

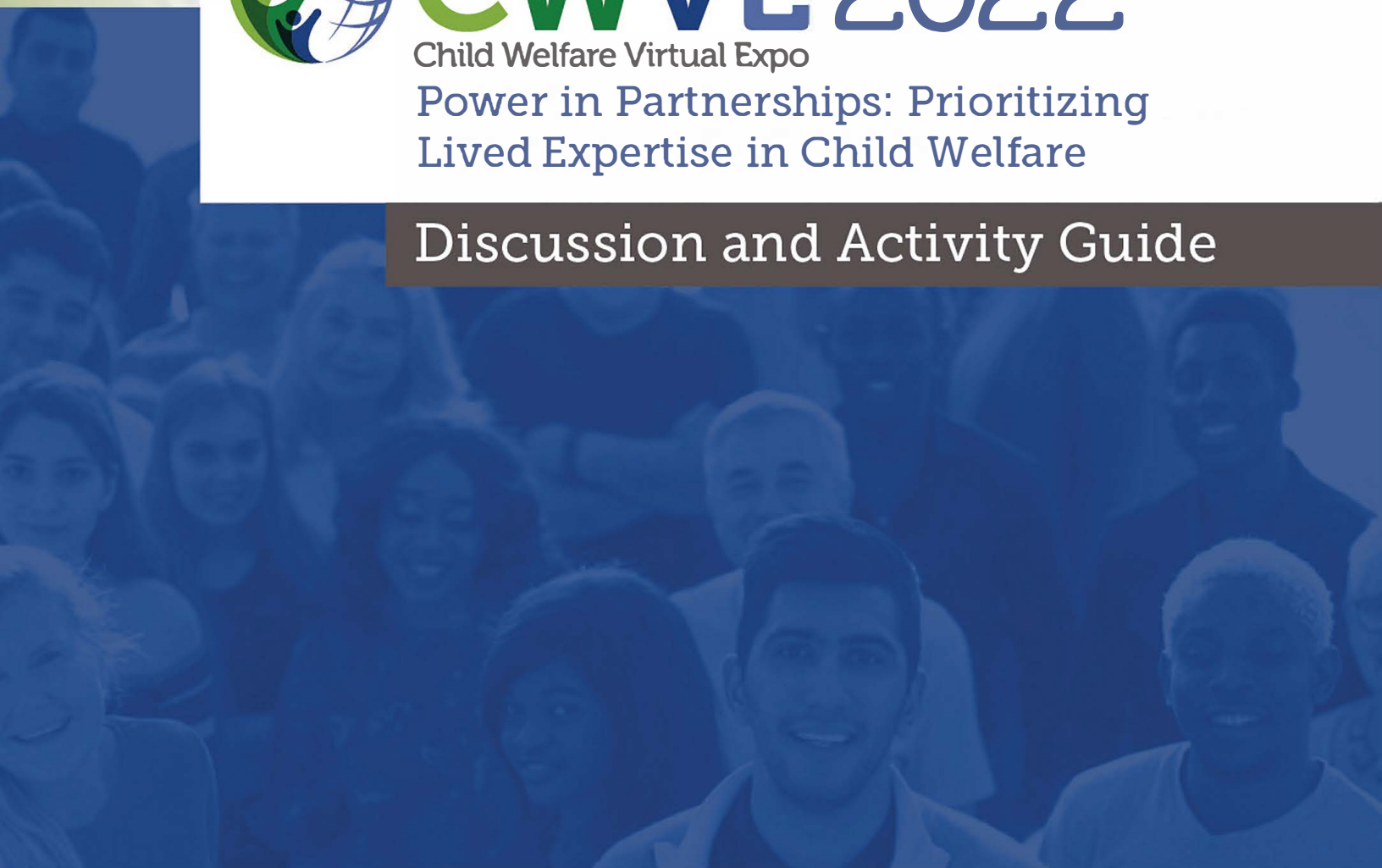


# CWVE 2022

Child Welfare Virtual Expo

Power in Partnerships: Prioritizing  
Lived Expertise in Child Welfare

Discussion and Activity Guide



# Introduction

Including people with lived experience and expertise in agency work and developing authentic partnerships with youth and families can help child welfare agencies enhance community services. Partnering with lived experts has significant benefits for both child welfare agencies and lived experts themselves, including (Children's Bureau, 2021):

- Engaging more fully with the communities served
- Developing a deeper understanding of the challenges and needs of families within their communities
- Cocreating the most appropriate solutions in a given context
- Promoting increased visibility and representation for youth and families who have historically been underserved by federal programs

You and your team can use videos from the 2022 Child Welfare Virtual Expo (CWVE) with this discussion guide to move toward cocreating a more equitable child welfare system alongside lived experts. Videos in this learning experience were developed by the Capacity Building Center for States' (Center's) Young Adult Consultants (YACs), Family Consultants, and Division X Technical Assistance Consultants, in partnership with the Center for States staff and other experts.

