

*Learning, Leading, Changing*

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

***NCWWI National Webinar Series Session #7***

# ***Casework Teaming to Reduce Workload, Enhance Effectiveness & Boost Morale***

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**Wednesday, January 30, 2013**

# Session Agenda

- 1. A Different Approach**
- 2. Video: Stakeholder Perspectives**
- 3. New York State/Albany County Presentation:**
  - Background/Context
  - Overview
  - Development & Implementation
  - Impact & Outcomes
  - Accelerators & Decelerators
  - Lessons Learned & Tips for Other Agencies
- 4. Application of CW Leadership Competencies & Skills: From the NCWWI Model to the Field**
- 5. Q & A via web platform**
- 6. Continuing the Conversation & Closing**

■ Teaming is a way to provide casework & supervision to families by:

1. Assigning more than 1 caseworker to a case (a primary and a secondary); and,
2. Using group supervision & teamwork to promote the best thinking on how to serve a family, provide support to each other, get all the work done & share responsibility for the results.



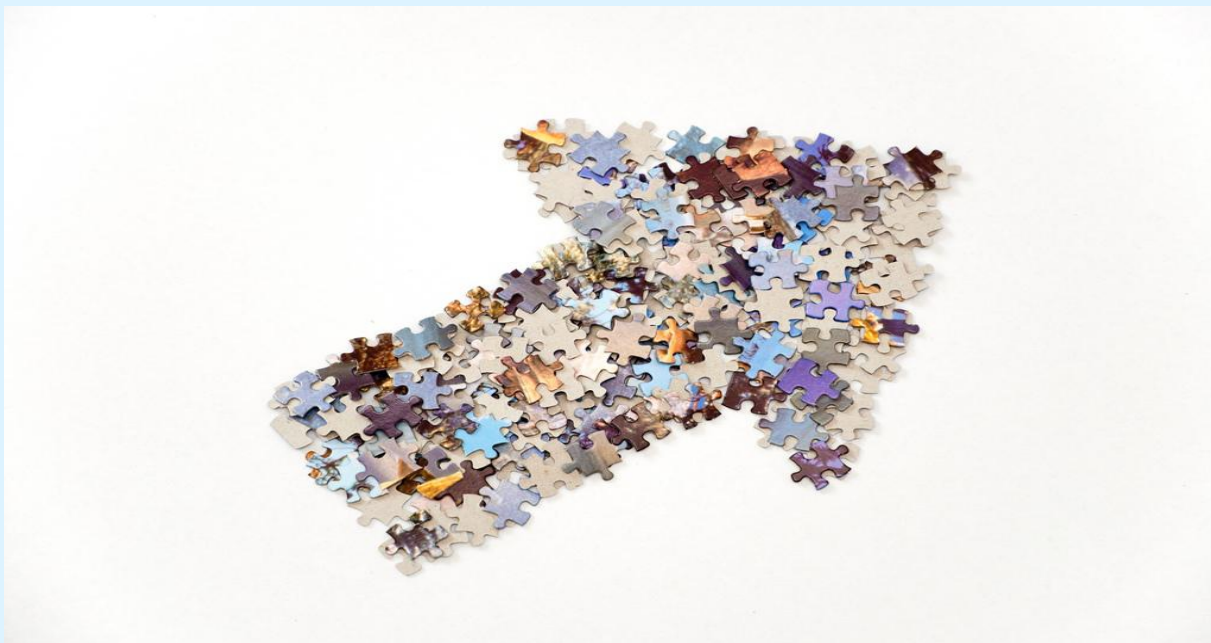
# Welcome to Teaming

- It sounds very simple – so why doesn't everyone do teaming?
- Welcome to the NYS Teaming story - and perhaps to the beginning of your own agency's Teaming story!

