



Department of

Children's Services

Quality Contacts with Children and Families

A Webinar Series



Department of

Children's Services

An Intro to Quality Contacts Webinar Series

A Pre-requisite Course

Goals following this training:

- Re-focus on the basics.
- Improve the quality of contacts with children and families
- Improve monthly documentation to meet CFSR standards beginning December 2017.
- Use the Desk Reference Guides to write quality opening, monthly and closing case summaries beginning December 2017.
- CQI will pull a random sample of case documentation beginning January 2018 to review using the revised CPR/QRI.
- DCS will be successful in completing the CFSR PIP ASAP!!!



BACK TO BASICS

The Context

- Federal, State, and local guidelines establish a foundation for a quality contact and attributes of good casework practice.
- Federal legislation establishes State requirements for quality contacts in child welfare. The Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006, Public Law (P.L.) 109–288, requires each State’s plan for child welfare services to describe standards for the content and frequency of caseworker visits for children and youth in foster care.
- The subsequent Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act of 2011, P.L. 112–34, includes provisions that add to the requirements for caseworker visits.
- P.L. 112-34 also allocates funding to support monthly worker visits and improvements in the quality of the visits with an emphasis on enhanced decision-making.
- In addition to Federal laws, States commonly have written standards expressed in State and local agency policies for the frequency and content of caseworker visits with children, youth, and parents.

DCS Policy relating to Quality Contacts and Documentation

- Policy 13.1 – Supervision of Youth Adjudicated Delinquent for Custodial and Non-Custodial Youth
- Policy 14.7- CPS Investigation Track
- Policy 14.16- CPS Case File Organization
- Policy 14.26 – CPS Assessment Track
- Policy 14.29 – Family Support Services Worker (FSSW) Responsibilities
- Policy 16.8 – Responsibilities of Approved Foster Homes
- Policy 16.38 – Face to Face Visitation with Dependent and Neglected Unruly Children in DCS Custody
 - Visitation Protocol Attachment
 - Visitation Plan Work Aid
- Policy 31.14 – Documentation of TFACTS Case Recordings
- Policy 31.8 – Parent/Caregiver Engagement and Support
 - Engagement and Support Work Aid

Reasonable Efforts

What are reasonable efforts?

“As used in this section, “reasonable efforts” means the exercise of reasonable care and diligence by the department to provide services related to meeting the needs of the child and the family. In determining reasonable efforts to be made with respect to a child, as described in this subdivision (g) (1), and in making such reasonable efforts, the child’s health and safety shall be the paramount concern.”

TCA 31-1-166(g) (1)

A higher court defined them as:

“In many circumstances, the success of a parent’s remedial efforts is intertwined with the efforts of the Department’s staff to provide assistance and support. Reasonable efforts entail more than simply providing parents with a list of service providers and sending them on their way. The Department’s employees must use their superior insight and training to assist parents with the problems the Department has identified in the permanency plan, whether the parents ask for assistance or not.”

In re C.M.M. (Tenn. App. 2004)

Concerted Efforts

Concerted Efforts is similar to Reasonable Efforts. It is the language used in CFSR reviews

How do we demonstrate Concerted Efforts in practice?

- ✓ The Caseworker documented attempts on a **monthly** basis to engage the child and family in completing recommended assessments and services.
- ✓ The Caseworker documented on a **monthly** basis **informal assessments** that they made through conversations and observations with children, families, and foster parents.
- ✓ The Caseworker documented that they did **different** things on a monthly basis to continue to engage resistant children and families to complete assessments and services.

