LEARNING CIRCLES
A peer-to-peer learning tool.

What are they?
Learning circles are groups that focus on using peer to peer learning to address common issues. Different configurations of learning circles are possible in child welfare (e.g., at the unit level with a supervisor and their workers, or a group comprised of all managers or supervisors). With the guidance of a trained facilitator, groups go beyond just learning and talking about an issue; they develop a plan to address that issue and then act upon it. The structure promotes an open and continuous dialogue among members.

Who do I contact?
Charmaine Brittain, MSW, Ph.D.
Senior Associate
Consultation & Capacity-Building
Butler Institute for Families
Graduate School of Social Work
University of Denver
Charmaine.Brittain@du.edu
(303) 871-6336

The Learning Circle Process
(Brittain, C., 2011)

National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement
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EXAMPLES

Georgia

Georgia partnered with the Butler Institute to pilot learning circles for their child welfare supervisors. In order to participate, a supervisor must have completed the Putting the Pieces Together pre-service training. This has helped to incent participation in the training for veteran supervisors. Georgia has six active circles with an average of twelve supervisors in each. The State plans to split circles as they gain in popularity. The Education and Training Services Department created a website for learning circles that provides resource materials, communication opportunities, and online access to those who live far from meeting locations to help make the learning circles self-sustaining. The website also contains mini-guides on various topics that learning circle groups can use to launch dialogue.

For more information, visit:

Western Workforce Project

The Western Workforce Project utilizes learning circles as part of a multi-level intervention approach to improving child welfare workforce. Pilot sites for this project include Colorado, Wyoming, and Tribal Nations in North Dakota.

The unit level learning circle teams are comprised of supervisors and their workers. Together, they participate in learning circles focused on improving the organizational climate, unit functioning, and practice outcomes.

For more information, visit:

RESOURCES

• Supervisors as Leaders of Practice Change: Tools and Approaches (December, 2010)
This NRCOI-sponsored webinar highlights tools and approaches child welfare agencies are using to support supervisors as leaders of practice change. This session highlights the use of learning labs and learning circles, with trainers and supervisors sharing their experiences. To view the webinar recording and access the materials, visit: http://www.nrcoi.org/tele_pastdetail.htm#121410.

• Learning Circles: An Introductory Manual (June, 2011)
Developed by Charmaine Brittain of the Butler Institute for Families as part of the Western Workforce Initiative, this manual provides detailed information on the learning circle approach, competencies and principles. Information on the Western Workforce Initiative is also included. To access this manual, visit: http://www.nrcoi.org/rcpdfs/LCManualMay2011Final.pdf.