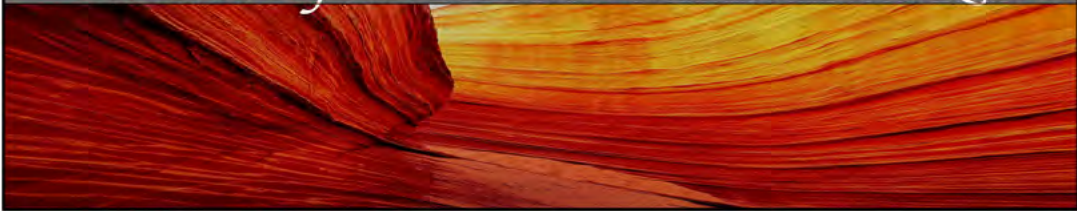
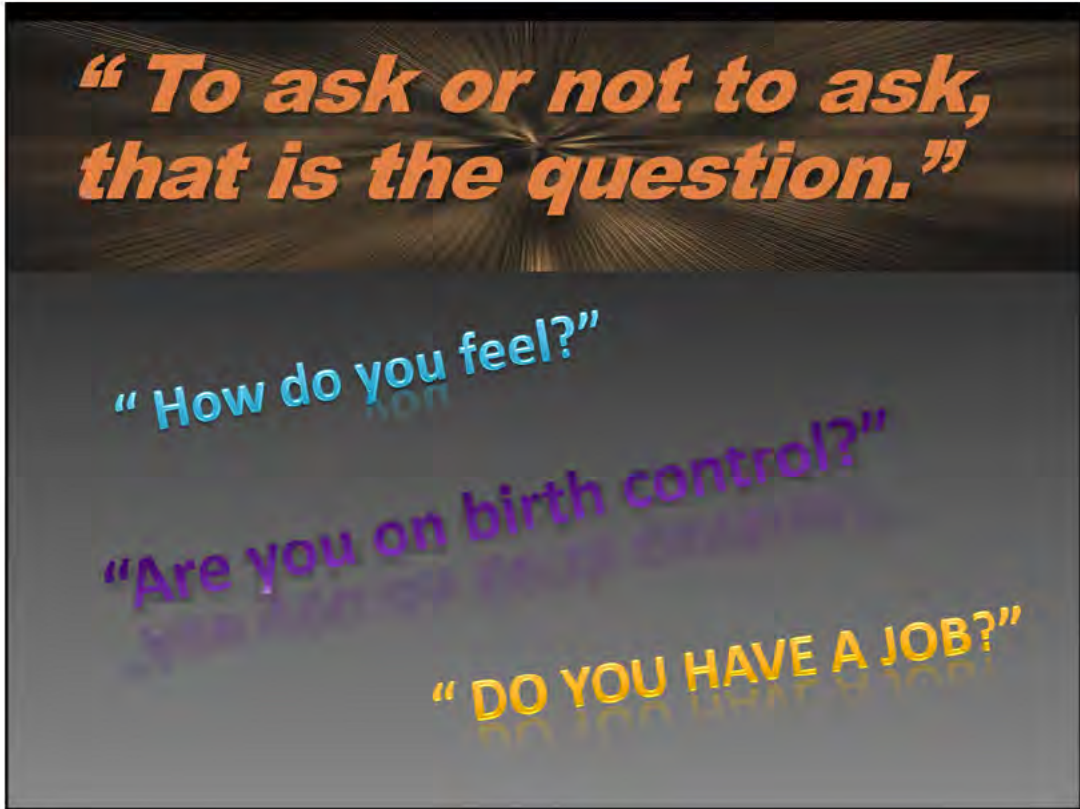


# Questioning Strategies

*Presented by Suzanne Callahan and Tina Qualls*





**Icebreaker exercise –**

county specific assessment, using questions provided (volunteer board member assessment, cards to be collected).

