Supervision to Support Best Practice in Family Group Decision Making

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Questions for Reflection

My current attitude about FGC.

My fears about FGC in practice in my agency.

A gift I bring to FGC practice.

How I need to grow in my role as an FGDM supervisor.
Knowing where you are to get where you’re going

- What is my team’s mission or purpose?
- How do I want my team to improve?
- What strengths do I have that will help my team improve?
- What challenges do I need to work on to help my team grow?
Parallel Process

- **When** – Two or more systems/people have significant relationships with one another they tend to develop similar affects, cognition, and behaviors which are defined as parallel process.

- **How** – The internal relationship (supervisor/coordinator) mirrors much of what is going on in the relationship between coordinator and family.

- **What** – Situations or issues in one system are often enacted elsewhere because of parallelism between the place or origin and the place of expression (the system – the family).
Supervisors can support coordinators by building scaffolding to go from A to B through coaching and fostering a critical thinking paradigm.
Supervision: “Lead from One Step Behind”

- “We teach, evaluate and reinforce from a position of one step behind, instead of standing in front of the coordinator and pulling him/her in a certain direction.”

- “…A collaborative stance is often reflected in the language you use, your voice tone and inflection and general posture of working together.”
Poll

What qualities make a good FGDM coordinator?
What are we looking for in an FGDM Coordinator?

**Peace-making/negotiation skills**

- Ability to promote family’s perspectives & solutions

**Belief in the philosophy & the values**

**CREATIVE**

- Open, appreciative & responsive to family’s culture

**Supports and guides a family-led process**

**Communicates honestly, clearly & concisely**

- Skilled in handling conflict

**Critical thinking & assessment skills**

- Strong sense of personal integrity

**Sensitive to issues of power and oppression**

- Able to build trust & rapport
How are these qualities assessed?

- Word of mouth (what peers say)
- The word of the coordinator
- Observing the family conference or preparation meetings
- Post FGC evaluations
Critical Thinking

Intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing and/or evaluating information gathered from or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning or communication, as a guide to belief and action. (Scriven, 1996)
Characteristics of a Critical Thinker

- Asking questions
- Defining a problem
- Examining evidence
- Analyzing assumptions and biases
- Avoiding emotional reasoning
- Avoiding oversimplification
- Considering other interpretations
- Tolerating ambiguity
## Critical vs. Uncritical Thinkers

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<tr>
<th>CRITICAL THINKER</th>
<th>UNCRITICAL THINKER</th>
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<td>Are honest with themselves, acknowledging what they don't know.</td>
<td>Pretend they know more than they do and ignore their limitations.</td>
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<td>Strive for understanding and keep curiosity alive; ready to invest time to overcome confusion</td>
<td>Inpatient complexity and don’t take the time to understand</td>
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<td>Base judgments rather than personal preferences.</td>
<td>Base judgments on first impressions and gut reactions.</td>
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<td>Recognize that extreme views are seldom correct so avoid them</td>
<td>Ignore the need for balance and give preference to views that support their established views</td>
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Ladder of Inference

Developed by Chris Argyris

I take action based on those conclusions
I draw conclusions about the situation
I view the data through my unique assumptions
I select out particular data
All observable data in a particular situation
The results of that action effects what data I can see next time.
The results of that action effect what data I can see next time, making the ladder thinner and thinner.
Ladder of Inference

The goal of critical thinking in this process is to get us to SLOW down and consider the assumptions we are drawing upon to make conclusions, potentially erroneous conclusions.
Critical Thinking Criteria: Questioning

Socratic questioning is a discussion:

Directed by the leader through the asking of questions to raise basic issues, probe beneath the surface and help staff arrive at more accurate judgments through their own reasoning, thereby enhancing their ability to reason effectively in their work with others.
Socratic Questioning

Socratic questioning is disciplined questioning that can be used to pursue thought in many directions and for many purposes including:

- Explore complex ideas
- Get to the truth of things
- Open up issues and problems
- Uncover assumptions
- Analyze concepts
- Distinguish what we know from what we don’t know
- Follow logical implications of thought
Questions that Target the Quality of Reasoning

- Questioning Clarity
- Questioning Precision
- Questioning Accuracy
- Questioning Relevance
- Questioning Depth
- Questioning Breadth
Questions that Help Assess Reasoning

**Clarity**
- Could you elaborate further?
- Could you give me an example?
- Could you illustrate what you mean?

**Accuracy**
- How could we check that out?
- How could we find out if that is true?
- How could we verify or test that?

**Precision**
- Could you be more specific?
- Could you give me more details?
- Could you be more exact?
Questions that Help Assess Reasoning

Relevance
- How does that relate to the problem?
- How does that bear on the question?
- How does that help us with this issue?

Depth
- What factors make this a difficult problem?
- What are some of the complexities of this question?
- What are some of the difficulties we need to deal with?

Breadth
- How can we look at this from another perspective?
- What other point of views do we need to consider?
- What might be revealed if we look at this in other ways?
Questions that Help Assess Reasoning

**Logic**
- Does all this make sense together?
- Does your line of thinking fit with the situation?
- Does what you say follow from the evidence?