## NYS Casework Teaming Initiative: Stakeholder Perspectives

- Caseworker
- Birth Parent
- Foster Parent
  - Attorney

# BACKGROUND & CONTEXT



# Background & Context: New York State

- New York State's child welfare system is state supervised and locally administered through **57 local county social service districts (LDSS), the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, and New York City (NYC) Administration for Children's Services (ACS).**
- The state includes highly diverse populations, cultures, geography and local service array.
- FY 2011: 200,319 children reported to the SCR
- On 12/31/12: 21,463 children in NYS foster care
- **OCFS is prohibited from establishing caseload size requirements.**

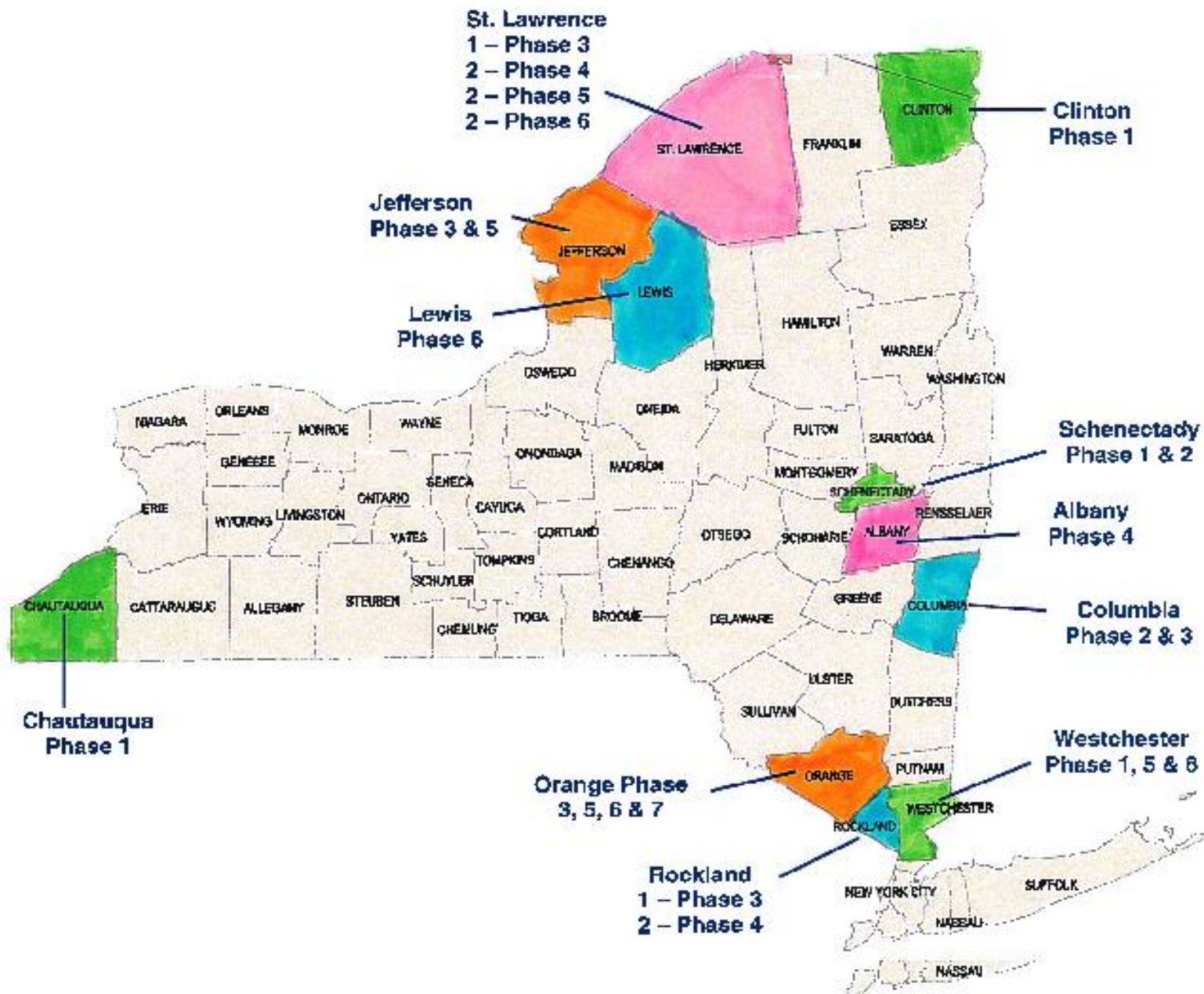
# Background & Context: New York State

1. Teaming grew out of **NYS 2003 Child & Family Services Review (CFSR) Program Improvement Plan (PIP)** strategies to support LDSS supervision and workforce development to achieve better outcomes for children and families
2. **Workforce instability, large caseloads and insufficiently supported decision-making** were negatively impacting safety, permanency and well-being outcomes
3. Workgroup charged with identifying strategies to strengthen supervisory practice; generated ideas - but **workload remained a fundamental issue**



# Background & Context: New York State

- So we had these ongoing workforce/workload challenges – and decided to explore who might have some innovative solutions....Massachusetts DSS did!
- In 2006, OCFS and 3 LDSS partners met with Massachusetts DSS & consultants on their Teaming model – a different approach to casework, workload definition and supervision. We were truly inspired!!!
- We developed and “sold” a concept paper for adapting Teaming to NY’s county-administered system and for managing, funding and supporting pilots in a few LDSS.



