

## LEADERSHIP ACADEMY FOR SUPERVISORS (LAS): Leadership Skills for Implementation of Change

**OVERVIEW:** As a member of the Children’s Bureau’s Training & Technical Assistance Network, the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute is part of the Bureau’s comprehensive strategy to develop leadership at all levels and promote sustainable change in the child welfare system. Through its on-line curriculum, the Leadership Academy for Supervisors (LAS) has the opportunity to reach an unlimited number of supervisors across the country with knowledge and skills training in leadership and implementation science. This experience will strengthen supervisors’ role at the grassroots level in achieving Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) outcomes, implementing Program Improvement Plan (PIP) priorities, and other systemic change initiatives.

The goal of the LAS is to develop *leadership skills for implementation of change*. The curriculum is designed for experienced supervisors who have already mastered the transition from caseworker to supervisor and the basics of supervision and who can strengthen the agency by providing leadership in their role as a unit supervisor.

**INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY:** The instructional strategy has two components:

- 1. Personal Learning Plan:** The first is to deepen supervisors’ understanding of leadership issues and develop leadership competencies. By responding to case examples and applying them to their own experience, supervisors are able to develop and apply leadership competencies in their role as a unit supervisor. Development of the Personal Learning Plan begins with the Foundations of Leadership module. In the pre-work, participants develop a leadership vision and describe the legacy they want to leave as a leader. At the end of the module they develop a Learning Plan that addresses (a) their development goals, (b) the importance of these goals, (c) the actions necessary to achieve them, (d) the support needed to achieve them, (e) the obstacles they are facing in reaching them, and (f) the steps that need to be taken to overcome them. At the end of each of the subsequent modules, participants are asked to review and update their Learning Plan.
- 2. Change Initiative Plan:** The other component focuses supervisors on contributing to the implementation of sustainable change in the child welfare system. In the core curriculum, supervisors are asked to identify and develop a Change Initiative that will improve services to children, youth and families in their sphere of influence. They document this process through a Change Initiative Plan and Logic Model. Following are the steps in the development of the Change Initiative Plan in each of the core curriculum modules:

- a) *Foundations of Leadership*: Vision and initial plan for Change Initiative;
- b) *Leading in Context*: Eco-map, adaptive and technical challenges, and implementation stage of Change Initiative;
- c) *Leading People*: Finding and keeping the right people for Change Initiative;
- d) *Leading for Results*: Logic model and measurement strategy for Change Initiative; and,
- e) *Leading Systems Change*: Internal and external implementation drivers (organizational supports) for Change Initiative.

**SUPPORT FOR LEARNING:** Each module is followed by a synchronous session, the LAS Learning Network (LASLN), with the goal of facilitating the transfer of learning and providing coaching to participants in the development of their Personal Learning and Change Initiative Plans.

The original design of the LAS was to provide primarily self-directed, on-line learning allowing supervisors to come in and out of training as their time and schedules allowed. However, evaluation results have shown that participation has been hindered by the lack of time on the part of supervisors and the lack of support from their agency to focus on their own professional development. In order to address these concerns, some states – including Indiana, Colorado, Tennessee and New Jersey – are working with their training departments to implement the LAS with a more coordinated state- or organization-specific approach. They are tailoring the training to state-specific policies and issues and focusing on change initiatives that are current priorities in their particular states.

The 21 hours of on-line learning in the core curriculum has been approved by the Children’s Bureau and states are not able to change the content. However, they are free to tailor the LASLN sessions in terms of delivery mode, scheduling, timing, and participant selection (including only supervisors from their own state), as evidenced by the following array of formats:

- In the national approach, the LASLN sessions are conducted as webinars with participation from around the country.
- In Indiana, groups of supervisors are assigned to specific webinars.
- In Colorado, regional training specialists conduct the LASLNs as face-to-face sessions.
- In Tennessee, coaches conduct regional LASLNs using MeetingPlace technology and follow up with face-to-face coaching. This is a blend of the Indiana and Colorado approaches and results in 40 contact hours to meet the state requirement.

**SUMMARY:** The LAS on-line learning experience is an opportunity for supervisors to develop their leadership competencies and to contribute to sustainable systems change in child welfare. It is also a way for agencies to link change initiatives at the state level to implementation of the change at the local level through unit supervisors.

Thank you for your interest in the LAS. If you need further information, please contact the LAS team directly at [LAS@usm.maine.edu](mailto:LAS@usm.maine.edu). We look forward to hearing from you.