

Learning, Leading, Changing

A Service of the Children's Bureau, a Member of the T/TA Network

NCWWI National Webinar Series Session #6

Design Teams & Learning Circles: Agency- & Unit-level Interventions for Improving Organizational Climate & Culture

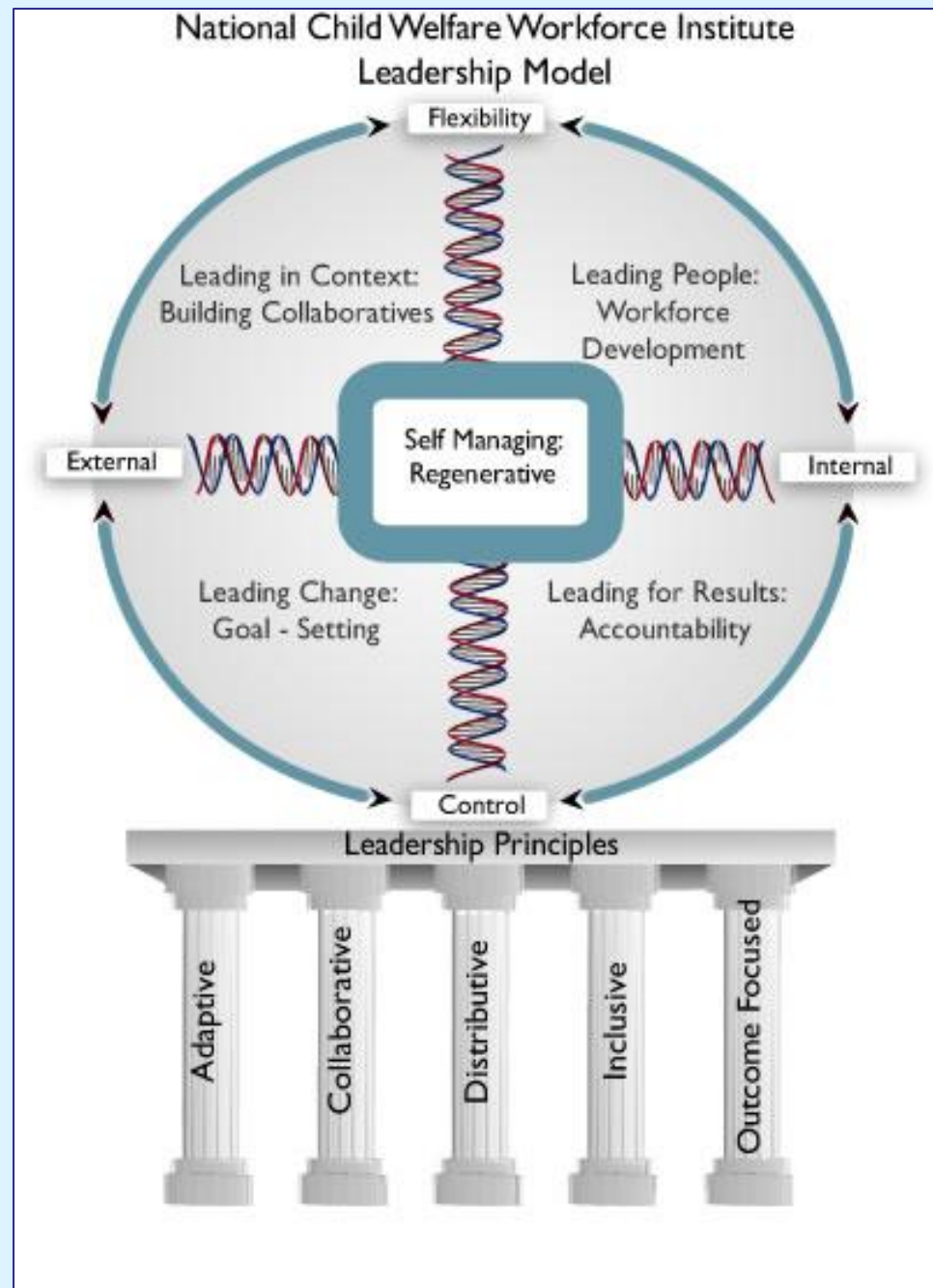
Paul Fritzler, Wyoming Department of Family Services
Peter Clarke & Heather Powell, Denver Department of Human Services
Linda Metsger, Butler Institute for Families, University of Denver
Charmaine Brittain, Butler Institute for Families, University of Denver &
NCWWI Knowledge Assessment & Management (KAM) Team

