

Critical Analysis in APS Casework

INSTRUCTOR LED TRAINING (VIRTUAL COURSE)

PARTICIPANT MANUAL



The Academy for Professional Excellence is a project of the San Diego State University School of Social Work

Funding Sources



This training was developed by the Academy for Professional Excellence, with funding from the California Department of Social Services, Adult Programs Division.

Curriculum Developer, 2025

Whitney Barnes, MSW

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Introduction

We are pleased to welcome you to **Critical Analysis in APS Casework Participant Manual** developed by Adult Protective Services Workforce Innovations (APSWI), a program of the Academy for Professional Excellence under a grant from the California Department of Social Services, Adult Programs Division.

The Academy for Professional Excellence, a project of San Diego State University School of Social Work, was established in 1996 with the goal of revolutionizing the way people work to ensure the world is a healthier place. Our services integrate culturally responsive and recovery-oriented practices into our daily work to promote healing and healthy relationships. Providing around 70,000 learning experiences to health and human service professionals annually, the Academy provides a variety of workforce development solutions in Southern California and beyond. With five programs, three divisions and over 100 staff, the Academy's mission is to provide exceptional learning and development experiences for the transformation of individuals, organizations and communities.

APSWI is a program of the Academy for Professional Excellence. APSWI is designed to provide competency-based, multidisciplinary training to Adult Protective Services professionals and their partners. APSWI's overarching goal is the professionalization of Adult Protective Services professionals to ensure that abused and vulnerable older adults and adults with disabilities receive high quality, effective interventions and services.

APSWI partners with state and national organizations and experts in the older adult and adults with disabilities professions to empower APS professionals and those they serve to live safely, peacefully and in a world that is free from abuse and neglect.

APSWI's partners include:

- National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA) and the National Adult Protective Services Training Center (NATC)
- California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Adult Programs Division
- County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA), Protective Services Operations Committee (PSOC)
- California's Curriculum Advisory Committee (CAC) and NAPSA's Supervisor Curriculum Advisory Committee (SCAC)

Partner Organizations

Dawn Gibbons-McWayne, Program Manager, APSWI

Academy for Professional Excellence

<https://theacademy.sdsu.edu/programs/apswi/>

Kat Preston-Wager, Curriculum Development Supervisor, APSWI

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Jennifer Spoeri, Executive Director, National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA)

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Paul Needham, Chair, NAPSA Education Committee

<https://www.napsa-now.org/>

James Treggiari, Adult Protective Services Liaison, Adult Protective Services Division

California Department of Public Social Services

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/adult-protective-services>

Acknowledgements

This curriculum was adapted from the *Critical Thinking for APS Protection Specialists* instructor-led training, with permission from Kansas Department for Children and Families. This training is also the result of a collaborative effort between Adult Protective Services administrators, supervisors, staff development officers and line staff across the state and the nation; professional educators; and the Academy for Professional Excellence staff members. APSWI would like to thank the following individuals and agencies:

Agencies

California Department of Social Services, Adult Programs Division

Kansas Department for Children and Families

National Adult Protective Services Association

Committees

California Southern Regional Academy's Training Planning Committee

Curriculum Developer

Whitney Barnes, MSW

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Executive Summary

Critical Analysis in APS Casework

Course Description:

Critical analysis is an application of thought processes that extend beyond logic and deduction, resulting in creative, comprehensive, and evaluative assessment. Critical analysis requires a deeper examination of apparent facts than simply accepting new information at face value. Critical analysis applies critical thinking skills to generate effective decision mapping.

This course will reinforce a foundational understanding of the importance of critical analysis in the work of Adult Protective Services (APS) professionals. Participants will also integrate five critical thinking skills essential for APS professionals' application of critical analysis. These skills will be practiced and applied to scenarios commonly faced in APS.

