

# SAMPLE COACHING QUESTIONS FOR SUPERVISORS TO ELICIT INFORMATION FROM SOCIAL WORKERS

## PROBING QUESTIONS FOR EVALUATING CHILD SAFETY

- ➔ What are the risk/safety factors affecting the parents' ability to meet the child's basic needs and protect the child(ren) from harm?
  - ❑ **Sample probing questions:** What is the parents' mental status? If they are psychotic or borderline personality, how does their mental illness affect their parenting? Do they use drugs or alcohol? If so, how extensive is the substance use, and how does the substance use affect parenting? Do the parents have impulse control problems? How do they manifest themselves?
- ➔ What are the parents' strengths and protective factors?
  - ❑ **Sample probing questions:** Do they have insight into their behavior? Are they willing to work toward changing behavior conditions? Are there people in their lives who provide emotional support, concrete assistance, and information and advice? Has there been a time in the past when they have protected their children from their abuse of substances? Do they have the intellectual capability to understand the children's needs? Is there another caregiver in the home who is willing and able to protect the child in the home?
- ➔ What do we know about the child(ren)?
  - ❑ **Sample probing questions:** How old are they? Do the children have any disabilities or conditions that make them more dependent on the care of the parents? Do the children have any behavioral, physical, mental health conditions that make them more difficult to care for? The vulnerability of a child can be determined by: the age, physical and emotional health, development, ability to communicate needs, mobility, the way that they have learned to engage the world. For example, is the child dependent on others for sustenance and protection? Is the child exposed to circumstances that he/she is powerless to manage?
- ➔ What do we know about the maltreatment to the child?
  - ❑ **Sample probing questions:** How long has it been going on? Is this a single occurrence or one that has a pattern? What is the frequency with which it has occurred? Has it increased in frequency and severity? If so, how? What is the nature and severity of the acts or omissions by the parent/caretaker? What are the effects on the child? How severe was the harm to the child? What

is happening within the maltreatment that specifically threatens child safety? Are behaviors, situations, and activities associated with the maltreatment severe in nature and likely to have a severe effect on the child? What might the effect be? Are behaviors, situations, and activities associated with the maltreatment manageable or within the control of the family or any resource available to the family? Are behaviors, situations, and activities associated with the maltreatment likely to recur in the near future?

→ Tell me about the parenting of the caregivers?

- **Sample probing questions:** Do the parents understand the developmental tasks, milestones, and needs for their children? Do they empathize with the children's feelings, behavior and condition? What types of disciplinary techniques do they use? Do the parents have realistic expectations for their children?

#### **PROBING QUESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING A SAFETY PLAN**

- Are there interventions/services that can be put in place to control and manage the safety threats in the home? What is the frequency and duration of the safety interventions needed to control the safety threats? Will the family accept and participate in these services at the recommended level?
- Do the safety interventions match the duration of the threat of harm? Are the safety factors accessible in time and physical proximity to the threat of harm? Will the safety interventions have an immediate effect on child safety?
- Are there relatives who are willing and able to meet the children's needs and protect them from harm?

#### **PROBING QUESTIONS TO DETERMINE THE PROGNOSIS FOR CHANGE**

- What needs to change to reduce or eliminate the threat of harm or reduce the risk of maltreatment? What are the individual, family, and environmental behaviors/conditions contributing to the risk of maltreatment (domain areas)?
- What does each family member need to do for the pattern to change? What does the caregiver need to do individually to change the behavior/condition?
- What is the likelihood of the changes occurring?
  - ✓ How pervasive is the problem? How many aspects of the caregiver's life do the problems/conditions affect?
  - ✓ How chronic and serious is the pattern?

- ✓ What are the family's motivations/willingness to change the problems?
- ✓ What strengths do members have to support the change?
- What resources are necessary to support the needed changes?
  - ✓ What concrete resources are needed to support change?
  - ✓ What internal resources are present in the family to help them change?
  - ✓ What resources exist in the community that will help the family change?
- How long will it take for the family to make these changes?
  - ✓ What is the availability/accessibility of the services needed?
  - ✓ What is the family's motivation/commitment to change?
  - ✓ How long will it take to change the condition?

**PROBING QUESTIONS FOR DETERMINING WHETHER THE CHILD CAN BE RETURNED SAFELY OR SHOULD ANOTHER PERMANENT GOAL BE ESTABLISHED**

- Has the family followed through with all of the actions/responsibilities required of them to eliminate the safety threat or reduce the risk and assure child safety?
- Have protective factors been enhanced/developed to offset the safety factors?
- What is the evidence that demonstrates the family has changed?
- Can these changes been seen in the parents' interactions with the children?
- What is the child's feeling/perspective about going home?

**PROBING QUESTIONS FOR DETERMINING ISSUES RELATED TO CHILD WELL BEING**

- What are the signs of normal development in the child?
- What are the child's strengths?
- What are the signs and symptoms of abnormality in the child?
- How has the abuse or neglect has affected the child physically, emotionally, mentally?

- ❑ How is the child functioning in school, academically, behaviorally, socially?
- ❑ Describe the child's current functioning – emotionally, socially, behaviorally?
- ❑ How is the child's health (immunizations, dental, vision, hearing? Any physical/health needs?)
- ❑ If the child has been placed in out-of-home care, how have issues of separation and loss impacted on the child?
- ❑ If the child has been placed in out-of-home care, what are the child's issues identity issues?
- ❑ Is the foster caregiver providing the care, nurturance, and resources needed to promote the child's growth and development?
- ❑ Is the agency providing a stable and positive environment that promote the child's social, emotional, and cognitive development?
- ❑ If the child has been placed in out-of-home care, is the agency maintaining the child's attachment relationships and supporting the development of more positive interactions?