Other examples of documenting Concerted Efforts are outlined in Policy 31.8

This is also known as Good Faith Efforts outlined in Policy 14.5

CFSR Feedback

Challenges

- Private time with children and youth.
- Talking about Safety at every contact
- Focus on goals
- Reflect detailed conversation to feed assessment
- Address developmental needs of case members.
- Ensuring a two way street between what the worker needs to address with the family, but also addressing what's important to the family.
- Duration of visits were short- hinders development of relationships.
- Assessment of progress or lack there of or reflect all known issues
- Formal assessments that do not match the known need of the child/family or the current situation – assessment quality.
- Conversations that address trauma of child not assessed or addressed.
- Visitation between child and parent that could benefit from coaching by the worker

Strengths

- Removals that were done without providing services were well documented to be due to imminent risk.
- Generally the initial permanency goals were thoughtful and well documented.
- Time to permanency is a strength.
- Use of relative placements is a strength.
- Some evidence of really strong casework by some Caseworkers

Why are Quality Contacts Important?



The impact of increasing quality...

Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) in 2001–2004 found:

- More frequent and better quality visits improved outcomes on
 - Safety
 - Permanency
 - Well-being.
- Better worker visits that **focused on assessment**:
 - Reduced risk of harm to the child
 - Improved parent involvement in case planning, assessment of needs, and service provision

(Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003)

Quality contacts are...

Purposeful interactions between caseworkers and children, youth, parents, and resource parents that reflect engagement and contribute to assessment and case planning processes. These face-to-face interactions often are referred to as “home visits” or “caseworker visits.”



Capacity Building Center for States (2017) Defining Quality Contacts

Core Components and Characteristics of a Quality Contact

As a cornerstone of casework practice, quality contacts reflect a focused exchange of ideas and information

(Atif & National Resource Center for Child Protective Services, 2010).

These contacts should go beyond a “friendly visit to chat about how the kids are doing” and represent a professional consultation.

(National Resource Center for Family-Centered and Permanency Planning, 2008)