Learning Objectives:

At the conclusion of this course, participants will be able to:

1. Identify areas of APS practice where critical analysis is necessary for effective outcomes
2. Summarize five skills essential for enhancing critical thinking and analysis in APS practice
3. Apply components of critical analysis to scenarios that require resourceful problem solving, crucial decision mapping, and effective communication

Intended Audience:

APS professionals (line staff, case workers, investigators) who investigate and assess allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation and are new to the field, or experienced and would benefit from a refresher.


Course Requirements:

Familiarity with Adult Protective Services program, policies, and procedures.


Course Outline

CONTENT	MATERIALS	TIME
Introductions and Definitions	Slides 1-10	Section Total: 15 min
Welcome, Introductions, Housekeeping	Slides 1-6	
Learning Objectives		
Critical analysis components		
Defining critical analysis		
ICETE Acronym		
Information Seeking	Slides 11-12	Section Total: 15 min
Broad range of sources		
<i>Activity: Interview Questions</i>		10 min
Considering Multiple Solutions	Slides 13-14	Section Total: 35 min
Determine solutions from multiple perspectives		
<i>Activity: Inversion Activity</i>		30 min
Challenge Biased Presumptions		
Emotional Intelligence	Slides 15-17	Section Total: 40 min
Emotional Intelligence		
<i>Activity: Self-Regulation</i>		10 min
<i>Activity: Self-Regulation</i>		25 min
Tolerating Ambiguity	Slides 18-19	Section Total: 25 min
Comfort in the grey areas		




CONTENT	MATERIALS	TIME
Balancing the duty to protect with right to self-determination <i>Activity: Weighing the Options</i>		20 min
Effective communication	Slides 20-21	Section Total: 15 min
Prepare for consultation	Handout: APS Case Consultation Template	5 min
<i>Activity: Casework under review</i>		10 min
Putting it all together	Slides 22-23	Section Total: 25 min
Critical analysis applied to ethical dilemmas		
Applying ICETE <i>Activity: APS Vignette</i>	Handout: Case Vignette	20 min
Wrap-Up	Slides	Section Total: 10 min
Summarize Key Takeaways		
P.I.E Feedback <i>Activity: P.I.E. Discussion</i>		4 min
Thank you and Evaluations		
TOTAL (Excluding Breaks): 3 hours		



Critical Analysis in APS Casework




We create experiences that transform the heart, mind, and practice.



About the Academy & APSWI



The Academy is a project of San Diego State's School of Social Work. Serving over 20,000 health and human services professionals annually, the Academy's mission is to provide exceptional workforce development and learning experiences for the transformation of individuals, organizations and communities.

APSWI, or Adult Protective Services Workforce Innovations, is a training program of the Academy that provides innovative workforce development to APS professionals and their partners.




San Diego State University

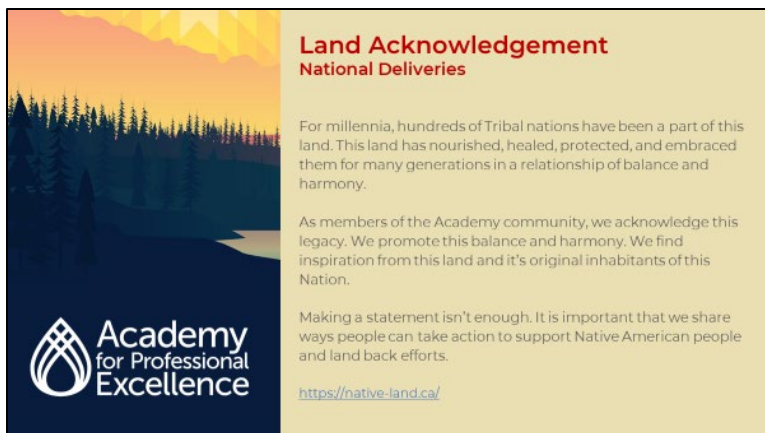
ACADEMY PROGRAMS



Purpose of Land Acknowledgement



The purpose of a land acknowledgement is to recognize the relationship of indigenous peoples to the land. It is multi-faceted in its meaning. It shows respect to the people of the land, to the land itself and to their relationship to one another. They are statements that recognize the dispossession from the land, the harm brought by colonial practices, beliefs and policies. They validate and recognize the continued presence of indigenous peoples everywhere. Lastly, when offered in earnest and with sincerity, they are the first steps in reconciliation and healing.