# Background & Context: Albany County

## ***Albany County Dept. for Children, Youth & Families (DCYF):***

- Unique child and family servicing county department; Children's Services, Youth Bureau, Children with Special Needs and Children's Mental Health all housed here for a holistic service approach
- ***Children's Services*** includes Child Protective Services, Foster Care, Adoption, Adolescent Services, Juvenile Justice, a Multidisciplinary Team and Preventive Services.
- Child Protective Family Services Units (on-going services) began Teaming as an enhanced services delivery model while providing support to staff managing complex cases/workloads.
- Teaming Unit services families with an indicated CPS report who receive ongoing CPS monitoring/foster care services.

# CASEWORK TEAMING OVERVIEW



# ***What is Casework Teaming?***

1. A group of caseworkers working together to support each other and to strengthen families.
2. The team of caseworkers and supervisor meet on a weekly basis for group supervision, to discuss cases, systems issues or barriers to service provision.
3. Together, the team develops strategies and techniques to help families and each other.
4. There is shared responsibility and understanding for cases that are teamed.

# Essential Components

1. Each teamed case is presented at weekly meeting.
2. Each team member contributes to the case.
3. Case criteria for teaming = high risk of removal, recent removal and/or multiple issues (e.g. domestic violence, mental illness, substance abuse).
4. Cases can also be teamed if staff feel it would be beneficial due to caseload size/workload management.
5. Decisions on a case are made by consensus and then supervisory oversight (approval/agreement).
6. An operating agreement is established to address roles, responsibilities, expectations and conflict resolution in relation to teaming.

# Teaming Benefits

1. Families always have a caseworker available with knowledge of their particular situation.
2. Each team member brings own knowledge/experience to benefit the family.
3. Caseworker stress/workload reduced by shared responsibility and decision-making; morale increased due to positive feedback/support & workload management.
4. Caseworker skill sets develop rapidly through group decision-making.
5. Caseworkers can take time off – they are confident crises will be effectively handled by others team members.
6. Responsibility for case outcomes rests on entire team, not 1 individual.

# ***How Do You Start the Process?***

1. Team members decide on various roles (primary worker, secondary worker, note-taker, time-keeper, facilitator, observer). Roles rotate as team agrees, and develop as part of Operating Agreement.
2. Team decides how many/what type of cases to team, and when to increase teamed cases or to de-team a case.
3. Team presents family with teaming brochure (developed by team & administration), as well contact #s of all team members. If family is comfortable, introduced to the team.
4. Service providers also given teaming brochure and invited to teaming meeting.
5. Primary worker identifies issues/barrier/tasks s/he needs help with. Fellow team members assist as needed.



# ***Operationalizing Casework Teaming on the Unit***

- 1. Team Purpose/Mission Statement**
- 2. Operating Agreement**, including case criteria, primary/secondary worker roles, etc.
- 3. Group Supervision Roles**
  - ✓ Facilitator
  - ✓ Recorder
  - ✓ Timekeeper
  - ✓ Process Observer

# Casework Teaming Group Supervision Framework

**TASKS**

**STRATEGY**

**IMPACT ON YOU**

**LEARNING  
POINTS**

# DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION



# Development & Implementation (1)

1. Established OCFS Design team
2. Refined NYS Teaming implementation & support plan
  - ❖ Massachusetts staff and consultants were our fabulous partners in learning, county outreach, training and TA: *Thanks Harry Spence, Susan Gettman, Mia Alvarado, Eleanor Dowd, Dennis Sousa & Charles McCrea!!*
3. Presented opportunity to pilot the model and join “learning collaborative” at two forums with LDSS administrators.
4. Solicited proposals from interested LDSS. Then we got some! Now what??!!!!

