Introduction to Learning Circles

• *Learning Circles* are groups that engage in a process of learning through collective inquiry.

• Facilitated by a group leader.

• Group members are accountable to one another.

• Goal: improve outcomes by improving how things are done (our system) and what we are doing (our practice).
In Learning Circles....

The **Process** is as Important as the Product
Learning Circle Approach

• Membership
  – A group of supervisors and his/her unit OR
  – A group of supervisors and/or managers
  – Designated facilitator and coach

• Learning Circles use the PARA approach -- Plan-Act-Reflect-Adapt

• Encourages building a learning culture through acquiring and building knowledge.
Learning Circle Process

Learning Organization Environment

- LC members select topic
- Each LC member shares topic experience
- Topic Basket

ADAPT

PLAN

REFLECT

ACT

SEND Recommendations to Other Org Levels

Agency priorities and information
Learning Circle Principles

• Create organizational change and improved outcomes through a focus on best practice.

• Inspire a learning organization committed to improved practices, functioning, and outcomes.

• Address challenges or practice issues relevant to and actionable by the Learning Circle members.

• Connect practice change to the agency’s mission, values, and practice model.

• Employ interventions and activities based upon evidenced-based approaches.
Learning Circle Principles

• Empower circle members to improve practice for more positive organizational climate and client outcomes.
• Use strengths-focused interventions.
• Embody a culturally responsive approach.
• Use comprehensive, incremental interventions for long-term sustainability.
Learning Circle Principles

- Expect full, open, and unbiased participation that encourages communication by all members of the circle.
- Empower circle members to engage in collaborative, balanced, and supportive behavior.
- Emphasize ongoing evaluation to improve effectiveness and achieve desired outcomes.
HOW DO THESE PRINCIPLES MANIFEST IN THE LEARNING CIRCLE? A SUPERVISOR’S PERSPECTIVE
Learning Circle Process

• Step 1: Convene the meeting. Make sure members “check” their baggage at the door.

• Step 2: Acknowledge the LC Recorder for the meeting.

• Step 3: Remind team members of the LC Principles—to create a learning culture.

• Step 4: Facilitate a dialogue about the designated topic, remembering PARA.
Learning Circle Process

• *Step 5:* Discuss what has been learned from the day’s Learning Circle and review the plan.

• *Step 6:* Set the next meeting date. Adjourn the meeting.

• *Step 7:* Complete the LC Meeting Journal and post as planned.
Evaluation Plan

• To what extent are learning circles implemented with fidelity to the model?

• What are the strengths and limitations of using PARA as a process for learning circles?

• What topics, best practices, and goals do supervisors address in learning circles?

• To what degree do agency managers and unit members perceive changes in supervisory practice as a result of learning circles?
A SUPERVISOR’S PERSPECTIVE
Topics covered in Learning Circles.....

- Staff Retention
- Community Partners
- Use of data and research
- Time Management
- Foster care issues related to DJJ
- Training for new staff
- Resource development
- Family Team meetings
Topics covered in Learning Circles.....

• Case staffing
• Transferring cases
• Secondary trauma
• Team Building
• Supervision and nurturing
• Dealing with difficult issues
• Change
• Managing upwards
Developing a Learning Circle Project

1. Convene a committee
2. Determine structure of program
3. Develop supporting materials
4. Recruit/identify learning circles
5. Train learning circle facilitators/coaches
6. Commence learning circles
7. Support learning circles
8. Conduct ongoing evaluation
QUESTIONS?