



Department of

**Children's Services**

# Quality Contacts: Focus on Assessment

A Quality Contacts Webinar Series

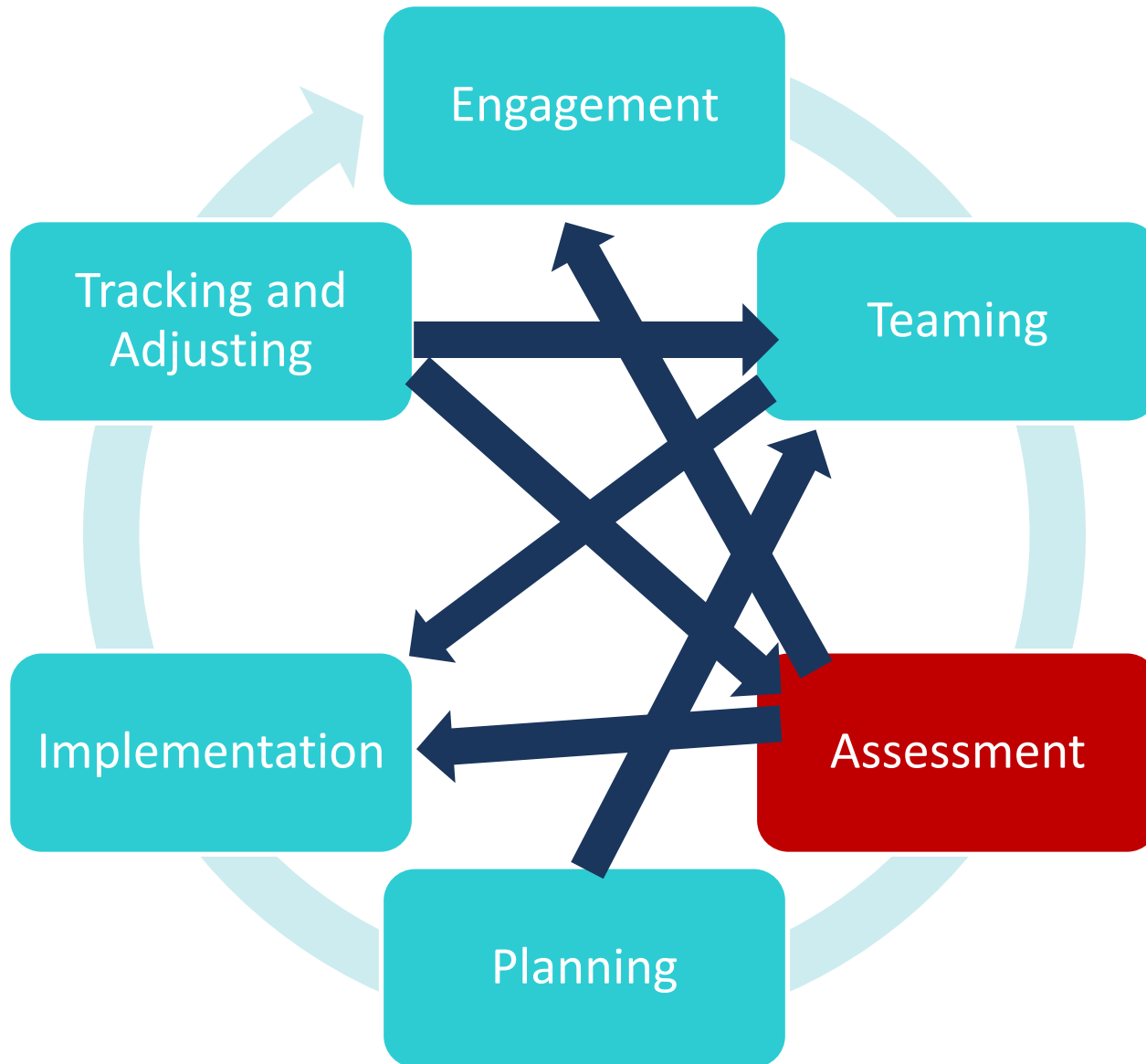
# What would you do?



# When does assessment occur?

At EVERY single contact, with EVERY member of the team, to globally assess and demonstrate CONCERTED efforts over the course of each **month** on every topic that applies to the family's situation.