Take advantage of this opportunity to reflect on how you partner with lived experts in your own practice, discuss ideas and strategies for prioritizing lived expertise and experience with your teams, create more intentional power-sharing relationships and partnerships with lived experts, and receive feedback from lived experts to refine your partnership practices over time.

## Who Can Benefit From This Learning Experience?

The videos and related resources are ready-made for individual professional development and group learning. Share them with program leaders, administrators, program managers, supervisors, community partners, families, and other team members working on incorporating lived expertise at all levels of a child and family support network.

- **For Leaders:** Your buy-in and support are critically important for prioritizing lived expertise in your teams and communities. Watch the videos in Building a Foundation for Prioritizing Lived Expertise in Child Welfare to gain a foundational understanding of the issue, then work through the reflection questions and facilitate team discussions with both agency administrators staff using the conversation starters.
- **For Individual Child Welfare Staff Members:** View the videos individually and answer the reflection questions to connect information and strategies about partnering with lived experts to your own work. After you watch each video, ask yourself: What are my goals? How does this topic impact the ways that I partner with people with lived experience and expertise in my work? These responses can also be shared with your team during group activities.
- **For Lived Experts:** In preparation for working with a team, view the videos individually and jot down the ideas that you would like to discuss further with the team. Then, answer the questions in the “Questions for Lived Experts” section. Bring your notes and answers to a team meeting for discussion.
- **For Groups:** Invite team members, people with lived expertise, and collaborative partners to view the videos individually, then come together and use the conversation starters to spark discussion and generate useful ideas. Ask group members to dig deeper into the additional resources and bring their discoveries to your team meetings. Then work on the Team and Collaborative Partner Activity to explore how you’ll put your ideas into action.

## What Would You Like to Do?

Use the table below to determine the best resources and activities for you and your team based on where you, your team, and community partners are in the process of prioritizing lived expertise. In each section, watch the recommended videos, answer the reflection questions, use the conversation starters to spark discussion, and work through the team activities with your team and collaborative partners. Then use what you’ve learned to complete the Putting It All Together activity and the Advancing Racial Equity Action Planning Worksheet.

- **Reflection Questions:** Use the reflection questions individually to review the ideas presented in the videos and virtual gallery resources. In your answers, consider how the information connects to your work.
- **Questions for Lived Experts:** If you are a child welfare staff member who engages directly with lived experts or a team leader, send this discussion guide to lived experts with whom you collaborate. Encourage them to watch the videos and explore the virtual gallery resources, jot down their answers to these questions (in addition to the reflection questions), and bring the answers to team discussion.

- **Conversation Starters (for team discussion):** Work with the conversation starters to discuss the ideas and strategies presented in the video, brainstorm ideas for putting them into action, and plan for next steps. For each discussion, make sure to identify one team member as a notetaker (if done in person) or record the session (if virtual).
- **Team and Collaborative Partner Activity:** After watching the videos and working through the reflection questions and/or conversation starters in each module, teams can work on a collaborative activity together with lived experts and community partners. For each activity, make sure to identify one team member as a notetaker (if done in person) or record the session (if virtual).

I Want To:	Recommended Sections
Gain foundational knowledge about prioritizing lived expertise at all levels of child welfare	<p><b>Building a Foundation for Prioritizing Lived Expertise in Child Welfare</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Video: “Methods and Strategies to Engage People With Lived Experience”</li> <li>● CWVE 2022 Discussion Guide</li> <li>● Virtual Gallery Resources</li> </ul>
Learn practical information and strategies for authentically engaging people with lived experience and expertise, including people from different backgrounds and perspectives	<p><b>Authentically Engaging With People With Lived Experience and Expertise</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Video: “Listen, Engage, and Reflect: How to Authentically and Respectfully Engage Individuals With Lived Experience in Storytelling Practices”</li> <li>● Video: “Authentic Youth and Family Engagement: Deploying Individuals With Lived Experience as Advisors”</li> <li>● Video: “Beyond the Numbers--Get to Know the Person In Front of You: LGBTQIA2S+ Youth and Families”</li> <li>● Video: “The Policies at Play: A Conversation About Indigeneity and Child Welfare”</li> <li>● Video: “What Is Still Needed for Fathers to Thrive in Child Welfare?”</li> <li>● CWVE 2022 Discussion Guide</li> <li>● Virtual Gallery Resources</li> </ul>
Explore practical strategies for building equitable partnerships and power-sharing with lived experts	<p><b>Growing Equitable Partnerships With Lived Experts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Video: “Productive Partnerships With Youth and Families: Commitment to Lived Expertise”</li> <li>● Video: “Setting the Stage: Creating the Space for People With Lived Experience to Thrive”</li> <li>● Video: “Engaging Expecting and Parenting Teens in Child Welfare”</li> <li>● Video: “Engaging Hard to Reach Populations”</li> <li>● Video: “The Necessity of Nuance: The Impact of Lived Expertise”</li> <li>● CWVE 2022 Discussion Guide</li> <li>● Virtual Gallery Resources</li> </ul>



