LEARNING EXCHANGE / LX01

From system strain to system stability

Recognize pressure early, preserve relationships, and match capacity to the needs of children and families.

Morning discussion | Terri Balliet

The morning discussion examined stability across the agency, contract, and wider service system. Participants described the need for local flexibility as conditions change, including workforce shortages, shifts in acuity, and gaps between child welfare, behavioral health, juvenile justice, and developmental services. Public-to-nonprofit transitions raised practical concerns about staff continuity, benefits, and the relationships needed to keep services operating. A recurring distinction was whether a barrier could be addressed by one agency or required a different contract or cross-system response.

Afternoon discussion | Tara Roussett

The afternoon group focused on early warning signs and the consequences of communication breaking down. Participants connected staff culture, turnover, and confidence in leadership with system stability. They distinguished available beds from capacity that can meet a particular child's needs. Trust with providers, courts, and state partners needs attention before a crisis. Honest transition communication, clear follow-through, and flexible resources were discussed as supports for maintaining continuity.

Put the learning to work

- Review one service pressure with operations, finance, and quality staff. Separate an agency-controlled issue from a contract or cross-system barrier.
- Select a small set of early signals, such as vacancy trends, delayed access, placement mismatch, or unresolved partner concerns. Give each an owner and escalation route.
- Walk through a potential transition from the family's perspective, including continuity of staff, information, and services.

Questions for your team

Where does information stop moving when pressure rises? Does our capacity picture show the needs we can actually meet?

Proposed CY2027 connection

January LX on funding and stability; Q1 COO/CPO and CEO discussions; Q4 Chicago review of continuity and resilience.

Source and coverage: Morning and afternoon automatic transcripts. Group-level synthesis; examples are not a shared performance benchmark.