Six Degrees of Separation:  
Your Community Support Network  
Assisting and Encouraging Staff to Develop Community Support Networks

**Target Audience:** youth-serving agency front line staff

**Length:** three hours

**Time frame:** any three-hour period

**Group Size:** eight to 12 participants

**Materials Needed:**
- refreshments
- Career Circuit brochures
- business cards
- Community Workshop forms
  - registration form
  - planning checklist
  - evaluation form
- stick-on labels for nametags
- agenda
- flip chart (with prepared topic headings)
- flip chart markers
- tape
- paper
- Post-it Notes
- prepared handouts (HO) or overheads or slides
- facilitator's references
- Connection Journals
- pens/pencils
- sample licence plate
- coloured cardboard
- felt pens
Facilitator’s Notes

Audience
This workshop is geared primarily to staff of youth-serving agencies who work directly with youth. We encourage you to tailor it, highlighting those points that are most relevant and/or adding new content that speaks directly to your audiences.

Preparation
Ensure that you read Circuit Coach Sections C4. and E2. prior to facilitating this workshop. Preparing well ahead of time will save you a lot of added stress on the workshop day. Circuit Coach is available online through the Career Circuit web site at <http://www.thecircuit.org/coach/english/default.htm>.

Materials
Flip charts and handouts are used in this workshop. You can also use PowerPoint slides and/or overheads if you have access to an LCD or overhead projector. You may wish to reproduce some flip chart pages, slides, or overheads as handouts in order to provide participants with a variety of visual aids and resource materials they can take away with them.

Suggestions
Create a portfolio for each participant containing copies of print information as well as blank sheets of paper for notetaking. Alternatively, provide your participant with a three-ring folder so handouts can be kept in order. If you do so, you will want to have the handouts holepunched in advance.

Provide pens at each station for participants' use.

Create individual labels with the workshop title and the participant’s name ahead of time, or have participants make their own at the beginning of the workshop.

Have appropriate music playing at various times during the workshop. Music can help create a warm, comfortable, and creative learning environment.

Circuit Coach Content and Tools Used During this Workshop

Section A2. Finding Community Supports for Youth
Section A2.3. Establishing Your Own Support System

Additional Circuit Coach Sections Relevant to the Topic

Section A2. Finding Community Supports for Youth
Section A2.1. Identifying Youth Needs
Section A2.2. Finding Community Supports for Youth
Section A2.4. Staying in Touch with Co-Workers and Other Colleagues
# Workshop Outline

## Set-up

### (30 min. before start)

**Materials Needed:**
- Community Workshop Registration Form
- Community Workshop Planning Checklist
- handouts/overheads
- refreshments
- Connection Journals
- paper and pen/pencils
- name tags or labels
- flip chart
- markers
- tape

- Place the Community Workshop Registration Form on the table for participant sign in.
- Place participant Connection Journals, pens, pencils, and nametags at each seat.
- Display participant business cards and agency brochures.
- Check equipment.
- Ensure coffee/refreshments are ready and waiting (as appropriate).
- Have sample licence plates displayed at the front of the room.

**Facilitator’s Note**

As this is a networking workshop, prior to the workshop invite participants to bring their business cards, agency brochures, etc. for networking purposes. These can be placed on a table in the room for people to pickup upon entering or leaving the workshop.

## Preliminary Activity: Licence Plates

**Materials Needed:**
- coloured cardboard
- felt pens
- FR #1—Samples of Licence Plates

- As people come in, ask them to design their own licence plate that describes their name, agency, type of work, services provided, philosophy, etc.
- Let them know that it’s to have a maximum of eight numbers and letters, e.g., I M SAM. Have a few samples displayed.

**Facilitator’s Note**

Have supplies available on each table and have samples of licence plates displayed. Refer to FR#1—Samples of Licence Plates, for ideas.

## Welcome and Introductions

### (10 min.)

- Welcome all participants to the workshop.
- Introduce yourself and briefly share a little background about yourself and how you became involved in presenting this workshop.
• Acknowledge those who have made contributions to the workshop (e.g., host agency, in-kind donations, and helpers).
• Briefly reference the focus of the workshop.