# Development & Implementation (2)

- OCFS developed project specs for training contract with training partner (Center for the Development of Human Services, Research Foundation/SUNY Buffalo - CDHS) to join with Design Team & 6 county pilots across state to provide:
  1. Project coordinator/trainer/coach to provide on-site training and coaching regarding how to form a team and implement the new casework model.
  2. Video conferencing equipment to support cross-site learning.
  3. 2007 kick-off symposium for 6 teams, their managers and OCFS Regional Office staff, with expertise and advice from MA DSS Teaming staff/managers (thank you, thank you!)

# Development & Implementation (3)

- Training and support were provided to individual teams:
  1. *Teaming 101 Orientation*
  2. *Social Styles Self-assessment*
  3. *Development of team goals/mission and Operating Agreements, e.g., who does, how, what, when?*
  4. *Development of criteria for selecting cases for teaming*
  5. *Development of brochures, team business cards, etc.*
  6. *Monthly team-building trainings, performance coaching for group supervision and practice development*
  7. *Follow-up with administrative staff with report after trainings*
- Monthly teleconferences held for county administrative staff, OCFS & CDHS to learn what works & discuss challenges, support needed & solutions.

# Development & Implementation (4)

- Based on pilot county feedback, expanded to other counties each year via application process.
- Application process considerations:
  - *How does teaming fit with agency goals?*
  - *Type of unit to be teamed*
  - *How will the teams be selected? Volunteers are best!*
  - *What resources can the agency provide, i.e. brochures, team business cards, etc.?*
  - *What administrative supports will be put in place, e.g. protected time, space for meetings?*
- Now **26 supported teams in 11 different counties**
- Teams exist in CPS, Foster Care, Adolescent/Adult and Preventive Services units.

# Development & Implementation (5)

1. An annual **Child Welfare Teaming Symposium** provides an opportunity for county teams, OCFS Regional/Home Office staff and other stakeholders to learn and share ideas in a collaborative learning environment. Experienced teams present workshops during the 1.5-day event
2. A **Teaming Guidebook** was developed.
3. Finally, **Teaming DVDs** have been developed for information and outreach.



# IMPACT & OUTCOMES



# Early Evaluation Findings (1)

1. Team development requires consistent exposure to **techniques** re: *group decision-making, use of time, problem solving, team building, conflict resolution, productive communication skills, and leadership.*
2. **1-year post-implementation** - Signs of team functioning/learning behaviors emerged:
  - ❖ Team members reported feeling psychologically safe, with a fairly strong sense of fitting into team.
  - ❖ Team members believed teaming could succeed & that team process was equitable.

# Early Evaluation Findings (2)

3. However, **team operational factors varied**; some had not coalesced. Team goals, objectives, and coordination unclear for some members. A relationship was found between some teams' low utilization of team-building resources and teams not yet coalescing.
4. Supervisors noted **changes in their approach to supervision**: less focused on workload/task completion; workers given more autonomy, with alternative perspectives accepted.

# Later Evaluation Findings

1. Teaming makes **asking for help** a normative behavior.
2. Teaming **accelerates the learning curves** and engages new workers.
3. A team-based approach **doubles collective efficacy and divides individual exposure**.
4. Workers stated **families saw the teaming approach as more responsive** to their needs.
5. Workers perceived that clients felt their needs were being met; workers experienced less stress; casework progressed toward desired outcomes; workers learned to take difficult interactions with families less personally.

# Examples of Success

- ❖ A team member brought a fresh perspective to a Teamed case; pressed for adoptive home study to be completed on family that primary worker felt was not a match. Home study found that family to be a perfect match, and the child was adopted!
- ❖ Supervisors noted that caseworkers' practice approaches improved as a result of the exposure to differing styles of casework discussed during group supervision.
- ❖ Team members provide a new and different engagement approach to a fairly disengaged father, who subsequently becomes child's permanency parent.
- ❖ Caseworkers and supervisors report being able to enjoy vacations knowing cases are covered competently by team members, reducing their stress and burnout.