Give an example of an inappropriate or ineffective question you or another member of your board has asked (cards to be collected and used at end of workshop for role play)

# Board Assessment

- **What do reviews look like in your county?**
- **Who is conducting the review?**
- **Do your boards ask specific questions?**



**Debrief Icebreaker (15 mins)** What do reviews look like in your county? Who is conducting the review? Do your boards ask specific questions?

# Why are we here?

- **Why are we here today?**
- **Why are we here as a program?**
- **Why are you here as a volunteer?**



## **Goals and Objectives:**

Today- we're are not giving a prescription to you of what to ask under each finding or a list of every potential question but to get you thinking about the relevance and importance of your questions. There are additional workshops on how to engage parties and the legal importance of our findings in the decision making process.

Program – to perform a legal review, to meet federal requirements, to give citizen input

Volunteer - Your role as a volunteer- what motivates you? Why do you continue to serve? It is important to ask yourself often to avoid becoming jaded.

# CRB PURPOSE



## **Oregon's Foster Care Review Program**

Why we are here as a program.

CRB Statute

We are Oregon's Foster Care Review Program

## CRB Mission

We provide a citizen voice on the safety, stability, and supervision of children in foster care through impartial case review and advocacy.

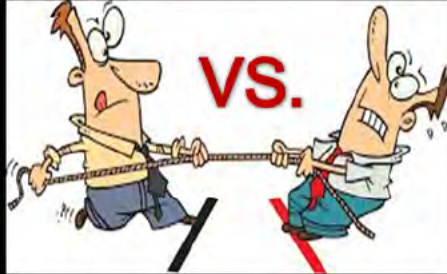
## CRB Vision

Citizens will shape public policy and actively promote conditions to ensure that every child lives in a safe, secure, healthy, and permanent home, preserving families whenever possible.



*Every Day Counts ... In the life of a child in foster care.*

**WHAT WE ARE**



**WHAT WE ARE NOT**

## **We Are:**


- A program of the Oregon Judicial Department
- An administrative review body who conducts legal case review
- The eyes and ears of the juvenile court
- Citizen volunteers who assist state courts to ensure that case plans and services meet the needs of children in foster care

What we are not – it's not our job to fix them, to fix the problem, to give advice, to problem solve, to tell personal stories that relate.



**We are NOT problem solvers, counselors,  
caseworkers, CASA's or psychiatrists.  
We do NOT conduct family decision meetings,  
youth decision meetings, or mediation.**





How do we substantiate our findings?

by asking relevant questions.

Do your counties use JCIP model court forms? – adopted statewide to ensure that findings are legal sufficient **8/1/14**

Reminder: we are making the same findings as permanency hearings and therefore findings need to be substantiated

The findings are the backbone of our program and the focus of the review.

We have to have an understanding what is required to make each of our findings in order to formulate the right questions.

The importance of understanding DHS policies, juvenile law, timelines,, jurisdictional basis, etc.

Do you understand the legal threshold for removal, appropriateness of placement, conditions for return.

**Just the facts, mam.  
Just the facts.**



# FACTS NOT FLUFF



WHO does the finding reference?

WHAT additional information is necessary?

HOW do you ask your question?

### TYPES OF QUESTIONS

WHAT are you measuring?

WHAT is the purpose of your question?

## What we **NEED** to know vs. What we **WANT** to know

- A. WHO does the finding reference – DHS, the parent? So who is the most appropriate party to ask...
  - B. WHAT additional information is necessary? What don't you already know?
    - Direct questions vs. open ended questions to solicit response and obtain information?
    - VERY DIRECT =YES or NO. ex. "did you response a written response from the tribe". WHEN was the referral submitted? What is your clean/sober date?
    - OPEN ENDED = ex. What ongoing efforts have been made to locate and contact relatives? What is the status of determining suitability of these families? tell me, explain to me, HOW, these questions ask parties to evaluate. BE careful of phrasing. WHY did you... leave your children with your ex-boyfriend? Why not? Acronyms, etc. What's was JCMH contacted for PCIT services to address his ODD.
  
