

Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System

Applied Learning Communities (ALCs)

Are you a Child Protective Services (CPS) Supervisor in Wisconsin?
Want to find out how to join the Applied Learning Communities (ALC)?
Need more information to get started?

How come the ALCs matter to me:

The system of child welfare is built with statutes, standards, and trainings. It is meant to set structured expectations for practice. You and your staff bring it to life in your community through work with family families; therefore, the ALCs are designed to benefit child welfare professionals in the supervisor and staff positions. Supervisors and staff in attendance will experience new learning, case consultation, and the opportunity to collaborate with peers from your region. Essentially, they are a forum of professional development. They provide learning and a shared experience between you and staff. The aim of the ALCs is to explore how you and your staff generally think about standards of CPS practice and how unique cases challenge that thinking.

As a child welfare professional, you and your staff receive immediate feedback about every day about how others think it is working. This feedback comes from families, colleagues in other disciplines, and community members. In their own way, everyone is telling a story about how the “system” works. We believe you, too, have thoughts and feelings based on your own experience and we want to hear about it. The ALCs are a forum for us to take time and think about the big picture. We’ll examine case details to advance our learning and deepen our capacities to carry out our respective responsibilities.

Come ready to share your knowledge and experience!

Is there a cost?

The division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services, private Ongoing Service agencies in Milwaukee and county agencies are responsible for paying standard training rates per session.

What you’ll learn:

Sessions include something for everyone, no matter what your learning style is! The day will include training and technical assistance with an opportunity to learn with and from colleagues in your region.

Wisconsin’s Continuous Quality Improvement processes, including a System Change Reviews, provide data about CPS practice. The data will inform training topic and facilitated case consultations.

The agenda will be structured the same for each session and it includes new material each time.

I am a CPS supervisor at a local child welfare agency in Wisconsin. I’ve been asked to build a team to represent our county at the ALCs, whom should I invite to join?

Great question! There are two requirements to participation:

1. Agency supervisor joins agency staff
2. Participants commit to attend ALCs for entire calendar year, or four sessions.

When considering staff that are likely to benefit, consider the topic, and availability and skill set of staff. The topic will help determine who the ALC may be most relevant to right now. Considering staff’s availability and skill set will help determine how to maximize the transfer of learning back at your agency. Staff that are available to attend all four sessions in a calendar year and are eager to learn, respected for their willingness to share learning, and able to effectively influence others are fit for the ALC.



Wisconsin Department of
Children and Families



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What to expect at the ALCs:

The ALCs are day-long sessions developed in partnership between the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) and WCWPDS. Sessions invite child welfare professionals to come together and reflect on:

- Policies that govern practice and drive formal professional development
- Data that captures practice outcomes and the current state of practice
- Training experiences
- Real practice with families referred to Child Protective Services (CPS)

The sessions build community within and between local child welfare agencies. They provide a unique learning opportunity to build a broader perspective outside the local agency and to increase our common understanding of how CPS practice is experienced by its professionals and families in Wisconsin.

There are four unique aspects of the ALCs that make them different from other trainings offered through WCWPDS:

- Local child welfare agencies send teams instead of individual participants. Teams include at least one supervisor
- Training curriculum is selected and developed in response to statewide practice data analyzed through Wisconsin's Continuous Quality Improvement processes, including Systems Change Review
- Cases are real and consultation and coaching is offered to support case practice
- Experience at the ALCs deepens supervisor/worker use of supervision

Don't be surprised if there is homework! In order to support continuous learning, there may be times when pre or post-work is assigned based on the practice theme.

What is my role on the team?

As a supervisor, you have a critical role on your local child welfare agency's team leadership. Your knowledge and expertise in Wisconsin CPS statutes and standards guides the support you offer staff at the agency. The ALCs continue to support you in this role. The ALCs do not provide the "right" or "wrong" answer, so when practice behaviors from a member of your agency do not align with expectations of practice in Wisconsin, we continue to rely on you and your authority and skills to compassionately correct thinking and offer guidance and direction.

How will my staff have to present the case at the ALCs?

Not without your permission and staff's agreement. We are scaffolding our approach towards case consultation/coaching. In the first year of implementation, we primarily want to set a foundation that are ALCs model and establish a supportive space for shared learning. We will want time to assess the need and adjust our program model to fit your needs. During this building phase, we will initiate and determine case selection and you will be aware of each step along the way.

What to know about logistics:

- Local child welfare agencies choose if they want to participate
- Each region is comprised of a cohort of child welfare professionals
- Participants travel within their region to a central site, or join virtually
- Daylong sessions include periodic breaks offered throughout the day, including lunch*
- Registration is through WCWPDS Online
- CEHs are available

* WCWPDS provides lunch at each session. WCWPDS invoices local agencies for the events at the standard rate per session.

