

# **VOICES**

**Ohio State Residence Life Senior Staff Training 2018**

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**Dialoguing Where We Live: Learning from Many Voices**

**Dialogue Workshop Prep Work Packet**

**SECTION II:**  
**Dialogue Formats and Agendas**

# A Dialogue Circle



## A Dialogue Circle...



- is a small, diverse group of 8 to 12 people.
- meets for several, two-hour sessions.
- sets its own ground rules. This helps the group share responsibility for the quality of the discussion.
- is led by an impartial facilitator who helps manage the discussion. The facilitator is not there to *teach* the group about the issue.
- begins with people getting to know one another, then helps the group look at a problem from many points of view. Next, the group explores possible solutions. Finally, they develop ideas for action and change.

### Further Information

A dialogue circle is small-group democracy in action—all viewpoints are taken seriously, and each participant has an equal opportunity to participate. These

face-to-face, facilitated dialogues help ordinary people understand complex social and political issues, and work together to find solutions.



# What Dialogue Circles Are and Are Not: A Comparison

## Dialogue Circles Are...

- > small-group discussions that combine dialogue, deliberation, and problem solving. Based on balanced discussion materials, the dialogue is enriched by the members' knowledge and experience. These groups are aided by an impartial facilitator whose job is to keep the discussion on track.
- > discussions where people examine a public issue from many angles and work together to find solutions that can lead to change in the community.

## Dialogue Circles Are NOT the Same as...

- > **conflict resolution**—a set of principles and techniques used in resolving conflict between individuals or groups.
- > **mediation**—a process used to settle disputes that relies on an outside neutral person to help the disputing parties come to an agreement. (Mediators often make excellent dialogue facilitators, and have many skills in common.)
- > **focus groups**—small groups organized to gather or test information. Participants (who are sometimes paid) are often recruited to represent a particular viewpoint or target audience.
- > **traditional education**—where a teacher instructs students.
- > **facilitated meetings with a predetermined agenda**—such as a committee or board meeting with tasks established ahead of time.
- > **town meetings**—large-group meetings where citizens make decisions on community policies.
- > **public hearings**—large-group public meetings which allow concerns to be aired.

# A Typical Two-Hour Session



## A Typical Two-Hour Session



- Welcome and Introductions
- Ground Rules
- Dialogue and Deliberation
- Summary and Common Ground
- Evaluation and Wrap-Up

### Further Information

While these small-group discussions vary in content, they usually have the same basic structure and last about 2 hours.

- > The *welcome and introductions* is a time to gather the group, set the tone for the discussion, help people get to know one another, and begin the conversation.
- > The *ground rules* are key to the group's success. Each group develops its own ground rules to ensure that the conversation is respectful and productive.
- > *Dialogue and deliberation* are at the heart of this process. Participants use dialogue to build trust and explore the problem. This can include viewpoints, data, and other content. Participants also deliberate—weighing the pros and cons of different choices. This leads to concrete action ideas.
- > The *summary* is a time to reflect on key themes and look for common ground.
- > The session ends with a *wrap-up*, instructions for next time, and a quick *evaluation*: “How did things go? What would we like to change?”



## Typical Progression of Sessions

### **Session One:**

Getting to know one another: What is my connection to this issue?

### **Session Two:**

What is the nature of the problem? (May include supplemental data)

### **Session Three:**

What are some approaches to change? (May include visioning or asset-mapping)

### **Session Four:**

Moving from dialogue to action: What can we do?