Characteristics of Quality Contacts

**Intentional
and
Purposeful**

Goal Directed

**Culturally
Responsive**

Respectful

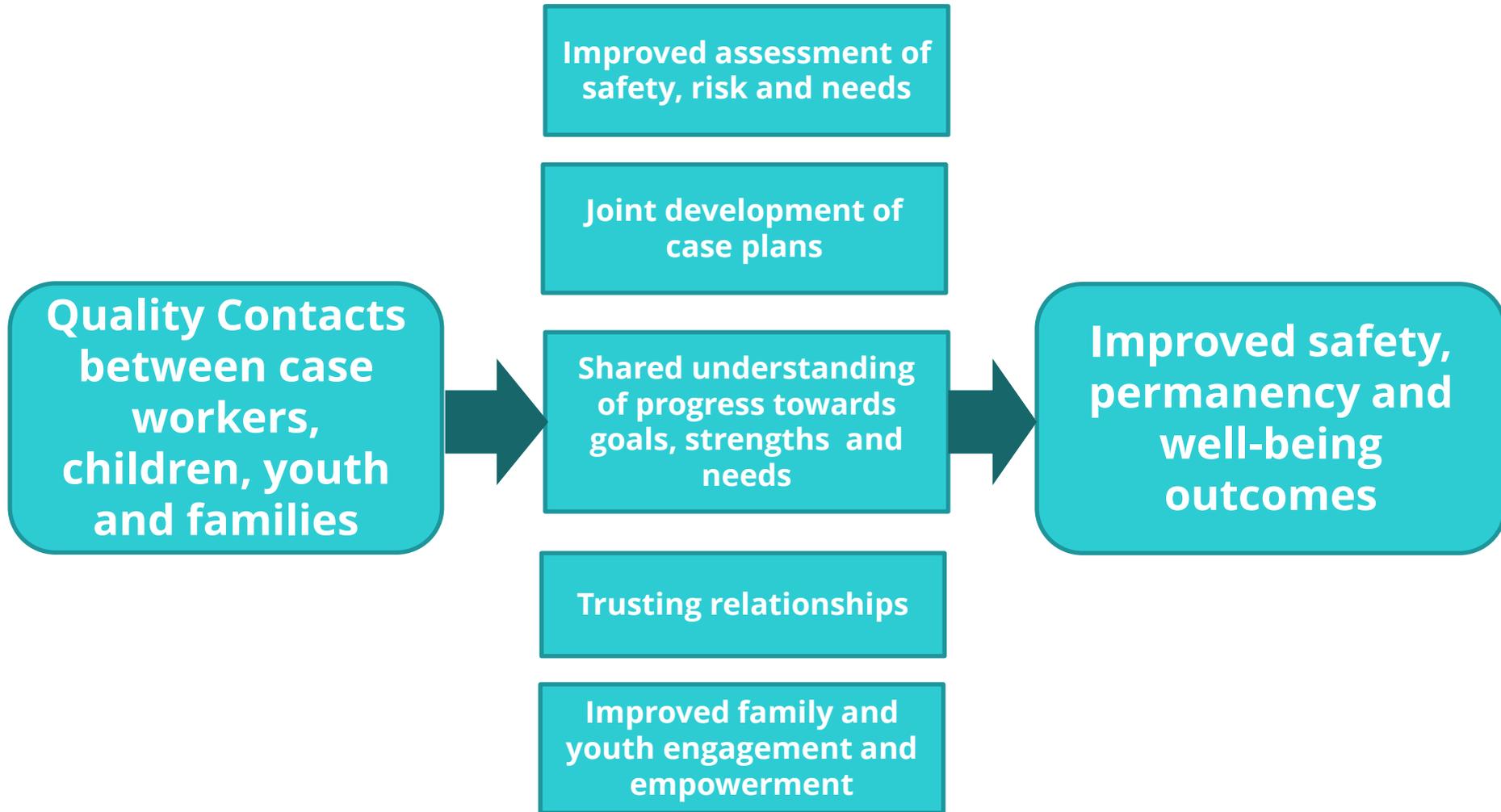
Unbiased

Tailored

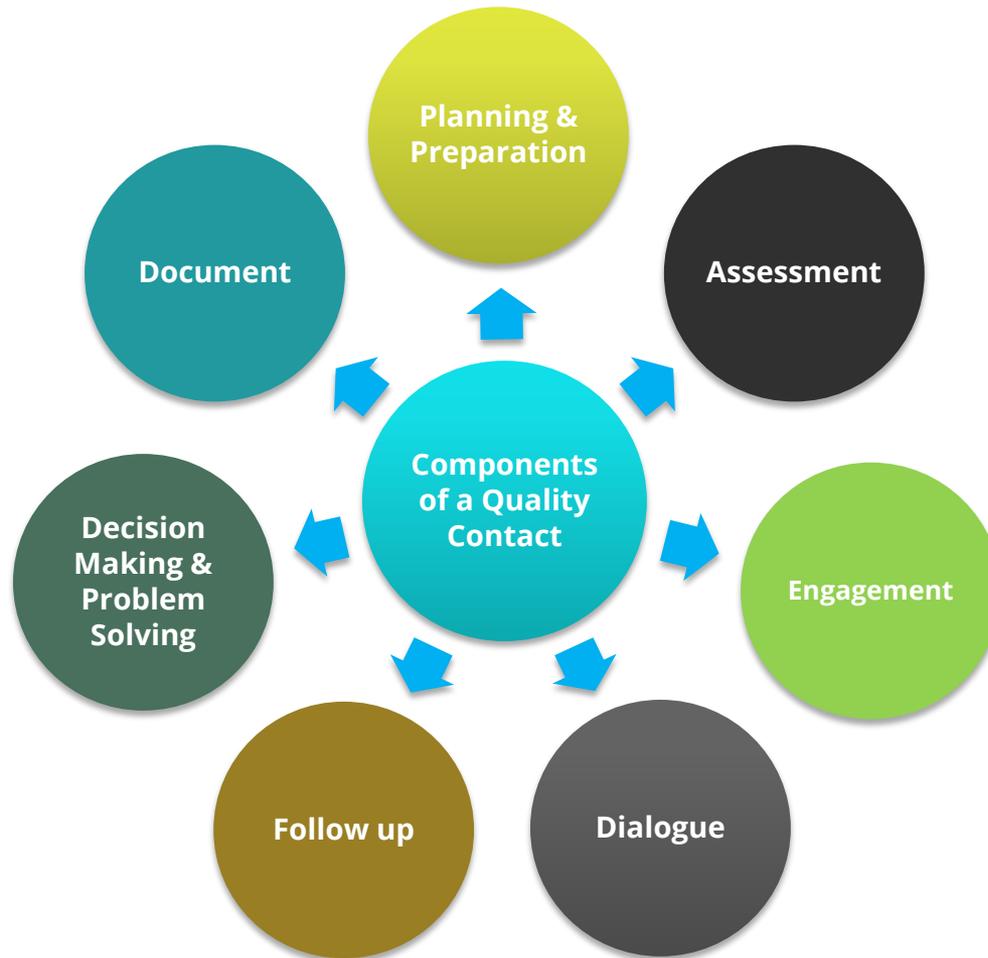
**Developmentally
Appropriate**

**Reflective of
Critical Thinking**

The Impact of Quality Contacts



Components of a Quality Contact



Three Phases of a Quality Contact

BEFORE

Preparation and planning tailored to the specific circumstances of the child or youth and family

DURING

Assessment of: Safety, risk, permanency, and well-being