The slide features a background image of a forest at sunset. The Academy for Professional Excellence logo is in the bottom left corner. The title "Land Acknowledgement National Deliveries" is in red. The text discusses the historical relationship with Tribal nations and the Academy's commitment to land back efforts.

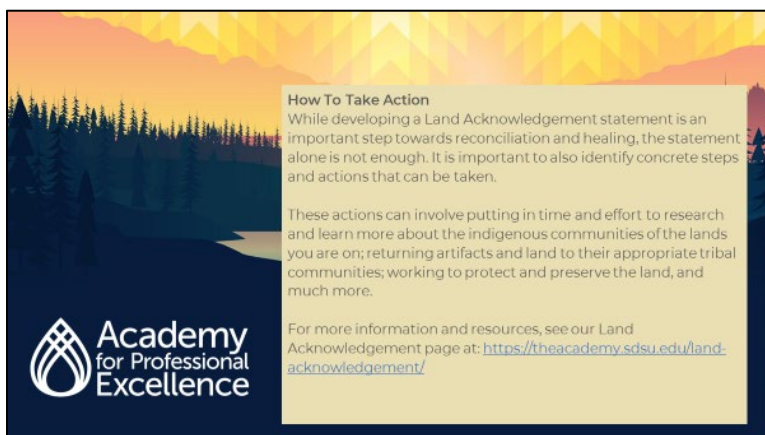
**Land Acknowledgement
National Deliveries**

For millennia, hundreds of Tribal nations have been a part of this land. This land has nourished, healed, protected, and embraced them for many generations in a relationship of balance and harmony.

As members of the Academy community, we acknowledge this legacy. We promote this balance and harmony. We find inspiration from this land and it's original inhabitants of this Nation.

Making a statement isn't enough. It is important that we share ways people can take action to support Native American people and land back efforts.

<https://native-land.ca/>

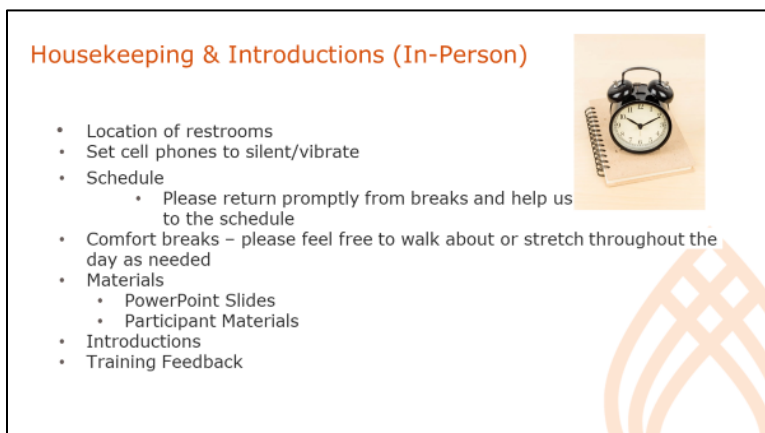
The slide features a background image of a forest at sunset. The Academy for Professional Excellence logo is in the bottom left corner. The title "How To Take Action" is in bold. The text explains that a Land Acknowledgement statement is an important step but not enough, and lists actions like research, returning artifacts, and protecting the land. It also provides a link to the Academy's Land Acknowledgement page.

How To Take Action

While developing a Land Acknowledgement statement is an important step towards reconciliation and healing, the statement alone is not enough. It is important to also identify concrete steps and actions that can be taken.

These actions can involve putting in time and effort to research and learn more about the indigenous communities of the lands you are on; returning artifacts and land to their appropriate tribal communities; working to protect and preserve the land, and much more.

