



# Using Webinars as Learning Tools: **THREE KEY STEPS**

Whether live or on demand, webinars can be an engaging way for child welfare professionals to discover new ideas, promising practices, and innovations. But how can you increase the chances that these new discoveries turn into true change? Research shows that transfer of knowledge into practice increases dramatically when individuals can connect concepts to their work, reflect on how the concepts can change the way they work, apply the concepts to a project or task, and share with others (Sar et al., 2012; Roumell, 2019)

By taking three simple steps, leaders and managers can transform any event into a dynamic learning experience. These steps can be used for in-person or virtual group trainings, team meetings, one-on-one coaching, supervision sessions, or to think through individually to build understanding and spark change.

## **1** Prepare Before Your Event

### Set Goals and Prime the Audience

Define what you hope to achieve, who you need at the table to reach the goal, and what they can do before you get together. Search the Center's [website](#) for related products that audiences can use in advance to build a common understanding of key concepts, strategies, and practice applications. Share goals and resources 7 to 10 business days before the meeting, giving time for people to prepare. Ask participants to watch the recorded webinar in advance. Help them make connections to their own work by asking them to make notes on innovative ideas, identify learning goals, and answer a few of the [Conversation Starters](#).

### Identify Your Audience

**Consider:** What needs to change? What do people need to do differently to support better outcomes? Who can improve outcomes in this area?

## **2** Get Together to Connect, Reflect, Apply, and Share

### Set the Stage

Review tips to hold [Virtual Meetings in Child Welfare](#) and use a co-facilitator to attend to participant questions and responses. Start off on a collaborative note and build buy-in upfront by creating a safe space for sharing together. Use [Opening Questions](#) to help participants tap into prior knowledge, uncover assumptions, share learning goals, and reveal connections.

### Talk About It

Use [Conversation Starters](#) to help participants talk about the connections to their own experiences, reflect on current work, share their perspectives, and reveal lingering questions or needs.

### Plan to Act

Once participants have a deeper understanding of the topic and while ideas are fresh, use [Questions to Prompt Planning](#) to help them apply concepts and identify future action steps. Following the discussion, summarize next steps and determine how to collectively follow up on them.

### Wrap It Up

End each session with a [Wrap-Up Activity](#) that will tie together lessons learned and energize participants to begin making changes.

## **3** Circle Back to Move Forward

Transfer of knowledge into practice is more effective with sustained, purposeful support (Strand & Bosco, 2011). After the event, use [Circle Back to Move Forward Prompts](#) to re-engage participants, encourage them to share changes made, and celebrate progress together.

# Sample Prompts and Questions



## Opening Questions

When you think about {insert topic}, what words come to mind?

What are the benefits and challenges of investing time and resources in making changes around {insert topic}?

What are three things you know about {insert topic} and one thing you want to learn?

What is one burning question you would like answered about {insert topic}?



## Conversation Starters

What was your "aha moment"?

What ideas or strategies presented in the webinar can we use in our own work?

How have we used something similar to what was shared in our own work? What went well? What could have been better and how?

What are our team's (or your personal) strengths and limitations around {insert topic}?

What knowledge, skills, experience, and expertise are needed to improve this practice in our agency?

Who needs to be at the table to further this work?

What roles or groups should be represented?

How can we benefit from engaging family and youth representatives and system partners in this work?

What are the challenges or limitations our agency has faced in this area in the past? What practices or lack of practices might contribute to the challenges? What data or evidence could tell us more about the challenge or its underlying causes?

What other supports might be needed to make improvements? Additional resources? Changes in infrastructure? Knowledge and skill building? Shifts in culture and climate or leadership support?

New engagement and partnerships?



## Questions to Prompt Planning (for Groups)

What would it take to start or improve this work with our team?

What next steps could our agency take to do this work more fully?

What strategies can we use immediately to improve practice?

What is working well that we should continue doing?

What can we stop doing because it does not support our objectives?

What is something that we could start doing? When could we start?

What is something that each of us could do immediately?

How will we measure success?

How will we ensure accountability for next steps?



## Questions to Prompt Planning (for Individuals)

What would you like to do differently? What outcomes would be ideal?

What is something within your control that might address this goal?

What is a specific, measurable action you can take towards this?

What next steps can you take to do this work more fully?

What might the first step be?

What are you willing to commit to? Starting when? For what duration?

How will you know you have been successful?

How can I support you in this change?



## Wrap-Up Activities (for Groups) In a Nutshell

Give one of the instructions below. For small groups, each person can share their answers; for larger groups, ask for volunteers to share responses.

Predict the future by writing a headline announcing the progress made related to your topic one year from now.

Write a postcard to a colleague describing what you are most excited about around your topic.

Explain the changes or improvements you plan to make to a family or youth currently involved with your agency.

Explain the who, what, where, when, and why for the next step towards change or improvement.

### Snowball Fight

Select from the questions below or ask your own related to the topic. Ask people to write answers to questions on a piece of paper, wad it up, and throw it in a pile in the middle of the room. Participants can take turns opening and reading each other's answers. Ask for a few volunteers to share with the larger group.

What is one thing you will stop doing, keep doing, and start doing?

What have you gained from this webinar and discussion that will matter to you next month?  
In 1 year? In 5 years?



## Wrap-Up Activities (for Individuals)

End individual coaching or supervisory sessions with an activity that supports commitment to change and assesses progress. Recap the action plan, then ask:

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your chances of doing {insert step} for (insert period of time)?

(If less than 8) What could you change to increase your chances to 8 or more?

What could get in the way of doing {insert step}?  
How could you break through that barrier?

What support do you need from me?

How helpful was this conversation for you?

What was most helpful?

What could have made it more helpful?



## Circle Back to Move Forward Prompts

Schedule time individually or in small groups to check in on progress since the event.

Ask participants to consider:

What has changed as a result of the action plan we devised?

How are my/our actions or behaviors different?

What strategies have we used to improve practice?

What is working well that we should continue doing?

What can we stop doing because it does not support our objectives?

What is something that we could start doing?  
When could we start?

How are we supporting each other to be accountable for change?

How are we celebrating success?

How will we ensure accountability for next steps?

# References

Roumell, E. A. (2019). Priming adult learners for learning transfer: Beyond content and delivery. *Adult Learning*, 30(1), 15–22.

Sar, B. K., Antle, B. F., & Bledsoe, L. K. (2012). Enhancing the professional development of the child welfare workforce: Does the training method matter? *Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education*, 15(2), 16–27.

Strand, V., & Bosco, R. S. (2011). Implementing transfer of learning in training and professional development in a US public child welfare agency: What works? *Professional Development in Education*, 37(3), 373–387.

This product was created by the Capacity Building Center for States under Contract No. HHSP2332015000711, funded by the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Users may freely print and distribute this material crediting the Capacity Building Center for States.

**Suggested citation:** Capacity Building Center for States. (2021). *Using webinars as learning tools: Three key steps*. Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