Facilitator’s Note
You may wish to record participants’ expectations on a flip chart, and then tape pages around the room. Review these at the end of the workshop to see if their expectations have been met.

Icebreaker: Licence Plates
(20 min.)
Materials Needed:
• completed licence plates
• tape
• Connection Journals

Icebreaker: Licence Plates
• Review the instructions on how to complete licence plates. Provide five minutes to make sure everyone has completed a licence plate.
• Draw participants’ attention to the Connection Journal; invite participants to make "networking" notes on each participant as they present their license plate.
• Display the licence plates on the walls around the room.
• Ask the owner of each plate to state their name, the name of their agency, their position, something about their work, and the meaning of their licence plate.

Debrief
• Upon completion of the exercise, let participants know that this licence plate exercise is linked to the goal of the workshop: to assist and encourage participants to develop community support networks.
• Also discuss the use of the Connection Journal. The journal is designed to show the variety of ways that a person can organize their contacts, and this journal is just one example.

Facilitator’s Notes
You may want to present your plate first.
This exercise leads nicely into the introduction of workshop objectives.
### Objectives

**Objectives**

- Review the following four basic objectives of the workshop:
  1. To identify a personal community support network
     - Point out to the group that we have already begun to work on this first objective through the licence plate introductions and the Connection Journal.
  2. To establish relationships within your network
  3. To develop a personalized system for organizing the contacts in your network
  4. To encourage the use of Circuit Coach as a resource to support your own learning and to work more effectively with your clients in the area of career development

- Refer to a flip chart with these objectives outlined.
- Invite participants to share what they hope to get out of today's session and note these on the flip chart.

#### Facilitator's Notes

- Ahead of time, prepare a flip chart sheet with an outline of the workshop objectives.
- If you are presenting the objectives on a flip chart, tape them up where they can be viewed by participants throughout the workshop.
- It is always a good idea to check in with participants to see if the stated objectives fit with their own expectations. Refer to the expectations recorded on the flip chart and negotiate amendments as appropriate.
- Tip
  - Because of the short time frame, you may want to send a copy of the objectives to participants as part of pre-session information.

### Agenda and Logistics

**Agenda and Logistics**

- Present and review the agenda on a flip chart.
- Outline any important norms such as punctuality and so forth.
- Note any important logistical or housekeeping details.

#### Facilitator’s Note

- Ahead of time, prepare a flip chart sheet with an outline of the workshop agenda.
| Setting the Context  
(5 min.) | Setting the Context |
<table>
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<tr>
<td>• Provide the following brief overview of Circuit Coach (no longer than five minutes):</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Circuit Coach, developed by the Canadian Career Development Foundation, is a self-managed curriculum to support the professional development of career development practitioners.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Circuit Coach is also an excellent practical resource for career practitioners seeking dynamic tools, strategies, and interventions to address specific youth issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• During this workshop, we are using Circuit Coach in its capacity as both a professional development support and practical resource to assist us and our clients to explore different learning options, and to help us to manage our own learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Note that Circuit Coach is available to all in a variety of formats (online at <a href="http://www.thecircuit.org/coach/english/default.htm">http://www.thecircuit.org/coach/english/default.htm</a>, disk, CD-ROM, and in print format as PDF files).</td>
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<th>Facilitator’s Note</th>
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<td>Many of your participants may not be familiar with Circuit Coach. If possible, you may want to have a version of Circuit Coach available for participants to view at the end of the workshop. I have my laptop set up showing Circuit Coach, and I also have a print copy available for participants to view.</td>
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| Introduction: Six Degrees of Separation  
(10 to 15 min.) | Introduction: Six Degrees of Separation |
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<tr>
<td>• Ask the group if anyone is familiar with the phrase &quot;six degrees of separation.&quot;</td>
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<td>• Ask if they can explain the concept.</td>
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<td>• Reinforce the presented definition or explanation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Facilitate the discussion by stating, &quot;The concept is that we are all connected by six or fewer stages of circumstance or acquaintance. This is the idea that everyone in the world can be reached through a short chain of social acquaintances.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Note that discovering these connections is also called the &quot;small world&quot; effect, and most of us have experienced it.</td>
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| • Ask participants if they can give a few examples of "small
world." Be ready to share one of your own, or use the following example:

While in a Bali resort, the owner asked if he could show a Dutch couple my room. They were thinking of reserving it for the following year. When the couple arrived, we introduced ourselves and began to talk. I was from Canada . . . their sister lived in Canada. I lived in the Vancouver area . . . well so did their sister. After a few more exchanges it turns out their sister is my neighbour and lives three houses away from me.