Discover practical strategies for partnering with lived experts on a variety of projects and processes at a child welfare agency, including data evaluation, the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), and continuous quality improvement (CQI)

#### Partnering With Lived Experts in Child Welfare

- Video: “The Power of Lived Expertise in Research and Evaluation: Child Welfare Edition”
- Video: “Living Leadership: Valuing Our Lived Expertise”
- Video: “Do No Harm: Engaging Parent and Kinship Families”
- Video: “Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Round 4: Strategies to Include Family and Youth Voice”
- CWVE 2022 Discussion Guide
- Virtual Gallery Resources

Synthesize and identify action steps for prioritizing lived expertise at all levels of practice at my child welfare agency and child and family support network

#### Putting It All Together

- Video: “Power in Partnerships: Prioritizing Lived Expertise in Child Welfare
- Prioritizing Lived Expertise Action Planning Worksheet



# Before You Start

Discussing how best to partner with lived experts in child welfare can sometimes bring up challenging emotions for individuals and teams. For example, if an individual with lived experience chooses to share their story, this might evoke a mix of emotions such as anger, sadness, or guilt. Establishing a new way of working with lived experts that prioritizes power-sharing may also evoke feelings of grief, sadness, or discomfort in child welfare staff, who are working on letting go of a familiar process.

If this occurs while you are participating in this learning experience, step back from the activity and take time for self-care. For example, you might take a walk outdoors, have a conversation about your reaction with a colleague, or explore the self-care resources that are a part of the virtual gallery resources. Group leaders, be sure to provide access to the self-care resources in advance of team discussions so that team members can access them when needed.



## Team Activity: Setting Conversational Agreements

Create a supportive atmosphere that promotes a culture of psychological safety—the belief that you won't be punished for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes—by taking time upfront to establish conversational agreements. Conversational agreements clearly state the rules and parameters for engaging in group conversation. Understanding the boundaries of group discussion helps individuals feel more secure when discussing potentially sensitive topics.

Before starting this learning experience, work together to set a conversational agreement. Once decided on, share the conversational agreement every time the group meets to work through any part of this learning experience.

At a minimum, the components of a team conversational agreement include:

- Parameters for active listening and speaking
- Rules for respecting individuals even if they disagree with you
- Description of constructive and positive language
- Instructions for what to do if someone feels disrespected during discussion
- Assumption of good intent among all team members
- A good example of a team agreement can be found here: [http://www.pmttraining.com.tw/member\\_pmp/Team%20Contract%202.0.pdf](http://www.pmttraining.com.tw/member_pmp/Team%20Contract%202.0.pdf).

## The Need for Trauma-Informed Practice

Research shows that lived experts, especially youth and young adults, are at a significantly higher risk for trauma exposure than the general population (Casey Family Programs, 2018). When partnering with lived experts, it is especially important to be aware of this risk and work to mitigate it by:

- Ensuring that agency staff are trained in trauma-informed practice
- Refraining from asking lived experts to share their stories so that they do not reexperience traumatic events
- Listening respectfully, without interruption, if a lived expert offers to share their experiences, and respecting their choice not to share additional information
- Developing peer support networks to help lived experts and staff address the effects of trauma

More information is available from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/SAMHSA-s-Concept-of-Trauma-and-Guidance-for-a-Trauma-Informed-Approach/SMA14-4884>



## Team Activity: The Importance of Lived Expertise

Before diving into this learning experience, take a moment to think about “the why” of lived expertise in child welfare. Why is it so critical for child welfare agencies to partner with lived experts?

**First**, ask each team member to take a minute and jot down one or two words (single words, not phrases) that answer the question of why working with lived experts is so important.

**Next**, ask each team member to share their word and tell the team why they chose it. Select a scribe to write all the words down on a whiteboard, flip chart, or a digital space such as Mural or Whiteboard on Teams.

**Once everyone has shared their word(s)**, discuss whether anything is missing from the list and add it. Think about adding the word list to your team agreement to remind everyone of the importance of prioritizing lived expertise in child welfare.



## Team Activity: The Language of Lived Experience, Lived Expertise, and Intersectionality

Developing shared language is an important part of understanding each other in any discussion. Language is continually evolving, and individuals and groups may have different perspectives on definitions and terms.