Progress toward individual case goals

Engagement of children, youth, parents, and resource parents by the caseworker through use of empathy, genuineness, and respect

Dialogue that values the youth and parent voice and promotes reflection on strengths, needs, and concerns

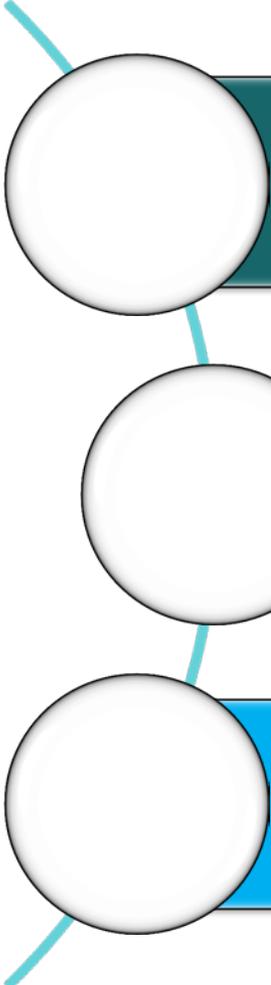
AFTER

Follow-up on tasks or concerns discussed previously (this may include difficult conversations about why certain things did not happen as planned)

Decision-making and problem solving to address needs and move the case plan forward

