Tips for Applying Critical Thinking Skills

• Prepare Ahead of Time
  • Why is an assessment needed?
  • What critical questions need answered?
  • What decisions will be made using this information?

• Plan for the Assessment Interviews
  • What type(s) of information are most pertinent and relevant to the criteria being assessed?
  • What is the scope for gathering this information? Who or what collateral sources can help?
  • How in depth do the assessment interviews need to be to complete a thorough assessment?
  • Tip: Become familiar with the Safety Assessment and Family Assessment categories (CAPMIS Tools).

• Determine Possible Information-Gathering Strategies
  • What strategies may work best based on the child(ren)’s age and developmental level?
  • What approaches have worked well in similar cases?
  • Tip: There are additional assessment tools and strategies included in the CW Self-Assessment and Field Tools (Pages 32-42).

• Analyze the Information (Examine in Detail)
  • What does this information mean?
  • What hypotheses can I draw about the family’s functioning? Child Functioning? Parental Functioning?
  • Tip: Clinical Consultation Framework (Coaching and Supervision Tools Page 34) and Group Supervision can help in this process.

• Evaluate the Information
  • Is the information consistent or are their conflicting pieces of information that need reconciled?
  • What can I do to test the accuracy of my hypothesis?

• Synthesize/Integrate the Information
  • How can I document this information in a congruent manner that allows accurate conclusions to be drawn?
  • Tip: Reflect on how the information comes together as you complete the CAPMIS Tools in SACWIS and review with your supervisor to help guide your next steps.

• Use the Conclusions to Make Well-Informed Decisions
  • How was the information gathered used to make a decision that achieved the desired outcome?
  • Have we used a structured decision-making process to assure safety, well-being and permanency for the family?

Adapted from Ohio Child Welfare Training Program - Caseworker Core Module IV, IHS, June 2015