Before beginning to work through the questions and activities below, look up definitions for the following terms individually, choose the ones that seem best to you, then discuss the questions below as a team.

- Lived experience
- Lived expertise
- Intersectionality
- Cultural humility
- Diversity
- Equity
- Implicit bias
- Partnership
- Power sharing

1. Did the definitions you chose match those your colleagues chose? What were the similarities and differences?
2. What would be the benefits of building a shared understanding of these terms for your work?
3. Discuss the definitions with the team to learn about different associations and meanings group members might bring to the same term and write down the points team members make on a whiteboard or flip chart. For each phrase, discuss the definitions and create a hybrid one that works for the team. Select a team member to make a list of the definitions and variations that were proposed and add it to your conversational agreement.



# I: Building a Foundation for Prioritizing Lived Expertise in Child Welfare



Video: [“Methods and Emerging Strategies to Engage People With Lived Experience”](#)



In this video, presenters discuss the idea that by seeking the contributions of people with lived experience, child welfare professionals can improve their programs and services, especially for groups that have historically been marginalized and who disproportionately experience social and economic barriers. Advantages for agencies include developing a deeper understanding of the conditions affecting certain populations, the solutions that are most appropriate for those impacted by the issue, and the potential consequences of current and past actions taken by the existing system on the people it aims to serve.

This video presents the work and results of a year-long research project to draw out the common themes across 27 federal initiatives that engage people with lived experience to identify successes, barriers to engagement, necessary resources, and practices for scaling the work.

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## Virtual Gallery Resources

- [Candid Conversations in Child Welfare - Episode 6: “What it Takes: Supporting the Youth Experience”](#)
- [Methods and Emerging Strategies to Engage People With Lived Experience: Improving Federal Research, Policy, and Practice](#)

## Reflection Questions

1. How would you define lived experience? Lived expertise? How are the two connected or different?
2. Do you or other agency staff feel fear, hesitation, or trepidation when thinking about including lived experts in a meaningful way in child welfare agency work? Why do you think that is?
3. What is the connection between lived expertise and racial or other types of equity in child welfare?
4. What is the value that lived experts bring to your work?

## Questions for Lived Experts

1. What has been your experience being engaged in child welfare agency work? Do you feel like an equal partner? What does an equal youth-adult partnership look like for you?
2. Do you feel you are able to speak your truth to child welfare agency or other adults with whom you work? Why or why not?



## Conversation Starters

- Why is it so important to involve lived experts in all aspects of child welfare agency work?
- Why do you think so many people with lived experience in the child welfare system experience such high levels of trauma and harm? How can these experiences be mitigated?



- How are people with lived experience and expertise currently being engaged at your organization? What do they bring to the teams they are on?
- What are some challenges young people with lived experience and expertise might face when engaging with child welfare agencies? What about people of color or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, asexual, two-spirit, or other alternate gender or sexual identity (LGBTQIA2S+) people?

### **Team and Collaborative Partner Activity**

Ask participants to think about the strategies for partnering with lived experts presented in the video and virtual gallery resources, then ask each participant to jot down the top three activities in which the agency could better partner with lived experts.

Once everyone is finished, come together and compare the lists. Discuss which ones can be immediately implemented and which ones might be longer-term projects that require further exploration and planning. Create a prioritized list of all the roles.

At the end, select a team member who will present this information to agency leaders.



## II: Authentically Engaging With People With Lived Experience and Expertise



Video: [“Listen, Engage, and Reflect: How to Authentically and Respectfully Engage Individuals With Lived Experience in Storytelling Practices”](#)



Through building on preestablished empathy lenses and learning strategic sharing and trauma-informed approaches, viewers will discover new, actionable ways to engage in authentic, nonexploitative storytelling endeavors with those with lived expertise. Finally, viewers will learn proactive strategies to authentically engage people with lived experience and mitigate harm to those asked to tell their stories.

Video: [“Authentic Youth and Family Engagement: Deploying Individuals With Lived Experience as Advisors”](#)



Lived experience experts commonly serve as advisors—often for groups, committees, and boards—for initiatives that develop national strategies, congressional reports, policy recommendations, and capacity building efforts. This video highlights various ways to engage lived experts as advisors, jurisdictional examples of this practice, and resources for doing so.

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### Virtual Gallery Resources

- [Strategies for Authentic Integration of Family and Youth Voice in Child Welfare](#)
- [Family Empowerment Implementation Manual](#)

### Reflection Questions

1. What are the ethical considerations agency staff and others should use when thinking about sharing stories from lived experts? Why are they important to follow?
2. Why are stories so powerful? How can they be used to create systems change?
3. What is strategic sharing? What does a trauma-informed approach to storytelling look like?
4. How can lived experts be engaged in agency work without tokenization?
5. What do people with lived experience and expertise need to meaningfully serve as team advisors?

