

COACHING AND SUPERVISION TIPS

Three Questions—Caregiver + Behavior + Impact—Solution-Focused Questions

Note: These coaching tips are designed to help deepen critical thinking and to help workers apply practices they are learning directly to their work with families in the field.

- At the beginning of a supervision session with staff, ask the three questions. (Let your staff know you will be formatting your consultations this way.) Listen for the “rigorous and balanced assessment.” If the account is all problems, ask about what is working well. If the account is all positive, ask about the worries.
- When staff talk about what caregivers are doing that worries them (drug use, violence in the home, etc.), ask, “*What is your sense of the **impact** that is having on the child?*” Be curious. What do we know at this point? What else could we learn? Who do we need to talk to? This can lead to a good discussion about how much we have talked with the child and the ways we have for doing that.
- When staff talk about what is working well in a family or what they appreciate about the family, ask the same question: “*What is your sense about the **impact** those actions are having on the child?*” Be curious. Ask how we could learn more. Also, when you hear what is working well, ask, “*Are these actions addressing the **original** worry or harm we had when we opened this case? Why or why not?*”
- Be sure to recall the children’s perspective in conversations about what is working well and what is worrisome: “If the child were here right now, what would they want to be sure we remember about their worries/successes?”
- When you begin to plan for the next steps with a family, try a scaling question. “On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being the most danger and 10 the most safety, where do you think the situation is for this child right now?” Remember that this is only a first step in the scaling dialogue. Follow up with questions to gather more details and to help focus on planning: “What have you seen the family do in the care of their child[ren] that leads you to give that number?” and “What would the family be doing if it was a 10? What would the family be doing if they went up the scale by one?”

POWERS

A mnemonic tool to remember the solution-focused approach.

P: Problems are acknowledged, but not analyzed.

O: Outcomes desired are specified.

W: Where are you now on the scale?

E: Exceptions to the problem are keys to solutions.

R: Relationships are enhanced and made productive.

S: Small steps forward lead to larger change.