



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT of CHILD SAFETY

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Reflecting on Assumptions and Bias.

All of us take “mental shortcuts” to help organize our world and make decisions easier. These shortcuts can include assumptions about other people. Most often, these shortcuts or assumptions are made subconsciously and without malice, but they can bring bias and inconsistency to our decisions.

Pausing to identify and reflect on your mental images, thoughts, and feelings about a family or individual can help you to identify your assumptions, interrupt the “mental shortcuts,” and reduce bias.

The reflection questions and some other content were adapted from: *Right from the Start: The CCC Preliminary Protective Hearing Benchcard, A Tool for Judicial Decision-Making.* National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. 2010

Talking about Bias, Assumptions, and Family Identity during Clinical Supervision

Considering Culture and Identity

When we act to understand a family’s or individual’s identity, experience, and point of view, we demonstrate empathy. Empathy builds trust. A person who trusts you will feel more comfortable sharing information about themselves that cause feelings of fear, shame, embarrassment, or grief. With more information, we are better able to accurately assess child safety and identify services that will strengthen the parents’ protective capacities.

Our own cultural norms influence our perceptions of whether a particular behavior is abusive or makes a child unsafe. Similarly, our beliefs about what is normal for a culture or community may cause us to dismiss signs of danger or harm. Pausing to identify your cultural norms and beliefs, gather knowledge and information about the family’s culture and community, and consider information within an objective safety assessment model (SAFE AZ) improves decision consistency and accuracy.

Consciously consider the unique cultural and familial context in which the family exists. The family’s strengths and cultural community can support behavioral change goals, child safety, and the identification of culturally relevant services.

Reflection questions to build on the red italics questions during Clinical Supervision.

These questions are offered for consideration, and not as a checklist of questions to be asked in each Clinical Supervision session.

- When I picture this family/individual in my mind, how do I see them? What do I believe about them? How do I feel?
- What is my understanding of this family’s unique culture and circumstances?
- How has the family’s past involvement with DCS influenced (or how might it influence) my decision-making process?
- Is the parent’s behavior rationally related to the involvement of DCS, and the feelings they may have about DCS involvement?
- What is my understanding about the father’s involvement with the child(ren) and reasons for the level/type of involvement?
- How have I integrated the parents, children, and family members into the assessment/case management process in a way that ensures they have had the opportunity to be heard, respected, and valued?
- Have the family’s cultural background, customs, and traditions been taken into account in evaluating the event and circumstances that led to a DCS Report?
- What evidence has supported every conclusion I have drawn, and how have I challenged unsupported assumptions?
- How is my decision specific to this child and this family?