Wednesday, November 28, 2012

Session Agenda

- Introduction to NCWWI Leadership Model
- Presentation:
 - Background/Context
 - Overview of Design Teams & Learning Circles
 - Development & Implementation
 - Impact & Outcomes
 - Accelerators & Decelerators
 - Lessons Learned & Tips for Agencies
- Application of CW Leadership Competencies & Skills: From the NCWWI Model to the Field
- Q & A via web platform
- Continuing the Conversation & Closing

INTRODUCTION TO THE NCWWI LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY MODEL

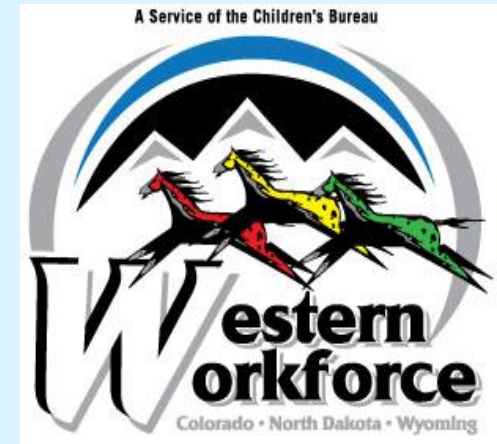


BACKGROUND & CONTEXT



The Western Workforce Project

- Funded by the Children’s Bureau in 2008; concludes in 2013
- Three Sites:
 - Casper, WY
 - Denver, CO
 - Tribal nations in North Dakota: the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara tribes of Fort Berthold, and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa



The Western Workforce Project (2)

- The Western Workforce Project (WWP) builds on work of:
 1. Recruitment & Retention Training and Systems of Care grantees
 2. Organizational Theory
 3. Intervention Research
- Connected to the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI)

The Western Workforce Project (3)

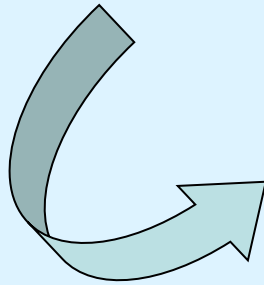
- The overall goal is to collaboratively develop & test a workforce intervention model for child welfare that responds effectively to diverse local needs
- The intervention includes
 - **Design Teams (DT)** to address workforce issues identified in the Comprehensive Organizational Health Assessment (COHA)
 - **Learning Circles (LC)** at the unit level

Why Focus on Workforce?

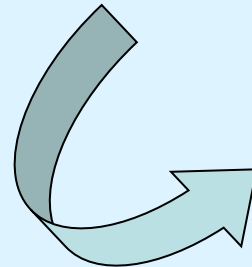
1. Child welfare agencies face significant workforce challenges
 - Changing demographics: Turnover due to retirement of “baby boomers”
 - Changing economics: Salaries not competitive, layoffs, recruitment difficulties, etc.
2. Workforce challenges impact children/families
 - Large caseloads and turnover negatively affect quality of caseworker-family relationships.
3. Workforce interventions offer promising solutions

Research About Organizational Change

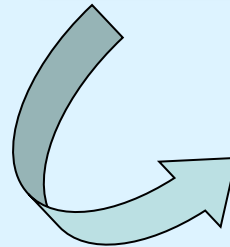
**Change at the Agency
& Unit Level**



**Improved
Organizational
Climate**



**Improved
Workforce**



**Improved Client
Outcomes**

Denver County Department of Human Services

- Workforce:
 - 170 caseworkers
 - 50 supervisors/administrators
- Referrals:
 - 980 per month
 - 230 cases accepted for assessment
- Number of cases: 1400