### Questions for Lived Experts

1. What is the difference for you between situations where you would be comfortable being asked to share your story versus situations where you would be uncomfortable?
2. What do you need to feel like your participation as an advisor on a team is being properly valued?

## Diverse Perspectives

### Video: [“Beyond the Numbers—Get to Know the Person in Front of You: LGBTQIA2S+ Youth and Families”](#)



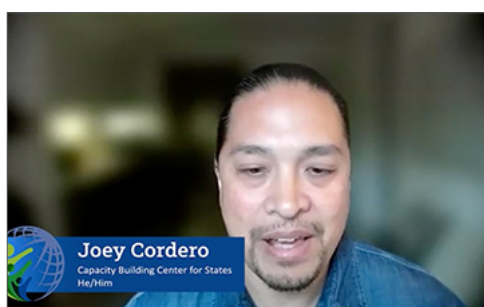
Recent research shows that over one-third of youth in the foster care system identify as LGBTQIA2S+ and experience higher levels of negative health outcomes. Presenters discuss strategies for accurately and safely collecting data on these children and youth to improve the care and services they receive.

### Video: [“The Policies at Play: A Conversation About Indigeneity and Child Welfare”](#)



This presentation highlights why understanding the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and the historical trauma Indigenous people have experienced is important when working with Indigenous families. The participants discuss the essential nuances of ICWA that support effective implementation of this policy and best practices for partnering with Tribal communities.

### Video: [“What Is Still Needed for Fathers to Thrive in Child Welfare?”](#)



Involving fathers and other paternal family members is a critical part of family engagement. This video reviews opportunities to partner with fathers throughout their involvement with the child welfare system and discusses solutions to potential challenges child welfare agencies may experience connecting with and engaging noncustodial fathers and paternal family members.

## Virtual Gallery Resources:

- [Tribal Best Practices: A Toolkit With Best Practices, Research, and Resources Developed by the National Indian Child Welfare Association](#)
- [Providing Unbiased Services for LGBTQ Youth Programs](#)

## Reflection Questions

1. Why is it important to consider representation related to racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual identity when engaging lived experts in child welfare?



2. When faced with discriminatory laws in place, what are some approaches agencies can use to support LGBTQIA2S+ children and young people in foster care?
3. Why is it important to understand the generational trauma experienced by Indigenous people when working with Indigenous children, youth, and families? How can this understanding lead to better engagement?
4. Why do you think that father engagement is still a rarely discussed topic in child welfare?

### Questions for Lived Experts

1. If you think back to an interaction in child welfare in which you felt authentically engaged, how would you describe it? In other words, what were the qualities that made that experience stand out?
2. If you are an Indigenous person, what do you need from child welfare agency staff to feel included and heard as part of an interaction or work on a team?
3. As a father in the child welfare system, what challenges have you faced? What actions could have helped address them?



### Conversation Starters

- How can agencies responsibly engage lived experts in their work? What are some of the roles available to them?
- What are the elements of authentic and equitable partnership?
- How can your agency empower people with lived experience and expertise to meaningfully participate in (and perhaps lead) agency work and advocate for themselves and others?



### Team and Collaborative Partner Activity

Ask every team member what one thing they can do differently in their own work **to better engage and interact with lived experts** (ask one team member to serve as a real-time scribe on a whiteboard or flip chart).

Then, ask every team member what one thing they can do differently in their own work **to better engage more diverse lived experts**.

Finally, go around once more, this time asking every team member to identify **what the agency can do differently to better engage and interact with lived experts and more diverse lived experts**—write these down as well.

Now, identify the links between individual and agency practice and discuss the ways that they impact each other in this area.

### III. Developing Equitable Partnerships With Lived Experts



#### Video: [“Productive Partnerships With Youth and Families: Commitment to Lived Expertise”](#)



In this video, presenters discuss how to increase commitment to true partnership with lived experts and establish the idea that simple presence is step one and should initiate the next steps: training, support, and development of a supportive environment. The content speaks to the needed for agencies to grow their capacity to authentically partner with youth and families, share success stories, engage in problem solving and action planning, and establish fair compensation.

#### Video: [“Setting the Stage: Creating the Space for People With Lived Experience to Thrive”](#)



This presentation focuses on strategies for effectively integrating lived experts into the child welfare workforce, why including lived experts in the workforce is so beneficial, and things jurisdictions need to consider as they explore integrating lived experts. Topics include essential considerations before bringing lived experts into the workforce, ways to secure leadership and staff buy-in, and technical or strategic pieces that must be addressed when successfully integrating lived experts into an agency workforce.