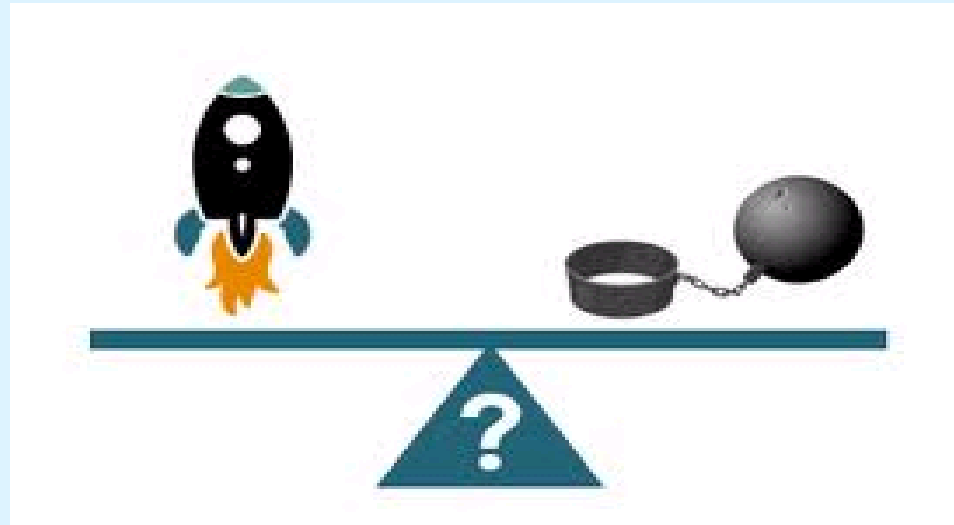
# Impact (1)

- **Initially teaming is more work. But as you develop and get to know others' style of communication, the payoff is worth it:**
  1. Families feel better - if they can't reach their primary worker, they know they can call another team member who will know their situation and be able to help.
  2. Workers learn from each other and as a result their skill set grows more rapidly.
  3. There is a greater connection and a sense of responsibility to help a team member.
  4. Workers no longer feel they are operating in silos.

# Impact (2)

- **Casework Teaming emphasizes the group decision-making process and team-building, which**
  1. Increase morale, relieve stress and help the unit bond.
  2. Help caseworkers brainstorm and move families along when they may be stuck.
  3. Humanize a supervisor and make it easier for caseworkers to challenge an idea/recommendation in a healthy, productive way.

# ACCELERATORS & DECELERATORS





# Decelerators: NYS

1. Competing priorities for staff time and focus.
2. Requires change in habits, change in relationships, change in roles - and change is hard!
3. Physical work space often not conducive to being a team; lack of meeting space for group supervision.
4. Frequent reorganizations and staff transfers are disruptive to team formation and coalescence.
5. Teaming supports individual accountability, which may challenge/upset some staff members.

# Accelerators: NYS (1)

1. NYS OCFS/CDHS **collaborate on the process** of ongoing team development.
2. OCFS facilitated **quarterly teleconferences** with administration staff and supervisors.
3. CDHS staff have extensive competencies/skills; offer **customized trainings**; staff rotation – parallel process.
4. LDSS willingness to **try a different way** of working & on-going feedback - helped with model and support adaptations.

# Accelerators: NYS (2)

5. **Yearly symposium/training** event held - opportunity to learn from one another and other experts in the field.
6. **Communication:** Ongoing contact with the design team, and regional office representatives increased consistent feedback throughout project on all levels.
7. **Model flexibility:** “T” and “t” types of Teaming

# Decelerators: Albany County (1)

1. Staff turnover definitely slowed teaming development process down.
2. Difficult to mandate teaming when certain supervisory staff do not seem to buy into the long-term benefits.
3. It is a challenge to take the initial investment of time in learning and development while simultaneously managing workload.

# Decelerators: Albany County (2)

4. Need a high level of team commitment to get through the “storming” phase of team development - which can be prolonged if there are frequent reorganizations and/or turnover that disrupts team formation.
5. Roadblock: Scheduling teaming trainings given workload concerns and other mandatory trainings.

# Accelerators: Albany County (1)

1. Ongoing support from CDHS.
2. A monthly teaming day away from the office to focus on team-building and in-depth case reviews.
3. Commitment and buy-in from staff at all levels.
4. Meeting on a weekly basis is really, really important.

# Accelerators: Albany County (2)

5. Team building activities and valuing staff and each other.
6. Ongoing support of the County Administration.
7. Establishing operating agreements with the administration across teams to allow for consistency in practice, division-wide.