Casper Office, Wyoming Department of Family Services

- **Workforce:**
 - 31 staff, 4 supervisors
 - 1 District Manager
- **Referrals:**
 - 165 per month
 - 82 new cases per month
- **Children in placement: 142**

Butler Institute's Role

1. Provide leadership for the project
2. Conduct Comprehensive Organizational Health Assessments (COHA)
3. Develop all project-related materials
4. Convene Design Teams, facilitate meetings, make logistical arrangements
5. Conduct Learning Circle Facilitator training
6. Support Learning Circles
7. Evaluate all project activities

OVERVIEW OF DESIGN TEAMS



&



LEARNING CIRCLES

What are Design Teams?

- **Who is involved:**
 - Child welfare managers, supervisors, caseworkers, case aides, resource staff
 - Members self-select into Design Team
- **Specifics:**
 - Champion project at the agency
 - Address agency-wide issues arising from COHA
 - Develop Action Plans - prioritize goals, choose strategies, and implement them

What are Learning Circles?

- **Who is involved:**
 - Led by supervisors, composed of unit members
- **Specifics:**
 - Members collaborate to pursue new ways of addressing common issues affecting their team, agency as well as practice with clients
 - Goal is to improve outcomes by improving what is being done and how things are done
 - Change happens from the unit level up

Comprehensive Organizational Health Assessment (COHA)

- Purpose of the COHA
 - Provide information about an organization's workforce strengths and needs
 - Guide areas for intervention in Design Team and/or Learning Circles
 - Assist in planning
 - Provide a way to look at improvements over time
- COHAs conducted at 3 points during WWP (1st & 2nd are complete)

What is the COHA?

- Multi-method assessment that includes:
 - 300-item staff survey (online and paper/pencil) assessing Individual, unit & organizational factors
 - Individual and group interviews with all levels of agency staff
 - Interviews with clients (biological, adoptive, and foster families plus transitioning youth)
 - Interviews with community partners and providers

COHA Survey Domains

Individual Factors

- Self-efficacy
- Job satisfaction (pay; promotion; supervision; benefits; contingent rewards; operating procedures; co-workers; nature of work; communication)
- Intent to stay
- Trauma (vicarious/secondary and historical trauma)
- Coping skills
- Time pressure

Unit-level Factors

- Supervision (*child welfare knowledge, support and skills*)
- Professional sharing and support
- Team cohesion
- Shared vision & professional orientation

Organizational-level Factors

- Leadership (distributive, adaptive, outcome-focused, inclusive)
- Physical environment
- Cultural responsiveness & Inclusivity
- Readiness for change
- Public perception
- Community resources

DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION



Design Team Roll-out

1. Hold agency kick-off meeting
2. Email all staff inviting participation
3. Hold information sessions
4. Convene COHA Results meeting/retreat
5. Convene ongoing Design Team meetings at least once monthly

Learning Circle Roll-out

1. Hold Agency Kick-off meeting
2. Email participating unit supervisors
3. Hold Learning Circle Facilitator training with coaches
4. Conduct unit-level LC introduction meetings
5. Convene learning circles with coaches
6. Periodically re-convene LC facilitators

Design Team Action Plan Example

Goal 1: *Improve supervision*

- a) Consistency
- b) Clinical supervision
- c) Cohesion

■ Action Steps:

- Supervisors will meet weekly with one another
- Supervisors will conduct regular case reviews using standardized case review form
- Supervisors will receive individualized coaching for 6-months from Western Workforce certified coaches