#### Virtual Gallery Resources

- [A Framework for Effectively Partnering With Young People](#)
- [Episode 63: “Foster Care Alumni - Making Lived Experience Matter, Part 1”](#)

#### Reflection Questions

1. What is the value and benefit to child welfare agencies of partnering with lived experts to identify and co-create solutions to systemic issues? What is the benefit to lived experts?
2. What are the qualities of a workplace culture that can help lived experts thrive?
3. What are some core beliefs that organizations or individuals may hold about lived experts that may be holding them back from authentically partnering with them?
4. What does it mean to co-create and share power with youth and families? In other words, how does the work look different when co-creation and power-sharing are implemented?

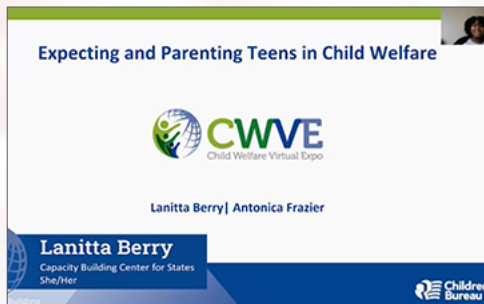
#### Questions for Lived Experts

1. What do child welfare agencies need to do better when hiring lived experts onto their workforce?

2. What does a true authentic partnership look like from your point of view?
3. Have you been in a situation at a child welfare agency where meaningful power-sharing regularly occurred? If you have (and you feel comfortable doing so), can you describe how it worked and how it changed the dynamics on the team?

## Diverse Perspectives

### Video: [“Engaging Expecting and Parenting Teens in Child Welfare”](#)



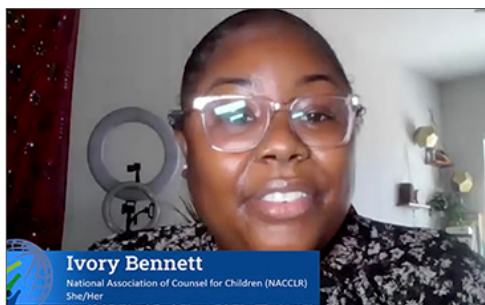
From services to resources, it is important to understand the needs and wishes of expecting and parenting teens. The video features a discussion that explores successes, potential barriers, and strategies for engaging expecting and parenting teens and young adults.

### Video: [“Engaging Hard to Reach Populations”](#)



This presentation identifies common barriers and challenges for states, jurisdictions, and Tribes when engaging difficult-to-reach populations of youth and young adults. Topics include risk factors and benefits of engagement and strategies for supporting and engaging with difficult-to-reach youth and young adults.

### Video: [“The Necessity of Nuance: The Impact of Lived Expertise”](#)



Lived experts in child welfare are complex individuals with unique and invaluable intersectional perspectives. From the personal to the professional, this panel of lived experts discusses how their lived experiences combine with their chosen industries to inform suggested changes in holistic approach, practice, and policy to achieve foster care equity and reform through the lens of restorative justice.

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## Virtual Gallery Resources

- [Court Improvement Program Talks](#)
- [Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting \(MIECHV\) Program](#)
- [Lived Experience Partnership Planning Tool for Organizations and Coalitions](#)



## Reflection Questions

1. What are the potential challenges or barriers for child welfare agencies in engaging pregnant and parenting young people?
2. Who is a hard-to-reach population and why are they hard to reach? Whose responsibility is it for these folks to be reached—theirs or the agency's? Why?
3. How might having lived experience and expertise impact a person's professional outlook on the child welfare system?

## Questions for Lived Experts

1. As a pregnant or parenting person in the child welfare system, how would you like to be engaged with in a different way?
2. Do you consider yourself a member of a hard-to-reach population? What kinds of interactions and assumptions have informed your or your community's interactions with child welfare?
3. How have your experiences in child welfare informed your professional expertise?



## Conversation Starters

- What is the most effective way to engage families and youth to advance racial equity at your agency? Why do you think so?
- Are there any challenges to engaging families and youth at the agency? How can they be overcome?
- What kind of beliefs can a child welfare staff member (and agency) hold that would facilitate working well together with youth and families to advance racial equity? If a person or organization doesn't hold these beliefs, how can that be changed?



## Team and Collaborative Partner Activity

Take 5 minutes to list all the ways you partner with lived experts in your work (child welfare staff) or all the ways you are asked to partner with the agency (lived experts). Come back together as a team and ask each person to share their list. Then consider the following questions:

- In what areas are productive partnerships regularly occurring?
- What roles do lived experts play? What roles do they NOT play?
- Where are there gaps in partnership?
- Are the partnerships diverse? If not, who is missing?