    - You are conducting a legal review but not an interrogation. You want parties to be engaged. We want to ask specific questions but in a way that solicits answers, not causes defensiveness, unnecessary rambling, parties to shut down or to escalate.
  - C. WHAT are your measuring? Reasonable Efforts toward adoption? Parental Progress?
  - C. If the purpose of your question does not help you evaluate the finding or substantiate the finding you are addressing, it's likely not something you **NEED** to know.
- WHAT WE WANT TO KNOW – do you have a job? Where do you work? How do you support yourself? Where do you live? What church do you attend? Ex. Citing historical details from psych evals? I read in your psychological evaluation that you were a victim of sexual abuse as a child, have you dealt with that?

*“ If you do not know how  
to ask the right question,  
you discover nothing.”*

*~ W. Edward Deming*



## *Who would you ask?*

Parental Progress

DHS

Child Safety, Health and Well  
Being

Parent

Reasonable Efforts

Attorney

Compliance with the case plan  
and court orders

Service Provider

Appropriateness of  
Placement

Foster Parent

You do not need to address every party on every finding. WHO is present in the room and who is the best person to ask?

# Just say NO

- **What weight is given to warrant a “NO” finding?**
- **Are we measuring our findings accurately?**  
**(parental progress, agency compliance, reasonable efforts)**
- **What is the impact and response to a “NO” finding?**



Do you counties make NO findings? Regularly? Seldom? Only when warranted? Are you more apt to make a NO finding on sufficient parental progress than you are under reasonable efforts?

What weight is given to warrant a “No” finding. (ex. Parenting time and attachment for finding #3 vs. parent relapse for finding #6 vs. face to face visits that aren’t documented in the case plan but that we conducted) Are we measuring our findings accurately or does it depend on the party?

Are you afraid of being critical? Not being liked? Don’t want to discourage a parent? Empathizing with the party? Do you have a personal relationship with the caseworker, going to see same caseworker next month? Can you hold someone accountable in a tactful way?

\*impact and response to a “NO” finding. The negative findings typically generate the most response.

Hard questions- difficult to ask DHS but easier to ask parents...

Refer to previous slide.. Talk about inconsistency of No findings statewide, collection of data,



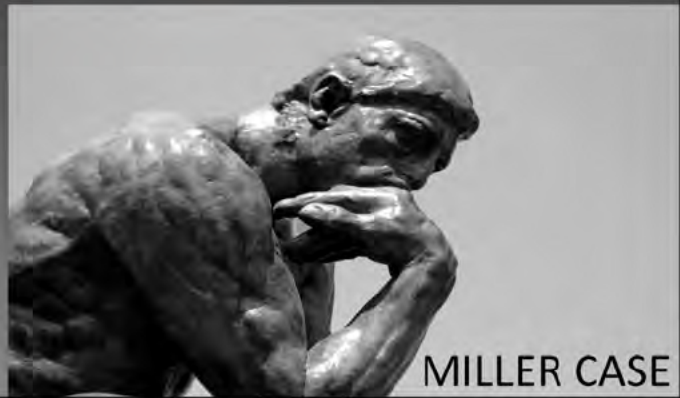


Your questions must be relevant to the finding. Zero in on the issues you need to address and develop specific questions with appropriate language.

How many of you write own specific questions on your case note sheets in advance of the review?

Do you discuss questions as a board during board time?

# Small Group Exercise



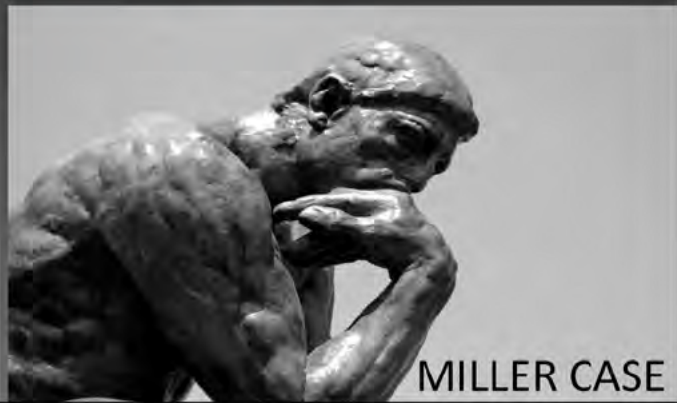
using case scenario and findings, formulate specific questions to be asked (15 mins to prep)

**BREAK**



10 minutes- in room stretch

# Small Group Exercise



Debrief- Small Group Exercise.