Range of Topics Covered in Learning Circles

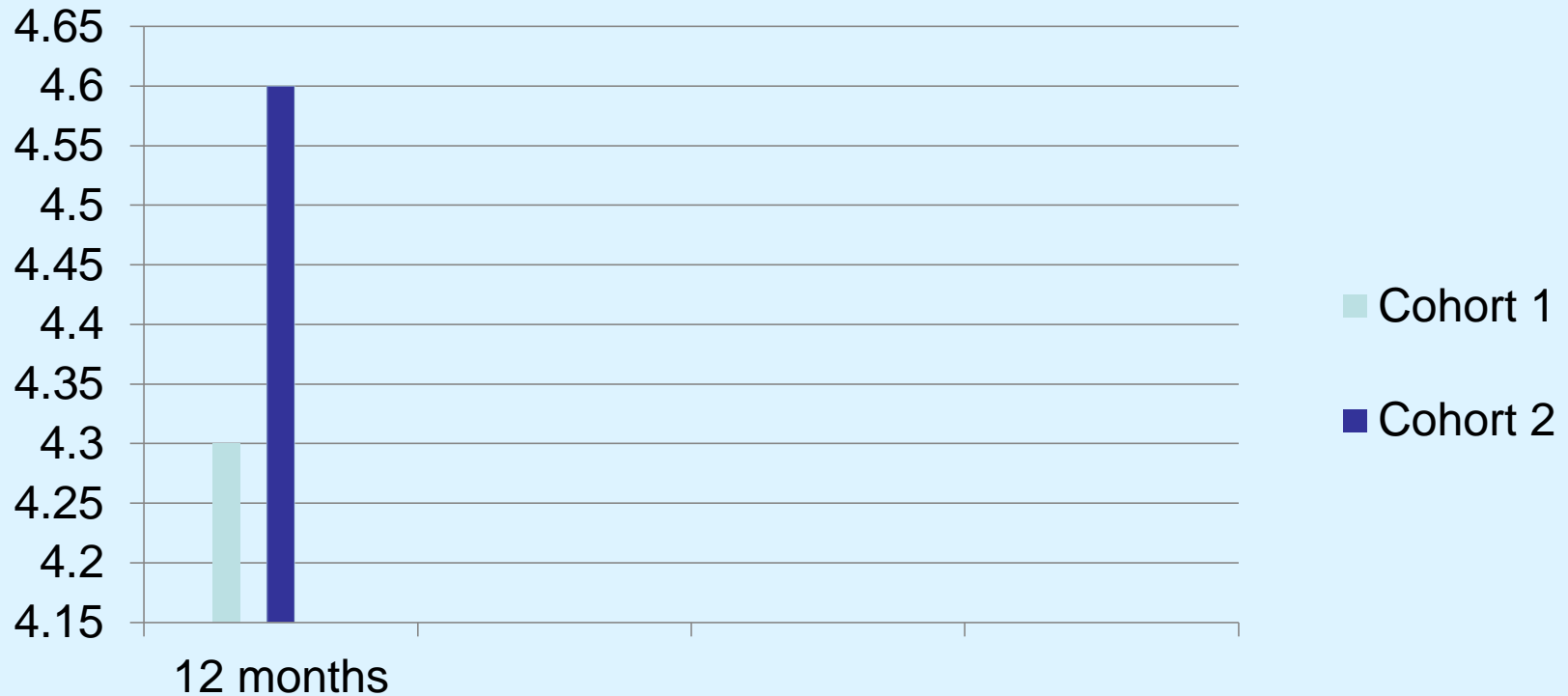
- Unit scheduling
- Vital documents (process)
- Emergency placements (process)
- Morale
- Certification of adoptive families
- Secondary Trauma
- Internal/external resource sharing
- Communication (internal and external)
- Contact documentation

IMPACT & OUTCOMES











Empirical Evidence for Learning Circles

Job satisfaction was higher at 12 months for the group engaged in Learning Circles



Empirical Evidence for Design Teams

- ▶ Job Satisfaction 
- ▶ Intent to Stay 
- ▶ Professional Sharing and Support 
- ▶ Supervision 
- ▶ Shared Vision & Professional Orientation 
- ▶ Team Cohesion 
- ▶ Vicarious Trauma 
- ▶ Coping 

Successes in Denver County (LCs)

1. Staff feel more empowered: Staff have power!
2. Staff recognize that change can and does happen at the worker level
3. Staff feel listened to and recognize that their expertise is taken into consideration
4. Management shows trust by empowering units
5. Process brings decision-making to the units
6. Agency breaks with tradition of top-down management

Specific Improvements in Denver County (LCs)

1. Vital Documents – went to centralized system due to LC efforts
2. Revamped non-certified home assessment template (all green lights in the process)
3. Formalized a foster care certification process for kin
4. Formalized home study procedures (now in writing)
5. Produced valuable discussions on work processes

Successes in Denver County (DTs)

1. Staff notice small successes and difference from when we started (low staff morale)
2. Staff are now interested in the process and see it as a real positive in the agency
3. Staff feel that the DT is really tackling issues and making change happen
4. People's mindsets have changed
5. Workers feel more appreciated
6. Design Team process is creative and FUN!