# LESSONS LEARNED & TIPS FOR OTHER AGENCIES





# A Few Surprises

- ❖ Once team members have a voice, they will use the teaming forum to express it and other individuals may not be prepared for that.
- ❖ Even though working in isolation is stressful to caseworkers, exposing one's own personal work habits, biases, level of expertise and weak spots to other team members can be experienced as more stressful to certain staff members.

# Other Lessons Learned

1. **Weekly...weekly...weekly:** Teams must meet weekly
2. Administrative support from the counties is essential. Hold quarterly administrative meetings from the beginning...
3. Supervisory support/buy-in is essential!
4. Teams need to be sitting contiguously.
5. Roles and expectations need to be clearly defined from the beginning.
6. All stakeholders must be provided with the same information about the new model and its benefits.

# Lessons Learned for Teaming Supervisors

- **Always stay positive:**
  - It's important to get excited about teaming. Stay positive: embrace change and the teaming process.
  - Develop the team together; grow and change with your team.
  - Always ask – how can we make this better?
- **Team-building activities are a must:**
  - Do quick team building activities at least once a month with your team
  - Have fun!
  - Give prizes/rewards and know that it's okay to be corny!

# How Can Teaming Best be Sustained in NYS?

1. Need to provide ongoing coaching of new teams as well as existing teams.
2. Need to ensure continuous communication with all of stakeholders, in particular regional office staff, supervisors, and administrators.
3. Need to allow for flexibility; model modified depending the type of team. For example, CPS teams to meet more than once a week – some of them will meet daily for 10 minutes for a morning huddle.

# Tips for Other Agencies

1. Develop an agreement between the county administration, trainers and sponsors of Teaming to ensure everyone's expectations and guidelines are being met.
2. Educate the agency as a whole first before rolling casework teaming out.
3. Provide opportunities for training. Expect waves.
4. Regularly review the practice to ensure continuous quality improvement.
5. Create buy-in at all levels from all stakeholders.

# Next Steps & Future Directions

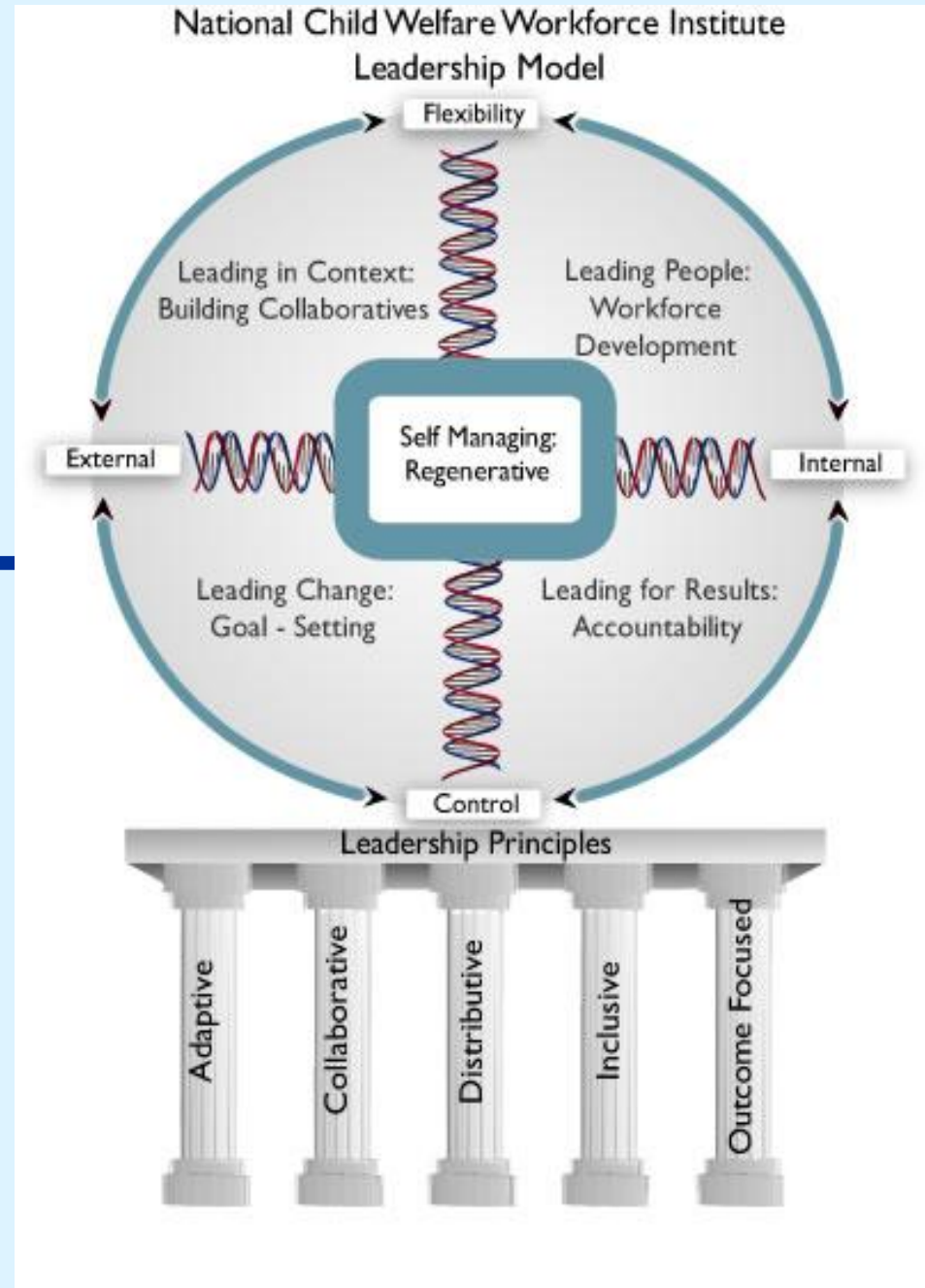
## We Want to Expand Our Vision of Teaming, to