Documentation to support monitoring and follow-up

Before the Visit – Casework activities

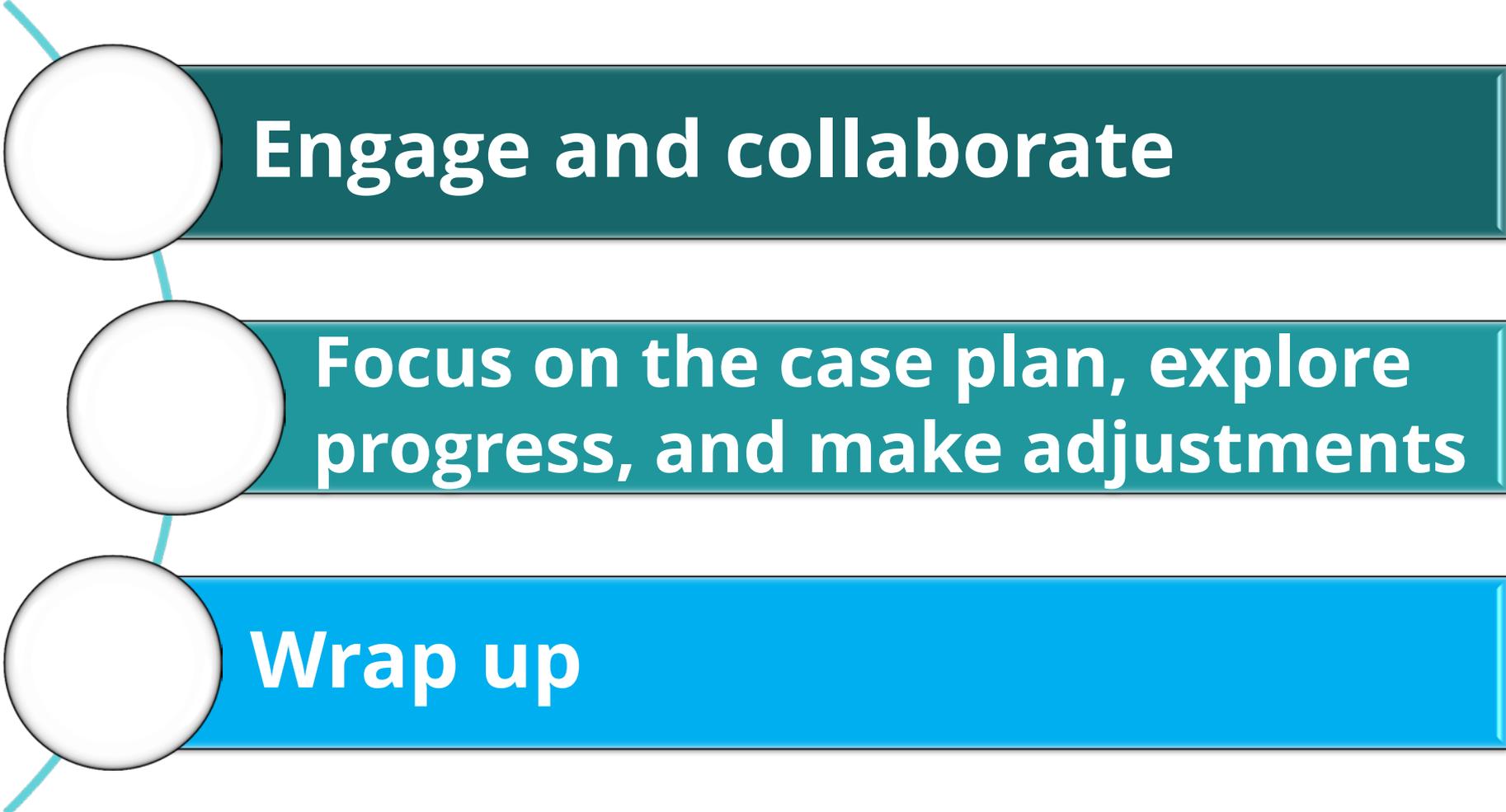


Schedule

Gather information and review

Plan and prepare

During the Visit- Casework activities

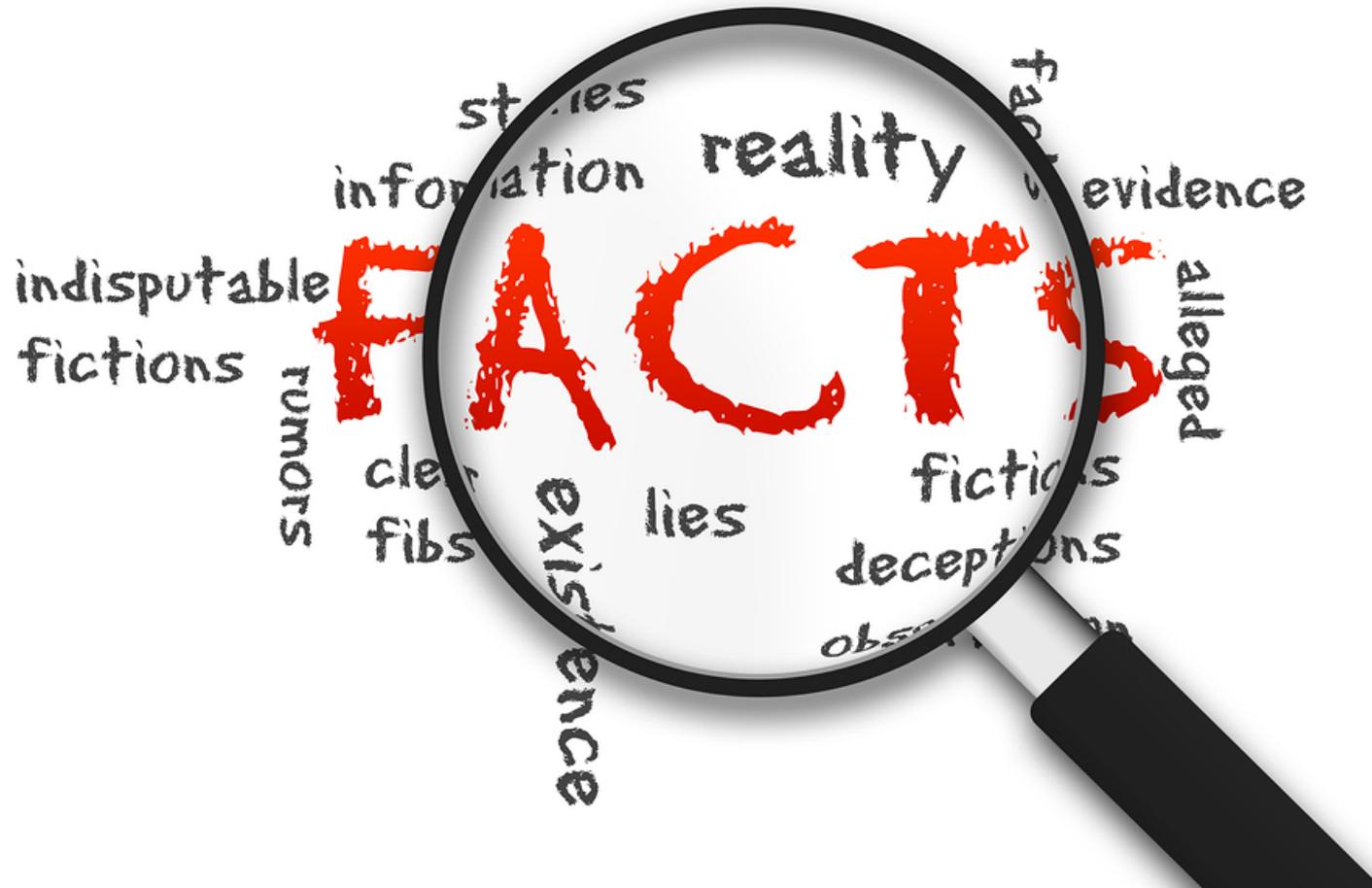


Engage and collaborate

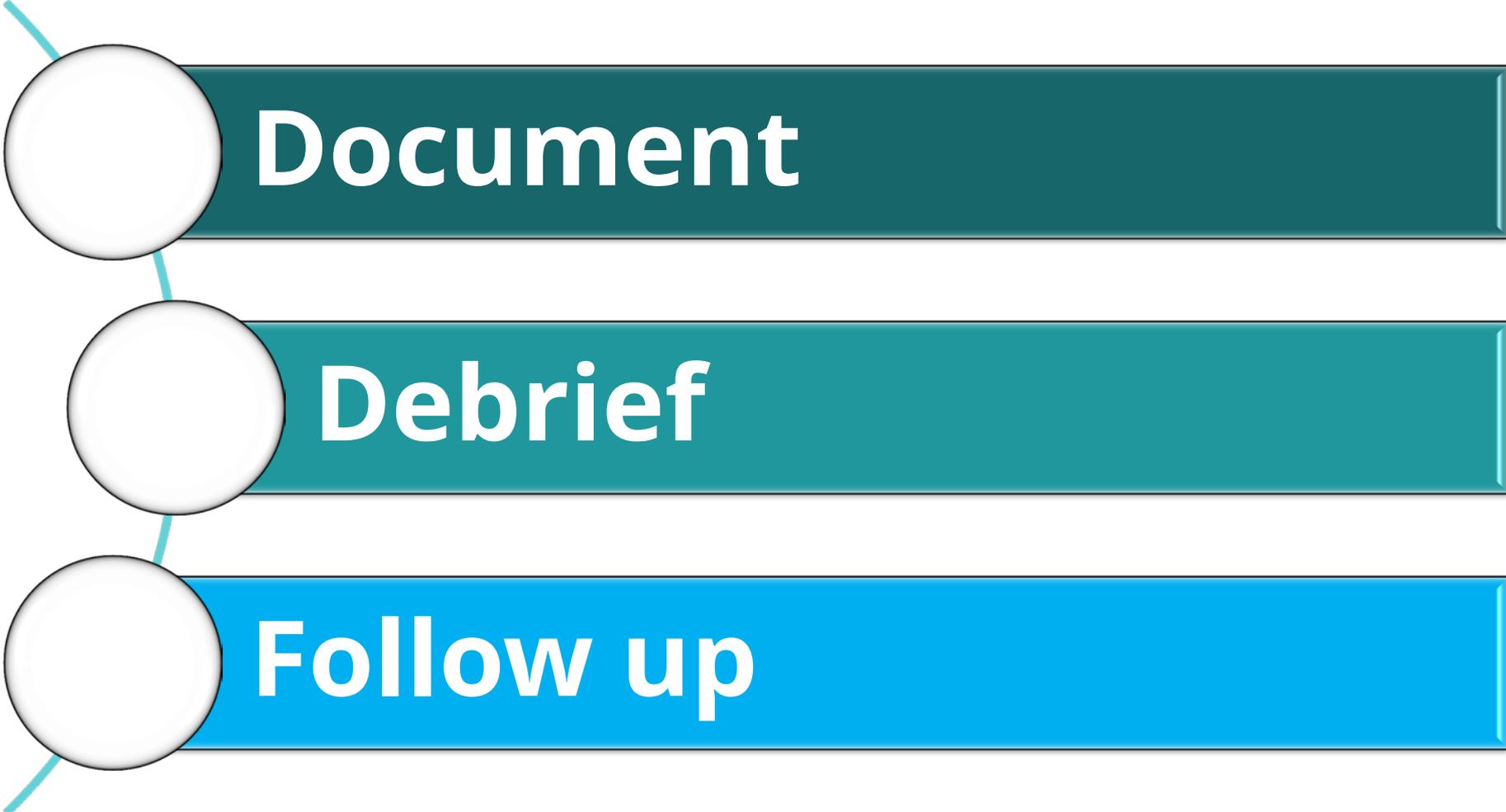
Focus on the case plan, explore progress, and make adjustments

Wrap up

Get curious!!



After the Visit- Casework activities



Document

Debrief

Follow up

Before, During and After the Visit

- Review the suggested **Before, During and After the Visit** casework activities on the Quality Contact Casework Activities Worksheet.
- Identify one area you can improve in your current practice.

Documentation



***“If it isn’t
in TFACTS,
it didn’t
happen.”***

Documentation

- To meet Federal conformity standards, Caseworkers must document that they have made concerted efforts monthly to provide quality services to the children and families with whom they work.
- States not meeting Federal conformity standards must enter into a Performance Improvement Plan (CFSR PIP) with the Children's Bureau.



Desk Reference Guides

- Provide clear guidance to staff on expectations for monthly documentation based on case type.
 - Non-Custodial
 - CPSA and CPSI
 - Custodial
 - Juvenile Justice
- Outlines expectations for:
 - Opening Summary
 - Monthly Summary – To replace individual case notes for all extra recordings that are not case worker face-to-face or parent-child visits.
 - Closing Summary
- Clarifies what should be documented to demonstrate Concerted Efforts

Q: Why?