Specific Improvements in Denver County (DTs)

1. Boosting morale (worker appreciation week)
2. Staff move around so teams can sit together
3. Supervisor Model - standards for supervision
4. File-O-Rama®
5. Clean Team
6. Communication Plan
7. Links to other division teams decreasing “silos” within the agency

Successes in Casper, WY (LCs)

1. Improved the planning process through PARA
2. Shifted focus to family-centered practice at Intake/Investigation
3. Operationalized reorganization of the units
4. Produced mission statements and their outcomes
5. Improved time management
6. Conducted a supervisor LC to increase cohesiveness and communication
7. Developing a “work from home” policy/process

Successes in Casper, WY (DT)

1. Improved supervision (incl. coaching, case reviews, cohesion, communication)
2. Addressed secondary trauma
3. Increased staff morale
4. Improved relationships with community partners
5. Improved time management (e.g., down days)

Unintentional Outcomes in Casper, WY

1. Opportunity to develop leaders
2. Brought people from various units together
3. Increased supervisors' accountability to staff
4. People feel empowered and have a voice
5. Provided sheltered time to work on what matters to us
6. Diffusion of information and intervention sharing
7. Provides a forum to express open discontent and then focuses attention on solutions

Staff Comments in Casper, WY

*We own
the process*

*Having the
sense that
change is not
a bad thing*

*There's a change in
the office culture
from expected failure
to now where there's
purpose and growth*

*Creatively
enact change
as a team*

*Learning at
all levels*

*It's
inclusive,
there's
diversity*

*Ability to
combine
talents and
drive*

*Creating
better
outcomes for
clients and
staff*



ACCELERATORS & DECELERATORS



Accelerators (Denver County)

1. Champions embraced and drove the project
2. It wasn't just talk (We really did change!)
3. A simultaneous initiative to develop and live Denver County's values supported project implementation
4. The right people were there at the right time
5. See the light. Be the light!

Decelerators (Denver County)

1. At 1st, unclear communication about project (not effectively communicated that it was not “something more” but a tool to make things better)
2. Ebb & flow in DT attendance, had to start over
3. Negativity
4. Took longer to get permission/policy approval when decisions were bigger than the group
5. For LCs, not everyone bought into process (90% did)

Accelerators (Casper, WY)

1. Having a voice in decisions
2. Having common goals
3. Successes become the accelerator
4. Having the consistency (it's not just once in a while - we stay on track)
5. Having an outside facilitator until we were ready and bought into the process

Decelerators (Casper, WY)

1. Time
2. Limited resources
3. Needed support at all levels – caseworkers, supervisors, administration, State office, etc.
4. People who were not bought in or invested in the project/process
5. Day-to-day work interferences

LESSONS LEARNED & TIPS FOR OTHER AGENCIES



Important Sources of Support

Denver County

1. WWP personnel always there to help
2. Coaches (for LCs and supervisors)
3. Increasing agency staff embraced the project
4. Successful LC participants had support of managers

Casper, WY

1. COHA identified problem/strength areas, and was a good place to start
2. Training: Learning Circles & Learning Organizations
3. Outside facilitator provided support
4. Goal of better outcomes for families & using best practice research elevated practice & ownership by all

Surprises (Denver County)

1. Some staff were extremely elated by the project
2. Those who gave it a chance were very successful
3. Large amount of successes overall
4. Projects were easily green-lighted
5. Projects were FUN!