**Significance**
- Is this the most important problem to consider?
- Is this the central idea to focus on?
- Which of these facts are most important?

**Fairness**
- Do I have any vested interest in this issue?
- Am I sympathetically representing the viewpoints of others?
Strategies to Promote Good Critical Thinking

- Anticipate questions others might ask. (What will my supervisor want to know? How does my coordinator need to develop?)
- Ask, “What if” or questions like, “What could go wrong?” or “What if we try...?”
- Look for flaws in your/their thinking. “What’s missing?”; “Have you recognized your biases?” and “How could this be made better?”
- Ask someone else to look for flaws in your/their thinking.
Strategies to Promote Critical Thinking

- Develop good habits of inquiry
- Ask questions like “What difference does it make?”
- Develop interpersonal skills like conflict resolution and getting along with those who have differing opinions
- Replace “I don’t know” and “I’m not sure” with “I’ll find out” or “what do I need in order to find out.”
Practice Example 1

Your coordinator, Jessica, states that Carla, a mom on a new FGC referral, is not ok with “agreeing to a have a family conference”. Carla doesn’t want her nosy sister or anyone in her family getting involved in her business. Carla stated that CPS didn’t seem to care what she thought before they took her son away from her, so why now? Given how distasteful the idea of a FGC seemed to Carla, Jessica says to you that this is likely one of those times that the “family just isn’t ready” and we need to respect where they are at this time and decline offering an FGC.
Practice Example 1 cont.

What is the primary concern here from the perspective of the supervisor?

a. Helping Jessica get Carla to agree to have an FGC and to widen the circle.
b. Helping Jessica develop a strategy for possible next steps.
c. Helping Jessica close out the referral based on her reasoning.
Practice Example 1 cont.

What critical thinking questions could you employ to help Jessica think through a potential strategy (Best response)?

a. Questions that explore clarity such as “Could you elaborate further?”

b. Questions that explore depth and breadth such as “What other information do you have that confirms Carla’s distaste for an FGC? Or “What possible worries or fears have you been able to explore with Carla that could help explain her reluctance?”

c. Powerful Questions such as “What difference might it make to Carla if she found out that her family cared about her and weren’t just being nosy?”
Practice Example 2

You’ve noticed that, Marcus, one of your coordinators tends to move through his preparation time with families fairly quickly (approximately a week to a week and a half post referral). His meetings seem to go well but you’ve begun to wonder if he’s taking short cuts that impact a truly family led process.

What questions could you ask to explore how Marcus goes about preparing families for an FGC?
Practice...Using Case Vignettes

Questions to ask Marcus:

✓ What if you were shadowed tomorrow, what would the other person see in how you prepare families?
✓ What would tell you that you have spent enough time in preparing the family and others for the conference.
✓ How could you make the conferences you coordinate even better?
Assessing & Keeping Your Team Engaged

- **Group Supervision Assessment** – a way to monitor & facilitate your staff’s critical thinking. For example: Ask staff to write a “Minute Paper” responding to questions such as “What was the most important thing you learned during our group supervision?”

- **Case Study** – Provide a case scenario to your team and dissect using questions you’ve prepared to help your team think through the case critically.
Assessing and Keeping Your Team Engaged

- **Conference Style Learning** – Assign your team an article to read on FGDM prior to your team meeting. Articles should challenge thinking and promote personal and/or professional development. During group supervision, have your team ask questions of each other and discuss these questions. The leaders role is to “direct and mold discussions by posing strategic questions”.
Assessing and Keeping Your Team Engaged

- **Dialogues:**
  - **Written dialogues** - are provided for staff to analyze. Staff can look at different viewpoints; biases, presence of reasoning. Groups explain their analysis of the written dialogue.
  - **Spontaneous Group Dialogue** – Staff are assigned roles to play out in a discussion (i.e. leader, information giver, opinion seeker & disagreeer). Observers are also assigned with the function of identifying biases, errors in thinking, reasoning & evaluating.
Example of a Dialogue

As you read the dialogue between a coordinator and a caseworker, think about the cultural issues that the coordinator is learning from the caseworker.

- **F:** Ok, I’ve read the material about the Brown/Whiteside family. I’m wondering what you think some of the cultural issues are that I should be aware of. I have worked with Alaskan Native families before but want to know more specific information about the Brown and Whiteside family. Anything you can help me with?

- **CW:** Sure, after talking to both Ms. Brown and Mrs. Whiteside, it sounds like they come from a big extended family. When I asked if anyone in the family could take the kids until this is all sorted out they said that they were too embarrassed to call anyone. Ms. Brown has five brothers and sisters and she had five children herself. Ms. Whiteside was the oldest in her family and it sounded like she had a lot of responsibility in her family. She didn’t seem to see anything wrong with their 10 year old daughter watching her brothers because she had been responsible for her siblings too at that age.

**What has the coordinator/facilitator learned that is likely culturally based and how that might be useful? What else might be useful to ask the worker?**
“I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better.”
—*Maya Angelou*
Thank You!!

Webinar evaluation link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LeadingTheWaySupervisors

Open for 48 hours