- Ask, "How is this relevant to our workshop?"
- Explain that many of us have contacts and people that we use every day in our work and we don’t often realize how many contacts they add up to, or how connected they are.
- Note that according to this concept, just through five or six intermediaries, we could be linked to millions of others; it only takes a few random links to short-circuit a vast network.

Facilitator’s Note

If you have time, and there is interest, you might tell participants that this concept has gained a lot of interest over the years and it has led to a lot of research. Sociologists at Columbia University are interested in what is known as the "Small World Phenomenon." You can view their web site at <http://smallworld.sociology.columbia.edu/>. There is even a game called "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon." The game states that if you use the actor Kevin Bacon as an end point, you can link him in six degrees to almost any other performer.

Exercise: Walk the Talk

(30 min.)

Materials Needed:
- flip chart
- HO #1—Client Scenario #1
- HO #2—Client Scenario #2

Exercise: Walk the Talk

- Divide the large group into small groups of four.

Facilitator’s Note

You can choose either to strategically place people into groups, or to allow groups to self-select. There is an advantage in selecting the groups because you can avoid having a group made up of members from the same agency/program where they already know each other.

- Provide each group with HO #1—Client Scenario #1, or HO #2—Client Scenario #2.
- Ask them to review the scenario and answer each of the questions asked.
- Ask them to record their responses for reporting back.
- Remind participants that this would be a good time to record this information in their Connection Journals.
### Reporting Back

- Have each group read aloud their answers to the questions on the client scenario handouts.
- On a flip chart, list the resources, agencies, or people that are mentioned as groups report back.

### Debrief

- Ask for group feedback on the scenarios. Ask if there are any other resources that might be used that aren't listed.
- Have the groups add any additional responses to the scenarios.
- Continue to add these additional comments to the flip chart list.

### Facilitator’s Note

Two client scenarios have been attached (see HO #1 and #2). You may wish to develop several more, depending on the size of your group and the size of your community. Consider contacting participants in advance for scenario ideas. Keep any samples of scenarios in a book for future reference.

### Break

(10 to 15 min.)

### Refreshment Break (optional)

This is an excellent opportunity for the group to network and exchange information.

### Brainstorming: Collective Reflection

(20 min.)

#### Circuit Coach Content:
- Section A2.2 Finding Community Supports for Youth

#### Materials Needed:
- flip chart
- marker

#### Brainstorming: Collective Reflection

- Suggest to the groups that the list generated so far has been confined to the specific client scenarios you have discussed.
- Now, within the whole group, brainstorm other agencies, programs, or people that could be used as resources for your agency and your clients in your community. Consider:
  - who to call
  - information
  - places
• Continue to record the group’s additional responses.
• Remind the group that they may want to copy the list into their Connection Journal.
• Once they are done, point out how many resources are listed.
• Let the group know that you will compile the list of resources and contacts and have it distributed to all workshop participants after the workshop.

**Exercise: Locating Resources**

*(15 to 20 min.)*

**Materials Needed:**
- HO #3—Finding Community Supports for Youth

• Congratulate the group on creating an excellent list of resources.
• Suggest that we are always looking for new resources or more resources as our client needs present themselves.
• Ask the group to share how they go about researching and learning about new resources in their community; point out any new and innovative methods or strategies participants provide.
• Record participants' ideas on the flip chart.
• Distribute HO #3—Finding Community Supports for Youth.
• Let the group know that there are lots of research ideas listed for finding community resources.
• Check the flip chart list to see if it covers all the ideas suggested on handout. Add any new ideas to the flip chart list.