Lessons Learned (Denver County)

1. Stay positive
2. Keep an open mind
3. Stop being problem-focused and start being solution-focused
4. Together, we all get so much more done
5. Get involved!
6. Trust in the process doesn't result in disappointment

Surprises (Casper, WY)

1. There was a real shift in organizational culture
2. This work has become VERY important to staff
3. Staff can deal with issues as a team instead of relying on supervision or administration
4. Staff are in charge of addressing their own problems

Lessons Learned (Casper, WY)

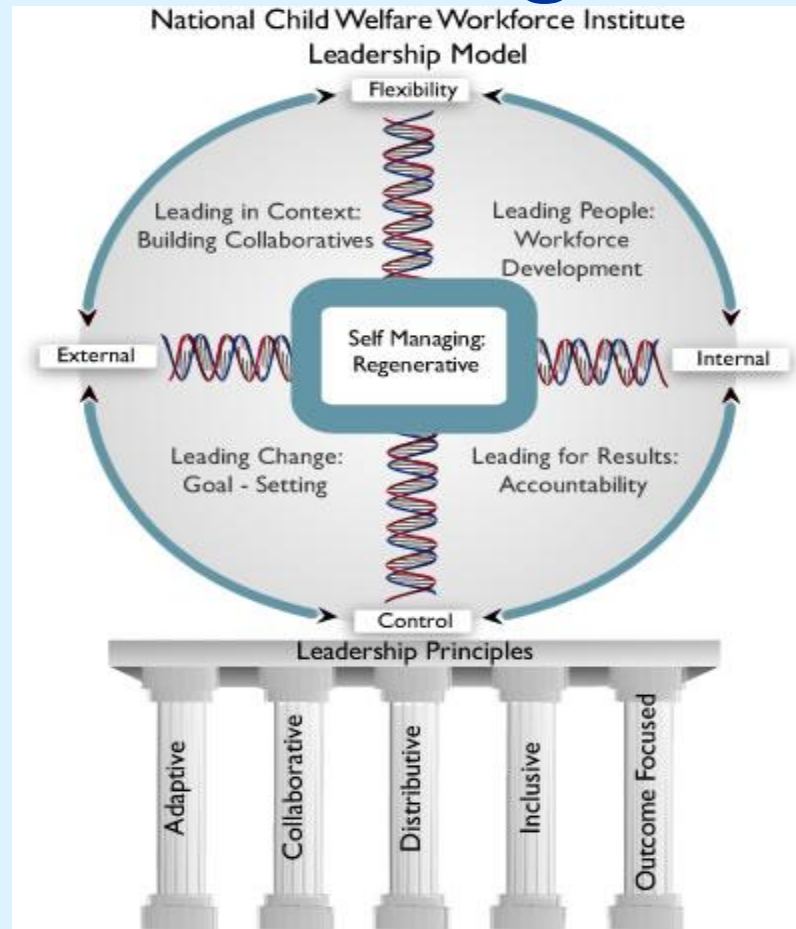
1. Takes time, effort, and determination
2. Important to incorporate community partners and have meaningful involvement
3. Should create a feedback loop between the LCs and the Design Team
4. Some people may just never “get it”
5. Have patience
6. Need buy-in and support at all levels
7. Keep good notes about action planning

Final Tips for Agencies Considering Similar Efforts

1. Persevere. Hang in there, as sometimes it's a **s l o w** process.... so ride it out.
2. If you can't do a complete COHA, try to find other ways of gathering information (e.g., SurveyMonkey).
3. When you see staff become disengaged or fall off, have a conversation with them. Find out why.
4. Find and engage a core team representative from each level of your agency. This should be an inclusive team from all agency levels.
5. Encourage open and frank discussion. There must be trust in the room.

How did the Denver/Casper leaders implement these strategies?

APPLICATION OF CHILD WELFARE LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES & SKILLS: FROM THE NCWWI MODEL TO THE FIELD



Applying the Leadership Model to the Implementation of these Strategies

Fundamental competencies include continuous learning, effective communication, initiative, interpersonal relations, integrity/honesty, resilience, personal leadership, socially responsible



What leadership competencies/skills have supported implementation in WY/CO?

