



## **Assessing Practice Standards**

### **How Supervisors Can Support Their Workers**

In addition to your Supervisor Practice Standards, your workers have their own set of core activities and Practice Standards. It is important that you help support your workers as they implement their best practice behaviors. Below are some strategies you can use to support your workers as they implement their Practice Standards. These strategies are different and more effective than telling or directing your workers because they give your workers a "hands-on" approach and experience to see how the Standards should look in practice. As a supervisor, it's also important to complete the Worker Practice Standards training yourself, so you are familiar with the Practice Standards as you support your workers.

#### **Modeling**

- Model best practice assessing behaviors during all interactions with your workers, families, and others by asking open-ended and strengths-based questions, having conversations about what is being learned through the process of assessing, and using a narrative approach.
- Model during case staffing by practicing how to use comprehensive assessment tools, such as Genograms, Three Houses, and Ecomaps. Complete each of the tools with your workers to model how the tools should be used as part of their assessment of the family.
- Model how to gather, synthesize, and prioritize information, and how to form logical conclusions.
- Review assessments and other case information ahead of supervisory meetings with workers. During the meeting, ask your worker to share their perspective and provide additional information.
- Model the three-column mapping questions by asking workers "what's going well, what needs to happen, what are our next steps?" and then ask your workers to use these same questions in their interactions with families.
- Model different types of assessing questions that your worker should be asking before they meet with a family they have just been assigned. This gives your worker an opportunity for skills practice, so they feel more confident meeting with families in the field.
- Ask your worker questions about the family that highlight information they should be gathering when assessing case progress or decisions to be made. For example, ask about the allegation, the child's developmental needs, or challenges engaging the school. If your worker responds that they are unsure, provide guidance about the importance of gathering the information when assessing and how they may use the information to inform planning. If these types of questions are repeated in each supervisory meeting, your worker should begin to implement them in their own practice.

#### **Coaching**

- Set aside specific time during consultation to answer questions and provide guidance to workers as they implement the Practice Standards.
- During supervisory meetings, ask your workers questions to understand what information was gathered and to be sure it includes all relevant information needed for the case. If they have not gathered all the relevant information needed to inform decisions or make sound conclusions, provide guidance about obtaining the missing information, such as why the information is needed, why it's important, and how to gather it.
- Remind workers that assessing is an ongoing process and that they should be continually gathering information as the case progresses.
- Encourage your workers to gather information about the family's strengths and successes, including what has worked well for the family in the past.
- Continually assess and check in with your worker about their assessment skills, and provide professional development opportunities when needed.

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- Monitor how your workers are processing information and forming conclusions by asking open-ended questions. If the family has had previous involvement with the agency, ask questions like "How is the new referral related to previous referrals that have been received?" or "How does the family's history impact their functioning now?"
- Talk to your workers about the importance of looking back at past situations that may be similar to the current case they are assigned. In doing so, guide them to identify what was successful in that situation and what they could potentially apply to the current situation.
- Evaluate your worker's written case decision summary and assess what they have written versus what they share verbally about the family. Look at the information in the summary that supports their conclusions. Remember to review facts and weigh them against opinions to determine if bias may be impacting conclusions.

### Courageous Conversations

- Provide support to your workers as they begin to identify their own biases and understand how they may impact their assessments.
- Model courageous behaviors during difficult conversations with families and in conversations with your workers, such as situations when a family is upset by the information gathered and the conclusions drawn from that assessment.
- Be honest, transparent, and consistent in your conversations with workers when they have come to a conclusion based on limited or incomplete information. Talk to them about the importance of gathering complete and detailed information from a variety of sources.
- When you notice that a worker has drawn a conclusion based on their own opinion or bias, discuss your concerns with the worker right away. Together, brainstorm solutions and strategies to help your worker identify their biases moving forward.
- Support your workers before and after they have courageous conversations with families about what they are learning through assessing.

### Case Staffing

- Provide case-level assistance when needed and model the Practice Standards when doing so.
- Help your worker synthesize information and form next steps through a visual process by writing out each of the decisions or solutions that have been considered in the case, why some ideas were not utilized, and which decisions were made at each point in the case. Use a whiteboard and post-it notes displaying each decision along a timeline of the case to help your workers see when decisions were made and why, and what could be considered next in their assessment with the family.
- Provide regularly scheduled consultation and supervision where you review, assess, and provide feedback on your worker's assessment skills.
- During case reviews, review documentation in the case file to ensure no documentation is missing or inaccurate.
- Support your worker by minimizing any anxiety they may have when a new report is assigned. Take time to meet with your worker before their first meeting with the family. Discuss any questions they have about the information in the report, such as areas that are unclear.
- Check in regularly with your worker and follow up as needed, such as around safety planning when an assessment is received.
- Be sure to address safety and risk at each staffing by framing your discussion around safety to aid in decision-making. When your worker is summarizing case information, ask them how that information relates to or impacts safety and risk.
- During staffing, review the worker's safety assessment, risk assessment, and strengths and needs forms. Discuss and process their conclusions and decisions made using your Structured Decision-Making tools.
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### Courageous Conversations

- Be honest, transparent, and consistent in your conversations with workers.
- Model courageous behaviors during difficult conversations with families and in conversations with your workers.
- Talk to your workers about the importance of discussing the "bottom line" with families and where the case is headed while also allowing the family the opportunity to provide input.

- Support workers in having courageous conversations with families, including preparing for and debriefing after these courageous conversations occur.

### Unit Meetings

- During unit meetings, ask your workers to share what they do during their assessment process. This provides an opportunity for new workers to hear what more seasoned workers are doing, and new workers can share new, innovative ideas of what they are doing.
- Set aside time during unit meetings to allow your workers the opportunity for skills practice where they model their assessment skills, questions they ask, and their narrative approach for the unit. During this time, your workers will be able to hear and see how others communicate and interact with families when assessing. You will also be able to step in to provide feedback and alternatives.

### Field Observation

- Regularly observe your workers in the field for real-time coaching and feedback on how your workers are processing information about families and forming conclusions. Field observation is especially helpful for you to work with new staff to provide coaching and set expectations.
- During field observation, actively engage in meetings and home visits by modeling best practice assessment skills. Get to know the family better by asking open-ended and strengths-based questions, authentically explaining the process and purpose of assessing, and using a narrative approach with the family.
- While you observe your worker in the field, take notes on their assessment skills. Did the worker ask questions to gather information that supports all positions? Or did their questions seem one-sided or biased? Did the worker engage the family in the assessment process by asking them about their hopes as well as their worries? Did the worker explain to the family the purpose and process for the assessment?
- After field observation, have a meeting with your worker to talk about your observations. Ask your worker to bring their written assessment with them and use your Structured Decision-Making tools to discuss and process with them. Talk to your worker about their conclusions based on the information they gathered during the meeting.