have someone who does outreach. Can you tell me a little bit about that position?
Jill Gwilt:	26:34	Absolutely. One of the other positions that we have is community outreach coordinator or outreach coordinator, and she is responsible for doing community engagement, one of the big proponents of all of our grants as we engage the community in our program, and parents and caregivers in our program, and our youth, obviously. She's the one that really ties it all together. She brings together the community members that work with youth and other types of organizations, whether it's sexual violence prevention or bullying prevention, drug and alcohol prevention. We bring together all these organizations into one spot quarterly, at least quarterly, and we just talk about the issues that youth are facing. What are we doing to help these youth get past these barriers or these issues? What

do we need help with, and how can we all work together to really move all of our missions forward?

27:25   We also work together to create events so that we're all in one place at one time, so that when youth or parents and families show up to this event, they can literally go to every single table, every single organization and get all of this valuable information in one place.

27:40   Working with youth is obviously really important, but that's just one component. We need buy-in from community members, from state workers, from parents and caregivers and school officials. This is just a way for us to really tie in that community aspect is this position really focuses on that part and then also brings in the youth voice to that community engagement. We could sit here all day and be like, "Well, we think youth need this," or, "We think youth are facing this," or, "They're doing this," or, "They say this," but we're not youth, so we really need those youth leaders, those youth voices in these meetings to really tell us what youth are facing and how we can best as adults really talk to them.

Dr. Kineka Hull: 28:19   Everything that you have hit on lends to program sustainability, community buy-in, partner buy-in, internal stakeholder buy-in because you're offering the opportunity to expand and have ownership over the project. You have the ability to expand and create new roles based on what you learned from your youth and your partners and your educators. You're also allowing your educators to expand their knowledge and their role based on their interest and their expertise. I think that's very important when navigating staff turnover because people leave because of the part we touched on earlier about feeling seen and heard, but also the lack of opportunity. Being able to say, "Hey, we're flexible. If you have an idea, if you see a need, let's try to figure out how to make that work and expand your role," create a role rather than having someone having to leave your organization to be able to fulfill some of their career aspirations, and so kudos again to your team. I think that's absolutely fantastic.

29:23   When it comes to program sustainability, are there any other things that your agency is doing?

Jill Gwilt: 29:28   One thing that I like to focus on that we do besides some of the things we've already mentioned like the app and everything like that is we also do... They're called Teen Expos. We go into the schools. We work with the school system, and we set up like these team conferences completely for free. It's free speakers, free food. The school pays for nothing, and we just really focus

on what does that school in particular need. What are the youth facing in that school? We use our YLC in that school and they tell us, "What do your peers need? What's missing out of the education that you're getting?" or, "What issues are they really just struggling with?" It could be sexting. It could be drugs and alcohol. Maybe it's mental health and anxiety and depression. We find speakers that they want to listen to. We bring them in, and they get to pick what sessions they go to.

30:23   That's something that will continue even if we're not here because it's a free event. All of our partnerships do it for free, and that's something that can continue even without funding and still get our message and other messages to really help our youth even if funding is over.

Dr. Kineka Hull: 30:40   I think that the outreach coordinator position is absolutely wonderful, but the one that is closest and dearest to my heart is the resource coordinator's position. I know through reading some of what that position does is that they act as a liaison between your agency, your partners who are youth-serving providers in the school to make sure that young people's needs are met. Can you tell me a little bit about that referral resource system that you have?

Jill Gwilt: 31:11   I will pat myself on the back for that one. My dream was to have somebody like this with all of our educators. I think grantees out there probably have big dreams, things they want to see happen, but they're like, "Ooh, that's not possible," but start small. My dream was to have this type of position, like I said, with every educator and be that support system for these youths, but we all know that that's not possible with the funding streams that we currently have or maybe, the other funding streams, you need to have some type of data to back it up.

31:39   We started off small with one position, and it's the youth resource coordinator. Her name is Autumn, and she really just works one-on-one with those kids who've really faced high trauma, and she gets referrals from our educators. We also do needs assessments to assess any type of basic needs that may be barriers to our kids getting education or coming to school or just being a happy teenage in this world.

32:04   One of the things that our educators do will review the needs assessment and, if anything stands out, they will then reach out to Autumn and say, "Hey, we noticed this on this student's needs assessment. Here's their contact information." Autumn will reach out to that student via email and say, "Hey, you

indicated this on your needs assessment," or, "You indicated you wanted to talk to somebody. Would you like to set up a meeting one-on-one? I'm happy to come to the school. We'll be able to meet in private," and then, if they agree, she'll go to the school and meet with them one-on-one and she just listens.