- Partnering
- Political Savvy
- Influencing
- Negotiating

Leading
in
Context

Leading
People

- Conflict Management
- Developing Others
- Team Building
- Cultural Responsiveness
- Leveraging Diversity

- Creativity and Innovation
- External Awareness
- Flexibility
- Strategic Thinking
- Vision

Leading
Change

Leading
for
Results

- Accountability
- Capacity-building
- Service Orientation
- Decisiveness
- Entrepreneurship
- Financial Management
- Planning & Organizing
- Problem Solving
- Technical Credibility

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS? IDEAS?



Continuing the Conversation

1. Visit <http://www.ncwwi.org/events/archive.html> for the webinar **RECORDING & PRESENTER HANDOUTS**
2. Participate in this session's follow-up **LEARNING LAB** on 12/5 at 3 pm ET for more discussion with your peers & the presenters (via email from Sharon Kollar)
3. Post **QUESTIONS, COMMENTS OR RESOURCES** on the NCWWI's national peer network, the *Child Welfare Workforce Connection* located at <http://cwwc.ncwwi.org>
4. Provide feedback to continue to strengthen our webinar series by completing a quick **EVALUATION SURVEY** (via email from Robin Leake, Butler Institute for Families at the University of Denver)

Supplementary Resources

Child Welfare Design Teams

Caringi, J.C., Strolin-Goltzman, J., Lawson, H.A., McCarthy, M., Briar-Lawson, K., & Claiborne, N. (2008). Child welfare design teams: An intervention to improve workforce retention and facilitate organizational development. *Research on Social Work Practice, 18*(6), 565-574.

Strolin-Goltzman, J., Lawrence, C., Auerbach, C., Caringi, J., Claiborne, N., Lawson, H., et al. (2009). Design Teams: A promising organizational intervention for improving turnover rates in the child welfare workforce. *Child Welfare, 88*(5), 149-168.

Child Welfare Learning Circles

National Resource Center for Permanency & Family Connections. (2007). *Preparation for adulthood - Supervising for success: Learning circles*. New York, NY. Retrieved from <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/pass/learning-circles/index.htm>

Child Welfare Organizational Climate & Culture

National Child Welfare Workforce Institute. (2012). *NCWWI e-resource list: Learning organization/organizational climate & culture*. Albany, NY: Author. Retrieved from <http://cf.umaryland.edu/ncwwi/files/Learning%20Culture.pdf>

National Child Welfare Workforce Institute. (2011). *Organizational/partnership functioning and change readiness: 24 assessment tools*. Albany, NY: Author. Retrieved from [http://www.ncwwi.org/docs/Organizational Partnership Assessment Tools March 2011.pdf](http://www.ncwwi.org/docs/Organizational_Partnership_Assessment_Tools_March_2011.pdf)

To learn more about....



Wyoming DFS – contact Paul Fritzler, paul.fritzler@wyo.gov

Denver DHS – contact Peter Clarke, peter.clarke@denvergov.org
& Heather Powell, heather.powell@denvergov.org

The Western Workforce Project – contact Linda Metsger,
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The NCWWI Leadership Model – contact Charmaine Brittain,
charmaine.brittain@du.edu

F/u Learning Lab – contact Sharon Kollar, skollar@albany.edu

Our National Webinar Series or other NCWWI products – contact
Sara Munson, smunson@albany.edu

SAVE THE DATES

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2013, 3-4:40 pm ET

7th Session: ***Casework Teaming to Manage Workload, Enhance Effectiveness and Boost Morale*** featuring the New York State Office of Children and Family Services and Albany County DSS.

- The session's learning lab will feature a brief presentation on a workload measurement and management pilot project based upon case weighting principles at the Kentucky Department for Community Based Services.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2013, 3-5 pm ET

BONUS Session: ***Diving into the Deep End: Putting Leadership Skills & Competencies to Work in Four States***, which will explore the practical application of the NCWWI leadership model to efforts in the field by NCWWI staff, partners and program participants from Indiana, Oregon, Washington & Vermont.