For more information and resources, see our Land Acknowledgement page at: <https://theacademy.sdsu.edu/land-acknowledgement/>

The slide features a background image of a forest at sunset. The Academy for Professional Excellence logo is in the bottom left corner. The title "Housekeeping & Introductions (In-Person)" is in orange. A list of items includes location of restrooms, cell phone settings, schedule, comfort breaks, materials (PowerPoint Slides, Participant Materials), introductions, and training feedback. An image of an alarm clock and a notepad is in the top right corner.

Housekeeping & Introductions (In-Person)

- Location of restrooms
- Set cell phones to silent/vibrate
- Schedule
 - Please return promptly from breaks and help us to the schedule
- Comfort breaks – please feel free to walk about or stretch throughout the day as needed
- Materials
 - PowerPoint Slides
 - Participant Materials
- Introductions
- Training Feedback



Learning Objectives

- Identify areas of APS practice where critical analysis is necessary for effective outcomes.
- Summarize five skills essential for enhancing critical thinking and analysis in APS practice.
- Apply components of critical analysis to scenarios that require resourceful problem solving, crucial decision mapping, and effective communication.

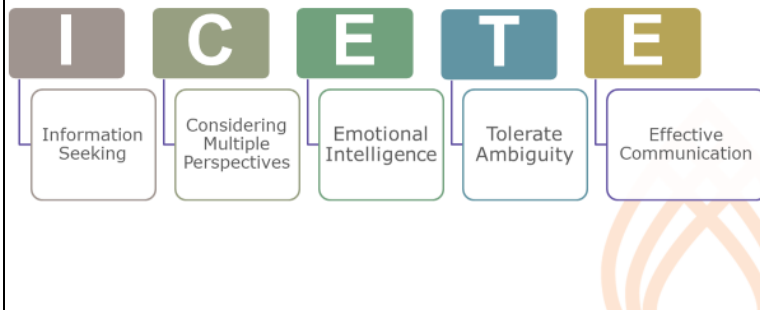
Critical Analysis: Application of thought exercises



Critical Analysis

...does not seek the right answer, rather it allows one to determine the most beneficial, or conversely least harmful, pathway to address a presenting problem.

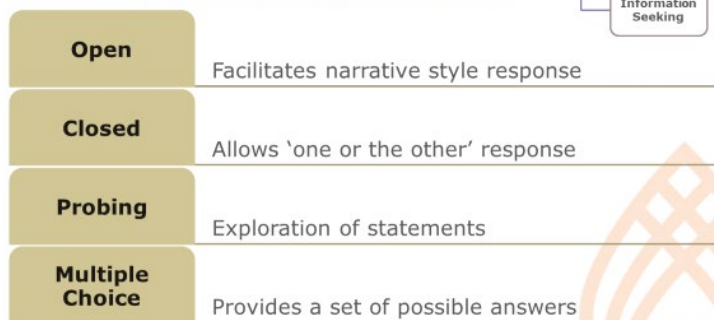
Critical Analysis Skills



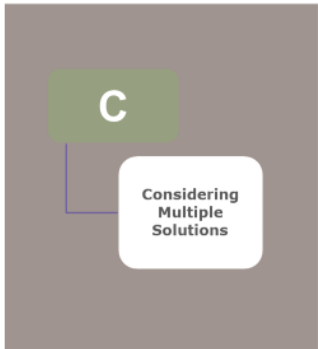
Information Seeking



Interview and Investigation Skills





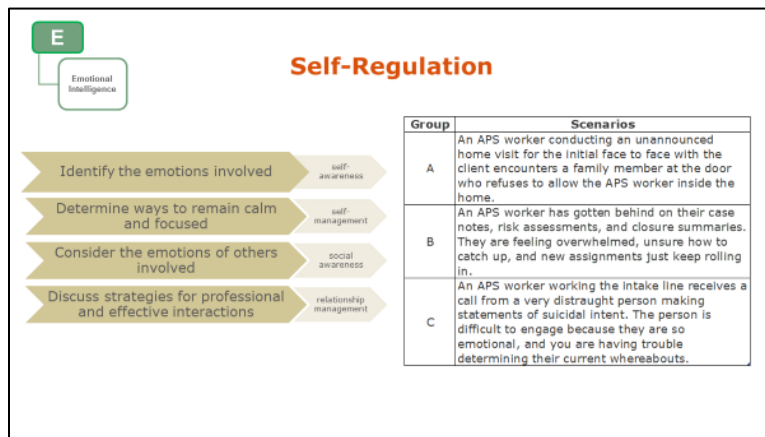
*Watch this [video](#)