**Debrief**

• Let the group know the now that they know the resources, it may be worthwhile to get to know the people who work at these places; it is as important to have a personal support network as it is to have a community network.
• This network of personal supports can be network of advice, information, and professional support.
• Point out that this is already beginning to happen as they make links here and begin to build relationships (refer back to workshop objective #2).
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<td>• flip chart</td>
<td>• Community Workshop Evaluation Form</td>
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- Refer to workshop objective #3.
- Say, "So know how do we keep track of all these resources?"
- Tell the group that part of networking and finding resources is to make sure you have them recorded somewhere, and in a useful format.
- Ask the group what works for them: How do they do it at their agency? Who is in charge of keeping resource lists up to date?
- Discuss various options for documenting and organizing your network system.
- Record these responses on a flip chart.
- Suggest that the Connection Journal is a good way to keep a personal record of contacts and resources.
- Note that when exchanging business cards, it is useful to write the connection relationship on the back of a person’s card to remind you of why they are important to your network.
- Discuss the importance of tools to ensure that agency resources and relationships are made part of the succession process when you bring in new employees.
- Remember to make a disclaimer about the availability of resources and technology (not all agencies have access to e-mail, Internet, etc.).

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- Highlight the key themes covered in the workshop. Suggest to the group that they probably have more contacts than they realize, and now they have the additional contacts from this session to help establish relationships within their personal network.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to consolidate their learning, reflect on “next steps” in their learning/development, and to say goodbye.
- Ask participants to identify what they got from the workshop and to address anyone in the room they wish to connect with before they leave, or after the workshop.
- Encourage the group to continue networking following the session. Remind the group to pick up cards, brochures, etc., on their way out of the room. Make sure they have everyone's business card.
Facilitator’s Note

When booking the room, include extra time for group interaction or closure. If this session is part of a larger workshop, schedule it before the break to allow for group interaction.

- Provide participants with time to complete a written evaluation of the session and submit their comments prior to leaving.
- You may decide to do a summary close, a closing exercise, or a closing quotation.
- Thank participants for their participation and contributions, and be sure they know how to contact you for support as they continue their learning journey.

Facilitator's Notes

Best Practice

It is always a good idea to leave your participants feeling like they’re walking away with some practical material. Ensure that everyone leaves with their Connection Journal and one last thought for the day. You could have this printed out for them to put into their portfolios suggested in the facilitator’s preparation notes, or have it on an overhead or PowerPoint display.

Alternatively, you might want to try the closing exercise below, "Weaving a Web," which is an appropriate end to this particular workshop.

Optional Closing Activity: Weaving a Web

Materials Needed:
- ball of yarn
- scissors

Optional Closing Activity: Weaving a Web

- Organize the group in a circle.
- Using a ball of yarn, have individuals pass the ball to others in the group who they believe they can/should link to.
- When the ball of yarn is done, or everyone has passed it at least once, take a look at the we’ of contacts that has been created.
- Cut the web so that everyone has the pieces of yarn to show them that someone wants/needs to be connected to them.
Handouts and Facilitator's References
Facilitator’s Reference #1—Samples of Licence Plates

MPOWR U
YUR NO 1
GR8 2 LERN
PO 10 SHELL
LINK 2 UTH
2 MENTL 4U
HELP 4 UTH
UTH RULE
UR GR8
HELP 4 YU
ED U K8 UTH
4 UTH
UTH XL
YES 4 UTH
KAR 4 UTH
GR8 UTH

Note: using pictures in the plates is a rebus or pictograph.
A 23-year-old Caucasian female has successfully completed a pre-employment program and a work placement. She is now employed as a cashier at a local community service agency.

Within the first few weeks of her new job, the employer notices continual till shortages, and then catches her stealing from the till. Upon talking to her about this, you discover that she has incurred recent street debts and is stealing the money from her employer to pay for food for her three-year-old child, herself, and her common-law spouse. She also discloses that she is pregnant.

Your task:

1. Prioritize the needs of this client.
2. Identify what supports, agencies, and/or resources you would access.
Handout #2—Client Scenario #2

Your client is an 18-year-old Aboriginal male from an isolated northern community. He is also a sex offender who has been incarcerated for one year. He has only a Grade 10 education.

You are the classroom facilitator of a life skills program. Three days into your group program, with 12 demanding participants, you realize that this client lacks basic literacy skills. He still has 12 months to serve in his concurrent sentence and has open custody status, so he can be referred to the community for programming needs.

