

Applied Learning Communities (ALCs)

Strategic Quality Contacts: Making First Contacts With Families Count

Agency Stakeholder's Annual Report

Overview

In 2019 the Applied Learning Communities (ALCs) program launched in Wisconsin. The ALCs facilitate dialogue and resource sharing among Child Protective Services (CPS) professionals across the state. In recent years, a transfer of learning approach has invited supervisors and lead workers to examine a specific area of policy, consider supplementary skills CPS professionals might need to support the practice, develop learning materials, and use those materials in their agencies to train and skill-build with staff. Recommendations for improvements at the state and local level in policy, training, and eWiSACWIS are then made to the Department of Children and Families.

The 2023 topic was Strategic Quality Initial Contacts: Making First Contacts with Families Count. Parent Partners from the Parents Supporting Parents Program were part of the facilitation team and provided insights on how families experience initial contacts.

Five Modules

Module 1: Preparing for Contact: Knowing Yourself

Module 2: Setting the Stage for Synergy with Families

Module 3: Engaging to Elicit Opportunities Related to Parent/Caregiver Protective Capacities

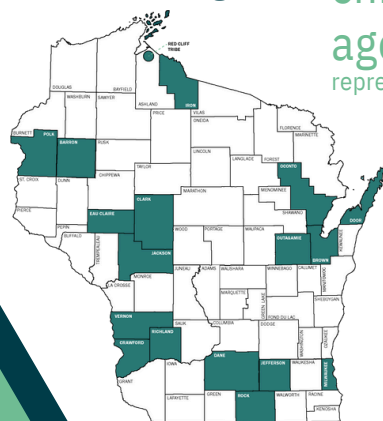
Module 4: Centering Family Voice: Elevating Partnership During Difficult Conversations

Module 5: Putting it into Action: Documenting, Debriefing and Follow-up

56

supervisors
and designees

18 local
child welfare
agencies*
represented at the ALCs



*The use of local child welfare agencies indicates both county and tribal child welfare agencies

Learning Objectives

- Identify biases
- Prepare for and implement quality initial contacts
- Learn methods to gather information regarding Parental/ Caregiver Protective Capacities
- Build trusting and authentic relationships with families
- Navigate challenging conversations in a way that enhances relationships and trust
- Conclude the process with documentation, debriefing, and follow-up

Transfer of Learning Resources

This year, the Applied Learning Communities again provided a Transfer of Learning (TOL) experience. The TOL aimed to enhance the sharing of information and tools within the teams at each agency.

The five asynchronous learning modules were utilized to create 25 short, subject-specific modules with discussion questions available on the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System website. Supervisors and lead workers shared tools they use to promote quality initial contacts. Those resources and short modules are categorized under the headings listed below.

These modules can be accessed by anyone for unit meetings, individual learning sessions, or as a reference tool for the agency's staff.

Subject-Specific Module Categories

Unconscious Bias

What Goes Into an Initial Contact?

Building Relationships to Support Safety

How Do Parents Promote Child Safety - Parent/Caregiver Protective Capacities

Tools to Have Courageous Conversations

Documentation and Debriefing

Supervision

The resources can be accessed at the [2023 Applied Learning Communities](#) page.

Top Recommendations

Local

1. Facilitate self-awareness and identification of biases and their influence on decision-making in initial contacts.
2. Provide an agency culture that promotes physical and psychological safety to support CPS professionals in engaging in quality initial contacts.
3. Use the tools and desk guides for initial quality contacts to support CPS professionals in engaging families in the initial contact.

State

1. Streamline the standards by combining them for improved access.
2. Add the requirement to inform parents/caregivers of the Initial Assessment process.
3. Gather resources and training for supervisors to support CPS professionals experiencing distressing situations.
4. Create desk guides for initial contacts.
5. Remove the word limit in the eWiSACWIS boxes.
6. Make space for the non-household parent in the Initial Assessment.