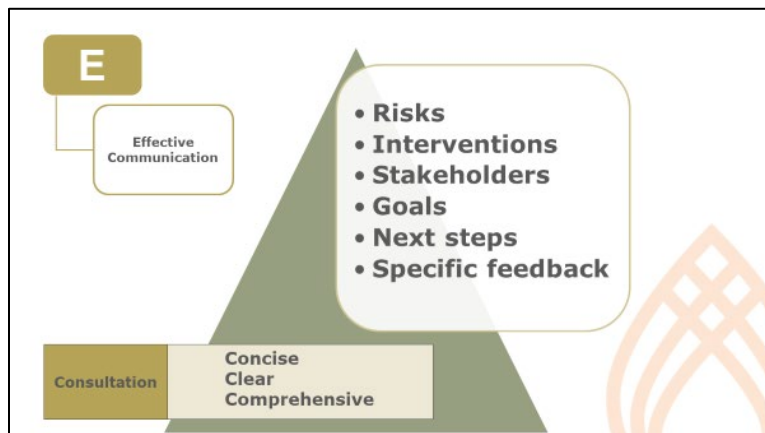
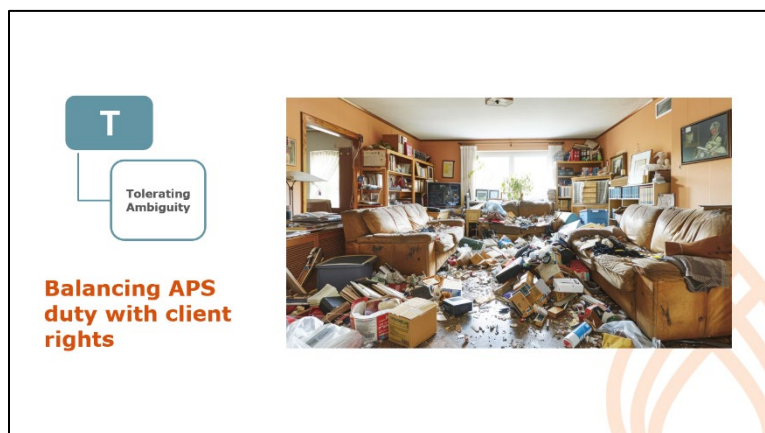
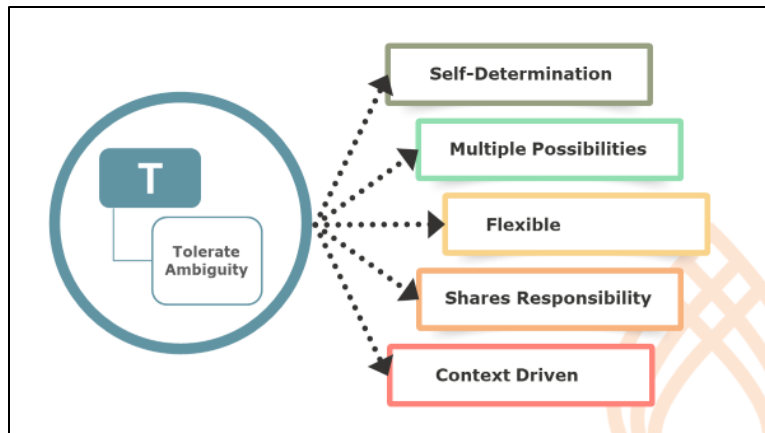