Your task:

1. Prioritize the needs of this client.
2. Identify what supports, agencies, and/or resources you would access.
There may be times when getting help for a client feels like banging your head against a wall. However, chances are that somewhere out there, there is help! It's just a matter of finding it, then building relationships so that you can access it effectively when you need it. Listed below are some basic things you can do to ensure that you know what supports exist in your community.

1. First and foremost, make sure you know what resources exist in your own agency, organization, or department. Are there resource guides, inventories, or information lists that you can use? Is there a referral system in place to assist you in locating outside help about programs or services? Is it, or could it be, computerized and shared?

2. Along the same lines as above, ask questions of colleagues who have been doing this work for a while. You can benefit from their experience.

3. Also, don't forget to ask your client what supports they already have in place.

If you've taken the above steps and you still need help, then here's how to do some digging on your own.

**Community Sources**

1. Does your community have a community services information and referral phone line? If so, get the number and keep it handy. Also, if there is a community services directory, get a copy.

2. Check out the municipal or local government in your area. They often publish directories or pamphlets with their services. For example, the City of Edmonton's social services branch puts out a booklet called Street Version, a directory of youth services and programs in the Edmonton area. You might also want to inquire about municipal publications or newsletters you could receive.

3. Look for inter-agency efforts. Is there a youth network in existence? Maybe it's time to start one.

4. Check out what your local churches are doing. Many of them run or sponsor social programs or social advocacy committees.

5. Is there a social planning council in your area, or the nearest large city? The council can provide a wealth of information about statistics and trends, as well as programs and services.
6. Contact your local youth emergency shelter, if you have one, to find out what services and programs they use for referrals.

7. The YWCA/YMCA offers all kinds of programs for youth, and chances are there’s someone there who can point you in the right direction.

8. The economic development officer and/or the Chamber of Commerce people tend to know what's going on in town; pick their brains about youth opportunities.

9. Check out your district health council, and/or community charitable foundations, to see who is getting money for projects.

10. Find out about the employment agencies—non-profit and profit—that have set up shop to do some of the tasks that are now contracted out by government (e.g., running job-finding clubs).

11. Think in terms of youth and special needs. Check out services and councils for youth with disabilities, agencies that deal with pregnant teens, aboriginal services, etc. The good, old-fashioned yellow pages and/or your local library can be a great place to start.

Dealing with Governments

Contact provincial and federal government offices in your area and find out about the services they offer. Do they have newsletters or publications that might be useful to you? Also, every government department has a public affairs, communications, or community relations department; don't hesitate to contact the communications officer to inquire about programs and services. It is part of this person's job to help you find the information you need. Also, make sure you become familiar with government Internet web sites. For instance, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) has a number of sites that you could go to for information on jobs, labour market information, etc. Governments also often have hotlines; tack those numbers on your bulletin board!

Educational Institutions

Make contacts at educational institutions in your area and get copies of all course calendars. If the institution publishes a newsletter, get on the mailing list. Don't forget about continuing education or extension programs, as well as private colleges and training institutions.

Keeping Up on Things

1. Read the newspaper regularly and clip any program announcements or trends that may be of relevance to you and your clients.
2. Read local community papers. You might be surprised to find out about local projects funded by community foundations, your local District Health Council, and/or HRDC office.

3. Check out your local phonebook and Yellow Pages. Look under Careers, Employment, Youth, Training, Management Consultants. Phone these various places and ask them if they work with youth and if they can send you some literature about their business or organization.

4. Every time you go anywhere, look for brochures and other forms of literature that may describe services, projects, or programs that might be useful for your clients. Also, start to keep a list or inventory of what services youths can get for free (e.g., personal counselling, budgeting help, emergency services).

You are probably shaking your head, saying all the while that you don't have time to do all that! Who does? Just do a bit at a time, or divide it up among your colleagues and assign everyone a task. For example, you might start by just focusing on federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal government services, in that order. If you invest in a couple of phone calls a day for each level of government, within three weeks you will find that you have obtained lots of information. Ask your boss for time for co-workers to meet and swap information with one another. Once you start doing this, it becomes second nature. You'll want to keep it up—it'll be worth it!