Questions, traps.

Talk about facts, key questions, and considerations

# Tips and Suggestions

**Focus on questions and  
the information that  
*hasn't* yet been provided.**

Breaking it down! TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS.

You do not need to prove to other parties that you've done your homework or convince you have an understanding of the case, do not need to regurgitate all of the information that was provided to you as this does not help conduct an efficient review.

Time efficiency!

The parties across the table are living and breathing these cases on a daily basis. You have read a portion of the discovery and are conducting a 40 minute synopsis of 6 months of events.

- Formulate questions that are easily understood; refrain from acronyms and jargon
- Ask other board members for additional questions
- Be sure all appropriate parties have been addressed
- The reasonable efforts finding relates to efforts made by DHS only, *not parental progress*
- Use active listening skills to prevent repetitive questioning

Be sure as a lead questioner that you are asking your fellow board members if they have any additional questions.

The reasonable efforts finding only relates to what DHS efforts so your questions should be to verify service referrals and what's been provided and not list the requirements of the Action Agreement or to ask about parental progress.

Use active listening skills, PAY ATTENTION, to prevent repetitive questioning, to retain control of the review as a board.

## HIERARCHY OF QUESTIONS

*Questions should be asked in  
order of importance*



HIERARCHY OF QUESTIONS – immunizations? Did you get your driver's license?

## PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

- Be sensitive of your audience
- Pay close attention during introductions to accurately identify the parties present
- Address parties by name and not role  
*\*Except for foster parents*
- Appropriate engagement of youth and children in reviews

When parties are introducing themselves – write it down- write NAMES not roles. Know who is in attendance so you know who is available to provide WHAT information.



# Categorization of Questions:

## EXAMPLE

DHS has ensured that appropriate services are in place to safeguard the child/ren's safety, health and well being.

Placement  
Mental Health  
Education  
Health/Medical  
Visits/Family Contact

For example, we spend a large portion of our review on finding #3 as it pertains to the child's health, safety and well-being.

Rather than jumping around with questions, stick to topic areas and categorize your questions. Are there any questions about who all lives in the home or certification of the placement? Then what support services are in place, what are the treatment goals of therapy? Next we are going to talk about school? Is he in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade or the 4<sup>th</sup> grade? When was the IEP updated? DOES ANYONE ELSE HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT EDUCATION?

# Board Demeanor

*The demeanor of the board affects the level and quality of participation by the parties.*

# **D E M E A N O R**

- Understand trauma informed practice
- Be aware of your perspectives and perceptions and how they influence you.
  - What cases do you prefer?
  - What types of cases trigger you?
  - How are you being perceived by other parties?
- Be careful of assumptions and judgments
- Avoid lecturing, counseling, and story telling
- Be aware of body language and tone of voice
- Be conscious of time allocated for review

bias, personalities, assumptions, trauma informed practice, refraining from casting shame (airing parent's dirty laundry and mistakes – finding #1), sensitivity to youth/children, non verbal demeanor.

# GROUP EXERCISE



## **(15 mins) Partner/ LARGE GROUP EXERCISE 2**

Using cards collected from icebreaker, in large group setting, use volunteers to ask partners inappropriate and uncomfortable question(s) .

Discussion: How to reword questions, ask difficult and sensitive questions, accountability without emotion (using example questions from cards collected and used in exercise (was that appropriate, totally inappropriate, how could it have been reworded, etc).

# QUESTIONS



*“ Sometimes the questions are complicated  
and the answers are simple.”*

*~ Dr. Seuss*



# FACTS NOT FLUFF

Thank you!  
from Suzanne  
Callahan and  
Tina Qualls