- Adopt a view that is counter to your beliefs
- Identify and address flaws in your thinking
- Multiple lenses allow for multiple potential solutions

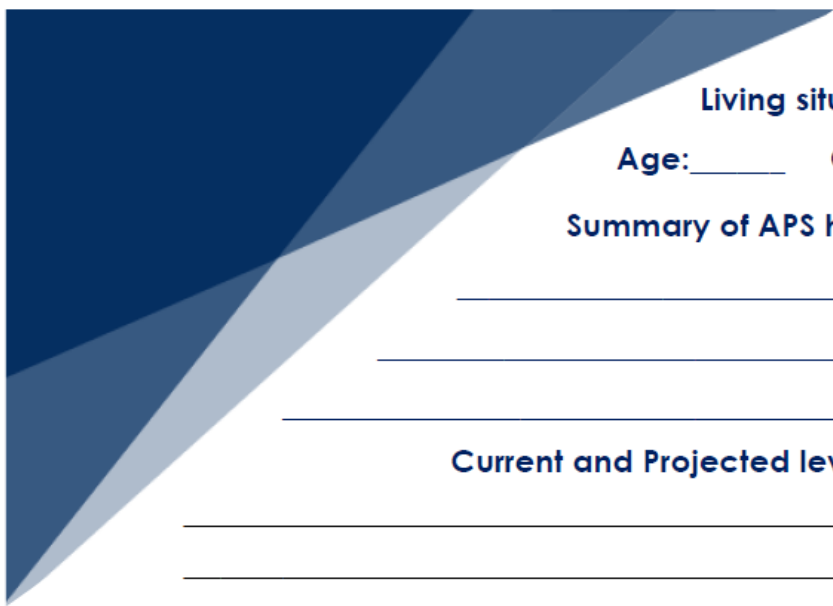
Inversion Activity		
Group	Topic 1	Topic 2
1	Public schools should be in session year-round, not taking a summer break	Persons over 90 years old, or with certain medical conditions, should not ever be allowed to drive.
2	Scholarship to play sports in college should be discontinued.	Breaching the confidentiality of an APS client by revealing the nature of an open investigation without the client's consent is unethical and should never happen during an APS investigation.
3	Voting age in the United States should be increased to 25	Due to their expertise with interviewing and intervening for persons experiencing a range of mental and physical crisis, APS workers with at least 2 years of experience in investigations should be included as qualified workers to write involuntary mental health (5150) holds.
4	Binge-watching media of choice is a healthy coping skill	Policy should be written to allow the identify and nature of the reporting party on an APS referral to be revealed to the APS client when requested.
5	Marching band members should receive PE credits in high school.	Being assigned conservatorship means that adults should not be allowed to make any social or financial decisions independently.
6	Daylight savings time is effective and should be maintained in the US	All persons making a referral to APS must provide their full contact information and cannot make a report anonymously.
7	The US should phase out the use of the penny	Adult children of parents over the age of 60 should have a legal responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of their parents.
8	APS staff should have no work from home schedules	MediCare should cover the Residential Care Facility for the Elderly (RCFE) placement for adults over the age of 90; with such placement compulsory unless the adult has 24-hour care in their home.

<div data-bbox="203 304 519 714"><h3>Considering Multiple Perspectives</h3></div> <div data-bbox="771 315 933 441"><p>C</p><p>Considering Multiple Perspectives</p></div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Challenge biases• Openly seek evidence• Neutral truth-seeking	
<div data-bbox="203 760 357 1176"><p>E</p><p>Emotional Intelligence</p><p>Emotional Intelligence</p></div> <div data-bbox="365 760 946 1176"></div>	