A: Because:

- Face-to-Face is simply not enough for concerted efforts.
- There are so many dimensions and layers to this work.
- It keeps the documentation concise and organized.
- Comprehensive casework each month moves cases to positive outcomes faster.

Positive Outcomes=

- ✓ Safety for children
- ✓ Permanency for families
- ✓ Well-being for all

Monthly Case Summaries

- Staff in the pilot areas will start using monthly case summaries on completion of this training. Required Dec 1st, going forward.
- Case Summaries will be entered in TFACTS by:
 - The 10th of the following month for Foster Care, Juvenile Justice and Family Support Services
 - Within the last 10 calendar days of the month in order to capture a full account of thirty (30) days worth of activity for CPSA and CPSI cases.
- Monthly Summaries will be reviewed to assess improvement in documentation

But this seems like duplication!



Who is Responsible for Quality Contacts?

Within a child welfare system, multiple players contribute to the achievement of quality contacts.



What's my role in ensuring Quality Contacts?



Challenges

- What are some of the challenges you may experience in ensuring Quality in your contacts and casework activities?
- What can you put in place to overcome these challenges?



Improving the Quality of my Contacts

- What can you do to enhance the quality of your contacts?
- What resources and support do you need?
- What can you do to immediately improve your practice?
- How will you know it has made a difference?



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a blue and white striped sleeveless shirt, stands in front of a whiteboard. She is smiling and pointing her right index finger towards the camera. In her left hand, she holds a blue marker. The whiteboard behind her has the words 'Plan', 'Do', 'Study', and 'Act' written in blue cursive. The background is a plain white wall with a green metal shelving unit visible on the right.

Plan

Do

Study

Act

Small Test of Change

Need an example?

- After Quality Contacts training, Jane decides to:
 - Schedule herself 3 hours each week for “quiet time” to document. She schedules different days and times each week based on her demanding schedule. She thinks this will help her from getting behind on documentation.
 - Make a written agenda prior to all home visits with parents, children and foster families.
 - Ensure she is considering her CANS or FAST on cases per policy and considering changes noted and what those changes mean for the families she works with.
 - Add to her checklist to remember to have a monthly private contact with each child on her caseload.



Goal:

I plan to make a
change!

Plan/Action Steps:

1. Step 1 ✓
2. Step 2 ✓
3. Step 3 ✓

Make a Plan and Do (Implement)

Goal:

I plan to make a
change!

Plan/Action Steps:

1. Step 1 ✓
- ~~2. Step 2 ✓~~
3. Step 3 ✓
4. New Step!

Study and Act

So what happened to Jane?

- She found that:
 - Scheduled “quiet time” only worked about half the time. She found that despite barriers, she felt that monitoring her schedule better improved the timeliness of her casework.
 - Her use of the agenda make it easier to take notes, cover key points during visits. After a month, she started using her Desk Reference Guide to develop her agenda. Her supervisors says she has the best case recordings on her team.
 - CANS and FAST help her highlight family progress or decline. She is then able to more thoughtfully plan next steps and articulate her position to the court
 - Jane has increased the frequency of private meetings with each child on her caseload. Sometimes when meeting with large sibling groups it is challenging to meet with each child alone before leaving, but now that she has laid out the expectation, the families she works with her helping her meet her goal.

What's next?



- Complete your Small Test of Change Plan
- Put learning into practice
- Attend future webinar coaching sessions
- Participate in coaching with supervisor to follow up on Small Test of Change Plan
- Share good practice with peers

All the resources you need!!!

- <https://www.teamtn.gov/dcs/divisions/training/staff-training/quality-contacts.html>

Evaluation

Course Title: Intro to Quality Contacts

Trainers: Check the Chat box

<https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/training/tpd/atl/dcstrainingevaluation.html>

The logo consists of a red square with the letters 'TN' in white, serif font. Below the red square is a thin white horizontal line, and below that is a dark blue horizontal bar. A small 'TM' trademark symbol is located at the bottom right corner of the dark blue bar.

TN

Thank you