Once everyone has shared, ask for a volunteer or group of volunteers to put together a summary of the answers and ask for a conversation with organizational leaders to discuss your insights.

## IV. Partnering With Lived Experts in Child Welfare



Video: [“Living Leadership: Valuing Our Lived Expertise”](#)



Child welfare systems must foster healthy organizational cultures and climates and improve the well-being of the child welfare workforce. Attention to issues of racial equity and partnering with lived experts, in all facets of the organization and especially the workforce, is particularly critical. This presentation discusses how child welfare organizations can create equity in the workforce by promoting diversity, emphasizing the need for organizational assessments, creating a culture and environment that value lived experience and

expertise, addressing moral distress, and combatting implicit bias.

Video: [“The Power of Lived Expertise in Research and Evaluation: Child Welfare Edition”](#)



Individuals with lived experience collaborate with agencies in conducting and leading research and program evaluation findings to inform policy and practice. This video focuses on key considerations to sustain research and evaluation partnership with people with lived expertise and minimize harm, as well as offers concrete strategies to collaborate and share power with youth and families in the practice and process of data collection, research (including Participatory Action Research/ Youth Participatory Action Research), and evaluation.

### Virtual Gallery Resources

- [Becoming a Family-Focused System](#)
- [Youth Engagement Blueprint Series](#)
- [Supporting Family Participation in Systems of Care](#)

### Reflection Questions

1. Why is it important to focus on the issue of racial equity in child welfare?
2. How do unrepresentative workforce demographics impact the experiences of families served by child welfare agencies?
3. What are moral distress and implicit bias? How can agencies address them?
4. What is the “wrong way” to involve lived experts in research and evaluation in child welfare?
5. What are three key considerations for agencies in partnering with lived experts on research and evaluation?

## Questions for Lived Experts

1. Has the agency you work with begun honestly addressing issues related to diversity and racial equity? If yes, what is working well and what still needs to be done? If not, why do you think that is and what would help them get started on this work?
2. How have you or other lived experts you know been involved in research and evaluation at a child welfare organization? Did the experience leave you feeling empowered? If not, what could have been done differently?

## Diverse Perspectives

### Video: [“Child and Family Services Review \(CFSR\) Round 4: Strategies to Include Family and Youth Voice”](#)



This presentation focuses on engaging young people and families with lived expertise in the CFSR experience, including strategies to include family and youth voice in the CFSR Round 4 process.

### Video: [“Do No Harm: Engaging Parent and Kinship Families”](#)



Research shows that when children and youth must live outside their birth parents' homes, they often fare better in kinship placements. Presenters discuss the importance of supporting the continuum of kinship care (e.g., relatives, grandparents, fictive kin), showing empathy to parents rather than stigmatizing, and understanding the role of child welfare professionals along this continuum.

## Virtual Gallery Resources

- [Advancing Equity and Inclusion Through the CFSRs](#)
- [It's All Relative: Supporting Kinship Care](#)

## Reflection Questions

1. How can your agency change the ways it engages families and young people in the CFSR to be more meaningful?
2. What changes need to be made to agency culture so that families and young people can share power with agency staff in the CFSR Round 4 process?



3. What is (or should be) the role of child welfare agencies in supporting kinship care? How can agencies change their practice around this issue?

### Questions for Lived Experts

1. Would you participate on a CFSR Round 4 project team if asked? Why or why not? What do you need to be comfortable and productive as a member of the team?
2. What are the best ways for child welfare agencies and legislators to support kinship care?



### Conversation Starters

- What does it really mean to diversify the child welfare workforce? What would a more diverse workforce look and sound like? What are some concrete differences you think this will make in your work?
- What is the role of leadership in supporting lived experts? And in supporting racial equity initiatives? How can leaders empower lived experts and staff to make changes in these areas?
- Are there cultural differences in the definition of “kinship care”? How can agencies and partners work with these differences to ensure that children, youth, and families get the support they need?



### Team and Collaborative Partner Activity

For this exercise, team leads should prepare summaries of two to four recent examples of agency collaboration with youth or families, perhaps in the CFSR, strategic or other planning, or other initiatives. Summaries could include project proposals, meeting minutes, team charters, and examples of project emails and other communications.

Assign each example to a small group and ask them: (1) How does this example reflect power-sharing and cocreation? (2) Were agency staff able to neutralize the power differential between themselves and family and youth partners? If not, how could they have done so? (3) What else could be done to strengthen power-sharing with youth and families more clearly in this example? The small groups can then report out to the larger group.



# Putting It All Together: Prioritizing Lived Expertise at a Child Welfare Agency

After you've watched the videos, worked through the questions and conversation starters, and engaged in the collaborative team activities for all the sections of this learning experience, watch the concluding video and work on the following activity with your team to discover links between what you've learned and what you can do to prioritize lived expertise and partner with lived experts in your agency and community.



