



Critical Thinking and Assessment

California Common CORE
December 31, 2018



Group Agreements



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Overview of the Day

- **Welcome and overview of the day:**
 - Review of the Agenda
 - Learning Objectives
 - Interactive activities
 - Wrap up

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Today's Goals

- Objectively consider how you are using critical thinking skills now and how you might strengthen these skills in the future
- Through the use of experiential activities, you will explore how to think critically and overcome personal bias

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What is Critical Thinking?

- Maria, age 20, has two daughters. Cherry is 4 years old and Veronica is 6 months old. Maria and her daughters live in the local Motel 6. A referral was received by the Child Abuse hotline from an anonymous caller alleging that Maria is prostituting and neglecting her daughters. Cherry is dirty, wears the same outfit every day and hardly speaks. Veronica is always crying and Maria does not do anything to comfort her.

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How Worried are You?

Discuss:

- *What are your worries?*
- *What do think is happening?*
- *How worried are you?*



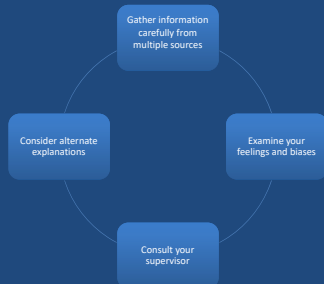
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Let's Discuss...

- Are these reactions and concerns evidence of critical thinking?
- What do you need to do to begin the critical thinking process?

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Critical Thinking Process



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What is Critical Thinking?

- A mental discipline that is used to continually gather, analyze, and re-examine information in order to assure that assessments are as current and accurate as possible and that the actions taken are consistent with these assessments.

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What Critical Thinking Is!

| | | |
|----------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Active | ➡ | Process |
| Skillful | ➡ | Systematic |
| Clear | ➡ | Transparent |
| Rational | ➡ | Illogical |
| Open-minded | ➡ | Willing to see all aspects |
| Informed by evidence | ➡ | Fact based |

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What Critical Thinking is Not!

| | |
|------------------|------------------|
| GATHER | Assume |
| ANALYZE | Guess |
| RE-EXAMINE | Bias |
| SYNTHESIZE | Compartmentalize |
| DRAW CONCLUSIONS | Cliff Hanger |

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American Denial



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Vignette: Part 2

- Maria does not have a car and uses the bus to get everywhere.
- Maria goes to McDonald's for every meal.
- There is no milk or formula in the motel room.
- Maria is not breastfeeding.
- Maria, Veronica, and Cherry all sleep in one bed.
- Maria has not applied for public assistance, so she is not receiving food stamps, MediCAL, or cash aid.
- Cherry is not in preschool.
- Maria does not know who the fathers of her daughters are.
- Cherry says she is hungry a lot.
- The motel owner mentions there are a lot of people going in and out of the room.

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For Discussion

- Which facts or bias need further verification?
- What meaning do you make of each card?
- Where would you get that additional information?
- Which facts would you want to verify?
 - Who should you talk to? Neighbor, motel staff, children?
 - What do you want to know? (Focus is on child welfare, i.e., is there neglect present which puts children at risk?)
- How do you know when your answers reflect your own life experiences or potential bias?

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Build a Critical Thinking Atmosphere

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The habits of mind that characterize a person strongly disposed toward critical thinking include a desire to follow reason and evidence wherever they may lead, a systematic approach to problem solving, inquisitiveness, even-handedness, and confidence in reasoning

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Components of Critical Thinking #1

Being Objective

- Assess situations from an objective and factual standpoint
- Analyze what you think (or assume) versus what you know about a given situation/client
- Trust but verify all information, regardless of source
- Differentiate between safety threat and risk, and between harm, danger, and complicating factors
- Make an effort to understand the life-world culture of the family

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Components of Critical Thinking #2

Gathering Facts: Have you assessed all available options before making your decision?

- Be curious, ask questions, use mapping, appreciative inquiry and other tools
- Don't make assumptions, let facts reveal themselves
- Consult with all reporting parties, collateral contacts, relatives, friends, victims, and the case file
- Consider relevant past child welfare history and criminal record
- Have you assessed all available option before making your decision?

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Thoughtful Fact Gathering

- Use safety mapping to create a systematic approach to gathering facts. This creates a patterned "due diligence" approach which ensures you don't miss anything
- Seek out the family's team, your peers and/or supervisor for their thoughts on a situation
- What are the types of questions that your supervisor typically asks? Be prepared.

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Components of Critical Thinking #3

Reflecting on bias

- Think about white privilege and institutional/systemic bias
- Think about how bias can hide in thoughts such as "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree" or "pull yourself up by your bootstraps"
- Be aware of counter-transference
- Think about how middle class bias might impact your work

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Minimizing “Blind Spots”

- Assess what thoughts, beliefs, or experiences underlie a families actions
- What are your potential assumptions, biases, and prejudices of the person and/or situation?
- Are you selectively remembering information that supports your beliefs?

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Critical Thinking Process

- Consult your supervisor
- Examine your feelings and biases
- Gather information carefully from multiple sources
- Consider alternate explanations

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Structured Decision Making Tools

- Identify and structure **critical decision points**
- Increase **consistency** in decision making
- Increase **accuracy** of decision making
- **Target resources** to families most at risk
- Use case-level data to **inform decisions throughout the agency**

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Fast Forward: Maria's family



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Activity

- What are the worries?
- What are the strengths?

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Minimum Sufficient Level of Care

- MSLC is not an ideal societal goal (i.e. middle class lifestyle)
- MSLC is family specific, not more or less
- Once determined, the MSLC must remain consistent for the duration of the case

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Consider the Needs of the Child

- Physical care
Is he or she safe?
- Emotional well-being
Is he or she thriving?
- Development
Is he or she learning and developing as expected?

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Using Assessment to Identify MSLC

Safety Threat: *Is there a factor that will compromise the immediate safety of the child?*

Risk: *What concerns may lead to future maltreatment of the child?*

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Maria's Family

Safety Factors

- Children bathe unsupervised
- Children are unsupervised while mother sleeps
- Cherry was burned on the iron while her mother slept.

Risk Factors

- Children are young, including a baby under 1 year old.
- Maria has an untreated back injury which causes her to sleep a lot

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Incorporating Household Strengths and Protective Actions

- Look for the parent's ability or willingness to use internal and external resources to lessen the danger or harm concerns.
- Looking for the strengths RELATED to the harm.

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Common Errors in Critical Thinking

- Making a decision with insufficient information about the family
- Exhibiting bias toward either the initial or the most recent information received about the family
- Selectively remembering information that supports one's own belief system
- Remembering information that is emotionally charged, vividly detailed, concrete, and recent more easily than information that is old, abstract, dull, or statistical

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How Do We Avoid These Errors?

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We Can...

- Gather information from all sources, include reporting parties, extended family members, case records, and other collateral sources
- Utilize Team Meetings
- Employ assessment tools
- Consult your supervisor
- Examine your feelings and biases
- Consider alternate explanations



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Wrap-Up

- Work in pairs
 - Share 3 new ideas, tools or strategies I learned today that I might use in my work.
 - Share 2 things I learned or was reminded about regarding my own challenges with critical thinking.
 - Share 1 lingering question about the concepts or content from today.

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