



Capacity Building
CENTER FOR TRIBES

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A FAMILY ASSESSMENT

SUGGESTIONS FOR CASEWORKERS AND FRONTLINE STAFF

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ABOUT THIS SERIES

Every assessment you do can change the course of someone's life. It is important to be self-aware, intentional about engaging with families, and to use the information you collect to make decisions.



*In our deliberation,
we must consider
the impact of our
decision on the
next seven
generations.*

- Great Law of the
Six Nations Iroquois
Confederacy of
Native Americans

SELF-AWARENESS

- Take care of yourself in order to create space for wise decision-making.
- Be responsible for your own emotional responses; others don't "make" us feel, we "choose" to feel.
- Ask yourself if you are projecting your experiences onto families. For example, "I'm angry at alcoholics in my life so I assume you are, too."
- Get as much training as you can to learn how to conduct assessments.
- Seek input from others about how to conduct assessments so you can improve your skills.
- Be reflective about your own biases. We all have them.
- Practice listening in a non-judgmental way to others.
- Be able to empathize with others because that might allow them to open up emotionally if they feel heard by you.
- Recognize the work you do is very important and requires ongoing self-care and self-reflection.



ENGAGING IN FAMILY ASSESSMENT

- Gather information and let it guide your steps, rather than guessing or making assumptions without evidence. Let the facts speak for themselves.
- Investigate several sources so you aren't just relying upon limited evidence.
- Engage with the family to gain their perspective and keep them involved in the process.
- Be aware that individuals and families have many challenges that led them to where they find themselves. Their situation is about their history/trauma and not about who they are as people.
- Remember, doing a thorough assessment helps people to be more likely to accept the outcomes because they are based in facts.



DECISION MAKING

- Analyze your findings carefully.
- Ask yourself questions once you have all the information:
 - Does it fit together and make sense?
 - What does it tell me about this family and possible next steps to help them reach their goals?
 - Do the facts align with the conclusions I'm making?
- Look for real solutions not quick fixes.
- Discuss the case with colleagues and your supervisor, if possible, to seek out their input. Listen and acknowledge feedback and consider if, or how, the feedback might influence the decision.
- Engage the family in decision making and say how you arrived at your recommendation.
- Work with the family to develop a meaningful case plan based on the findings of the assessment.
- Offer hope and a path for healing, based on the strengths of the family.

ABOUT "TOOLS FOR GROWTH" RESOURCES. The Capacity Building Center for Tribes' Tools for Growth resources are developed by a team of American Indian/Alaska Native/Indigenous child welfare professionals from across Indian Country who are dedicated to providing tribal communities with the tools they need to thrive and build their capacity to strengthen children, youth, families, and communities. The group works together to both establish a common vision of the resources needed and create content.