1. Let it be fluid and allow for flexibility to grow and develop within the teams.
2. Expand team-building activities at the supervisor and administration levels to increase morale and cohesion within the agency as a whole, not just the unit-level.
3. Increase the number of units who are teaming within the County and the agency.
4. Continue to expand across the state.
5. Continue to receive/provide support from CDHS.

# NCWWI MODEL



# THE FIELD



# Applying the Leadership Model to the Implementation of Casework Teaming

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





# What leadership competencies/skills have supported teaming implementation?

- Partnering
- Political Savvy
- Influencing
- Negotiating

Leading  
in  
Context

Leading  
People

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

- Creativity & 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 **2/11 at 2 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

- 1. NYS OCFS Teaming Website -**  
<http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/cfsr/teaming.shtm>
- 2. NYS OCFS Teaming in Child Welfare: A Guidebook -**  
<http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/cfsr/Teaming%20in%20Child%20Welfare%20A%20Guidebook%202011.pdf>
- 3. NYS OCFS Child Welfare Teaming Model Videos -**  
<http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/cfsr/teamingVideo.shtm>
- 4. NCWWI Caseload/Workload Resource List -**  
[http://www.ncwwi.org/docs/Caseload-Workload\\_ResourceList.pdf](http://www.ncwwi.org/docs/Caseload-Workload_ResourceList.pdf)
- 5. NCWWI Caseload/Workload 1-page Resource Summary -** [http://www.ncwwi.org/docs/Caseload-Workload\\_1pager2.pdf](http://www.ncwwi.org/docs/Caseload-Workload_1pager2.pdf)

# To learn more about....

***NYS Casework Teaming Initiative*** –  
please contact the presenters collectively at  
[ocfs.sm.teaming.webinar@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:ocfs.sm.teaming.webinar@ocfs.ny.gov)

***Casework Teaming/Workload Management  
Follow-up Learning Lab*** –  
please contact Sharon Kollar at [skollar@albany.edu](mailto:skollar@albany.edu)

***NCWWI National Webinar Series & other NCWWI  
products*** – please contact Sara Munson at  
[smunson@albany.edu](mailto:smunson@albany.edu)

# UPCOMING SESSIONS

**Mon., February 11, 2013, 2-3 pm ET**

***Casework Teaming/Workload Learning Lab***

**Wed., February 13, 2013, 3-5 pm ET**

***Learning & Living the NCWWI Leadership Model***

**Wed., February 20, 2013, 1-2:30 pm ET**

***Evidence-based Practices in Child Welfare***

**Mon., February 25, 2013, 3-4 pm ET**

***Leadership Model Follow-up Learning Lab***

**Final Sessions in National Webinar Series**

**April 2013: *Culturally Responsive Workforce***

**June 2013: *Professional Education & Training***

**September 2013: *Workforce Retention***