32:37   That first meeting is just getting to know the student. What is the issue that they're facing? Are there any other issues that they're facing, and what do they want to get out of this conversation? What do they want to get out of maybe meeting with Autumn more one-on-one, and how often do they want to meet? She really puts it in the youth's hands. They get to set up their communication with her and what they need. She does pretty much anything. Like I said, she doesn't do therapy because that's not something that our program provides, but she's that listening ear and that trusted adult.

33:10   There are days that maybe the youth want to talk about an amazing day, a test that they scored an A on, and she's like, "All right, let's talk about that. We don't have to focus on your issues, but if there is an issue you know that you want to talk about, I'm here." If there's issues in the school system, she'll advocate for them in that school system. She has had a student who had a plan to commit suicide that day, and she had to go and take them to the school counselor and really advocate for them to call 911 because they didn't want to. Just really pushing, I think, for that help for that student is a big support I guess you could say. There are some times when our kids feel like they don't have anybody listening to them.

33:48   I would also like to add to that that, when you mentioned liaison, she also is a great connector for them for those. If a student needs therapy, if a student needs something connected to an outside program, I mean, she's that one person, and we know that there are so many programs that are available that can be continually helping the students. Each area is generally unique to the services that they have, the resources that they have, and so our educators also have the list of resources in the area. Sometimes, the student might get referrals from the educator based off of that list, but usually it requires a call to Autumn and to verify, "Do you think this would be the best thing for this student?"

34:36   Then sometimes the educator can just do that. They can just say, "Listen. Here's a great resource," what Autumn is great at, and that is also following up with the student and saying, "Hey. How'd it go? Did you get connected with... Have you gotten a call back?" Maybe she needs to talk to the parent because they

need parent permission and they're kind of nervous. "Do you want me to sit with you while you call mom? Do you want mom to come in? Do you want to meet?" How can we make this referral easier acting as that middle person to make sure that those kids are getting what they need that's maybe outside the scope of what Autumn is able to provide for them as well.

| Dr. Kineka Hull: | 35:12 | Jill and Melissa, this has been excellent information. I'm sure it will be very valuable to other grantees and our listeners. What is a key takeaway that you would leave for listeners? |

| Jill Gwilt: | 35:22 | I think one of the big things when I came into the director position, I was very overwhelmed with just all the goals and just everything that needed to be done. I mean, I think it's okay for grantees to be scared, and I think it's okay for grantees to make a mistake or to try something and it doesn't work. That is totally okay. Talk to your project officer. They are there to help you. They're not there to punish you, and that took me a while to learn, and so I think just taking a step back and realizing you're one person, get help when you need help and realizing that you're doing a great job. You might make mistakes, and that is totally okay. Active listening and reflective listening is so important to not only the youth, but your staff. They will be the ones that tell you what gaps are missing, and they will be able to tell you how to do it in the best way possible to really help the youth you're serving. |

| | 36:17 | I think it's just really important to genuinely care about what you're doing. I don't know if you've heard of Jim Harris, but he's a speaker that we've had on several different occasions, and he said, and I carry this with me on the regular, "You look in the mirror and you say, 'I am a positive force of nature and the world needs me today.'" When you walk out your door believing that you can impact other people and have an impact on the lives of other people, it changes how you look at your day, and so reminding yourself, "The world needs me today." If I don't show up today, somebody could be affected by that. I'm going to show up as my best self. I'm going to take my little box, put aside the things that I can't really fix right now and work on being the best manager that I can be, the best whatever my job is that I can be. |

| | 37:17 | That requires me listening. That requires me responding promptly, when somebody asks me a question and they're nervous or scared, to encourage them when that is important, when that's needed, to just recognize people need to feel encouraged, equipped and like they belong to something bigger |

than themselves. I think that helps us make the impact that we need to make.

Dr. Kineka Hull: 37:41   I absolutely have enjoyed our conversation, so key takeaways are that navigating staff turnover is a business decision, but you have to put a personal touch on what you do to ensure that your business or agency is successful. Be an active listener. Equip and employ and empower your staff to be change agents. I love that. Be a force for young people. Be a reckoning power as we try to impact young people's lives. Thank you for listening.

38:18   If you enjoyed today's conversation, be sure to like and follow Elevate Youth Programming on your podcast platform of choice. For information on today's topic and resources in adolescent pregnancy prevention, visit The Exchange at teenpregnancy.acf.hhs.gov. The Elevate Youth Programming podcast is funded by the Family and Youth Services Bureau. The content in each episode is not the opinion of FYSB nor its training and technical assistance contractors.

38:51   I'm Kineka Hull, and this has been another episode of Elevate Youth Programming.