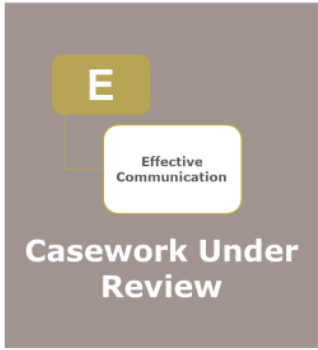

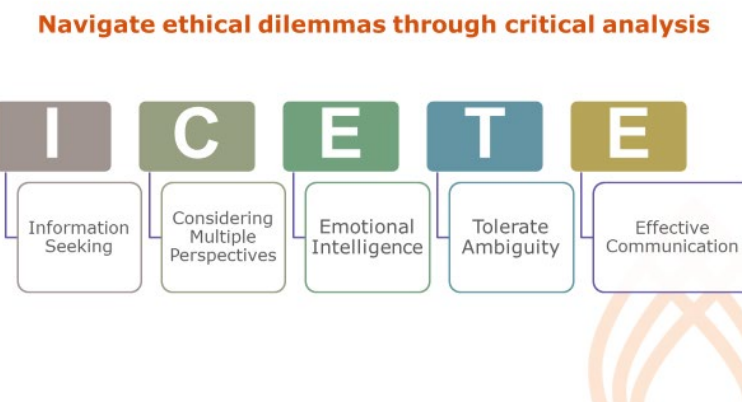




Handout: APS Case Consultation Template

	Client Name _____	
	Living situation _____	
	Age: _____	Case #: _____
	Summary of APS history:	
_____ _____ _____		
Current and Projected level of risk:		
_____ _____		
Client Strengths: _____ _____ _____ Allegations(s) being investigated: _____ _____ _____ Interventions tried: _____ _____	Involved parties: _____ _____ _____ Client's goals: _____ _____ _____ Potential next steps: _____ _____	
Specific Feedback Sought: _____ _____		

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 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Subpoenas from the court• Law Enforcement request for records• Internal Quality Assurance Practice• Future cases open by different APS workers• Critical Incidents• Dissatisfied family or client	
	
 <p>Navigate ethical dilemmas through critical analysis</p> <p>I C E T E</p> <p>Information Seeking Considering Multiple Perspectives Emotional Intelligence Tolerate Ambiguity Effective Communication</p>	

Handout: APS Case Vignette

You are assigned an APS investigation into allegations of neglect by caregiver. The client is a 91-year-old widowed woman who lives with her adult son, Frank. Frank is the alleged perpetrator on the referral. The allegations are that Frank is withholding medication and failing to assist with necessary personal care. The reporting party is the client's primary care physician, who recently saw the client in clinic.

During your initial face to face visit, you find that the client presents with extreme body odor, hair is uncombed, clothing is stained, and you notice several medication bottles that appear unopened. The client expressed a desire to remain in care of alleged perpetrator/son, but wishes she received more care and attention. The client expressed shame and embarrassment about her presentation, trying to smooth her hair and straighten her clothing throughout your interview. The client minimized the reported concerns and appeared concerned about getting Frank "in trouble."

During your first contact, the alleged perpetrator was rude and dismissive toward you. He does not give clear or complete answers to your questions about his care responsibilities to his mom and repeatedly asks you to leave the home. You return with your supervisor for a follow up home visit and find the alleged perpetrator is still evasive but seems more willing to answer direct questions from your supervisor. Your research reveals that the alleged perpetrator has recently been released from jail on charges of opiates possession and drug trafficking.

The client's primary care physician has called the APS referral line twice since the first report requesting an immediate update on your efforts to "get the client out of that house and somewhere she has real caregiving."

Summary

- Critical analysis is the application of thought exercises
- APS intakes, investigations, risk assessments, service plans and findings are impacted through critical analysis
- Apply critical analysis to ethical dilemmas to identify multiple acceptable paths

Necessary skills for critical analysis in APS:

- Information seeking
- Consider multiple perspectives
- Emotional intelligence
- Tolerate ambiguity
- Effective communication



Reflections

- Priceless information
- Item to implement
- Encouragement received

Thank You!

We envision a world where
the quality of life for individuals, organizations, and communities
is transformed into a healthier place.



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OUR WHY: **REVOLUTIONIZE
THE WAY PEOPLE
WORK TO ENSURE
THE WORLD IS A
HEALTHIER PLACE.**



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