## Concluding Video: "Power in Partnerships: Prioritizing Lived Expertise in Child Welfare"

### Part 1: Being on a Team

Start by considering your own experiences being part of a team. Think of a time when you had a positive experience on a team and felt your participation was valued. **What made that experience so worthwhile?**

Next, think about a time when you had a negative experience on a team. **What caused you to have that negative experience?**

### Part 2: Arnstein's Ladder of Engagement

The following ladder illustrates a continuum of lived expert engagement.<sup>1</sup>

**Where would you place your team's or your own level of engagement of people with lived expertise? Why?** Discuss this question with your team.

**7. Lived experts' expertise and perspectives are centered at every phase of a process.**

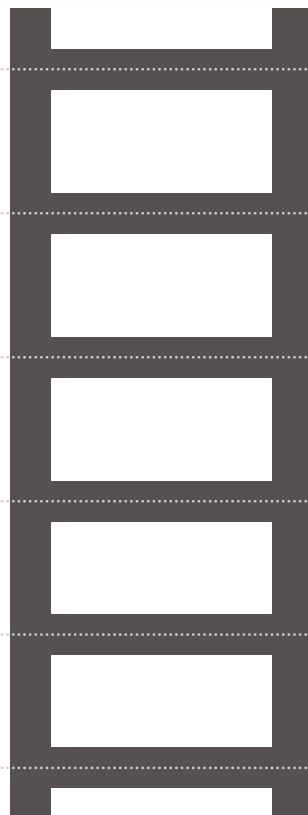
6. Lived experts are asked to participate as partners at every phase of a process.

5. Lived experts are asked to participate directly in the planning and development of a process.

4. Lived experts are asked to share their expertise throughout a process.

3. Lived experts are asked to provide information or feedback during or after a process.

2. Lived experts are invited to sit at the table.



**Lived experts' priorities drive and guide outputs and decisions, neither of which are developed or made without their full input and approval.**

Lived experts are involved in decision-making and asked if the outputs reflect their contributions.

Lived experts' contributions are reflected in outputs and decisions are made with their involvement.

Lived experts' contributions are reflected in outputs and decisions may be influenced by their expertise.

Lived experts' contributions may be reflected in outputs and decisions may be influenced by the information they shared.

Lived experts' contributions are not reflected in outputs and decisions are made without their input.

**1. Lived experts are not included in the process.**

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation. <https://organizingengagement.org/models/ladder-of-citizen-participation/>

## Part 3: Strategies for Partnering With Lived Experts

### Individual

Take 5 minutes and reflect on how you can more effectively and more frequently partner with people with lived expertise in your work. What would you like to change? How can you move up the ladder of engagement?

### Partner or Small Group

Next, with a partner or a small group, discuss your individual reflections and brainstorm about how to move your team up a rung or two on the ladder of engaging lived experts.

Consider the following questions in your discussion:

- What will you do differently?
- How can you incorporate more of the qualities that made up a positive experience of being on a team and fewer of the negative qualities (from Part I)?
- How will these changes benefit your team? How will lived experts you partner with benefit from these changes?
- What barriers might prevent you from implementing change? How can these be addressed?
- What support do you need to implement your strategies?

Write down at least three strategies your team can implement in the next month.

### Team

Come back together and share your small group's strategies with the larger team. Be sure to note any other strategies that seem workable for your team.

Now, use what you've learned here and throughout the learning experience in your responses to the action planning worksheet below to tailor strategies to your needs and available resources and create a plan to act.





## Prioritizing Lived Expertise Planning Worksheet

After working through the sections of this learning experience and the Putting It All Together activity, use the action planning worksheet to identify areas for growth and plan next steps.

1. Based on what you learned in the videos, questions, and activities, identify three actions that would help your agency more effectively partner with lived experts in all areas of practice and policy.

2. What are the barriers to taking each action? What are some possible solutions?

3. Prioritizing lived expertise at a child welfare agency takes a village and no one does this work in a vacuum. Review the services and resources offered by CWVE exhibitors—are there any organizations your agency could partner with to better engage and partner with lived experts? How can you use at least two of the Exhibit Hall resources in your own work or practice? Be specific.

4. How can you more equitably collaborate and share power with lived experts in your community to find solutions to challenges they identify?

5. What would be some specific benefits of sharing power with lived experts at every level of child welfare?

6. What resources (within reach) do you need to help you with this work? Who needs to be included on planning and implementation teams?

7. When will you start? What one thing can be done immediately?

8. How will you measure success? How will you ensure accountability for next steps?

## References

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