# Focus on Assessment



Why is  
assessment  
so difficult?

Why is assessment  
so important?

# Types of Assessment

## Informal

- Observations
- Interviews/conversations
- Review of summary or progress reports, records, etc.
- Shared conclusions

## Formal

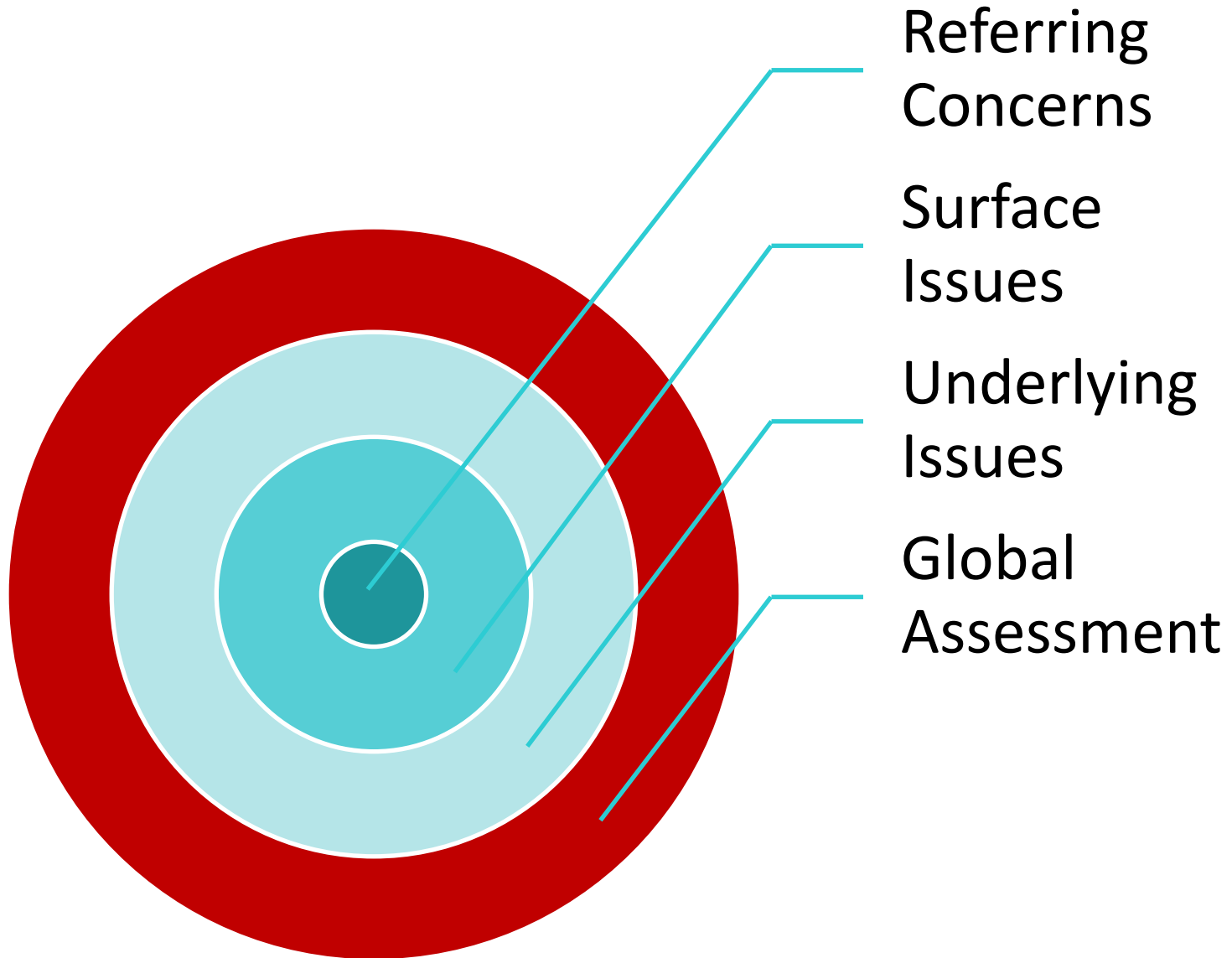
- FAST
- Psychological and other mental health assessments
- Parenting assessments
- Etc.

# Assessment adds up

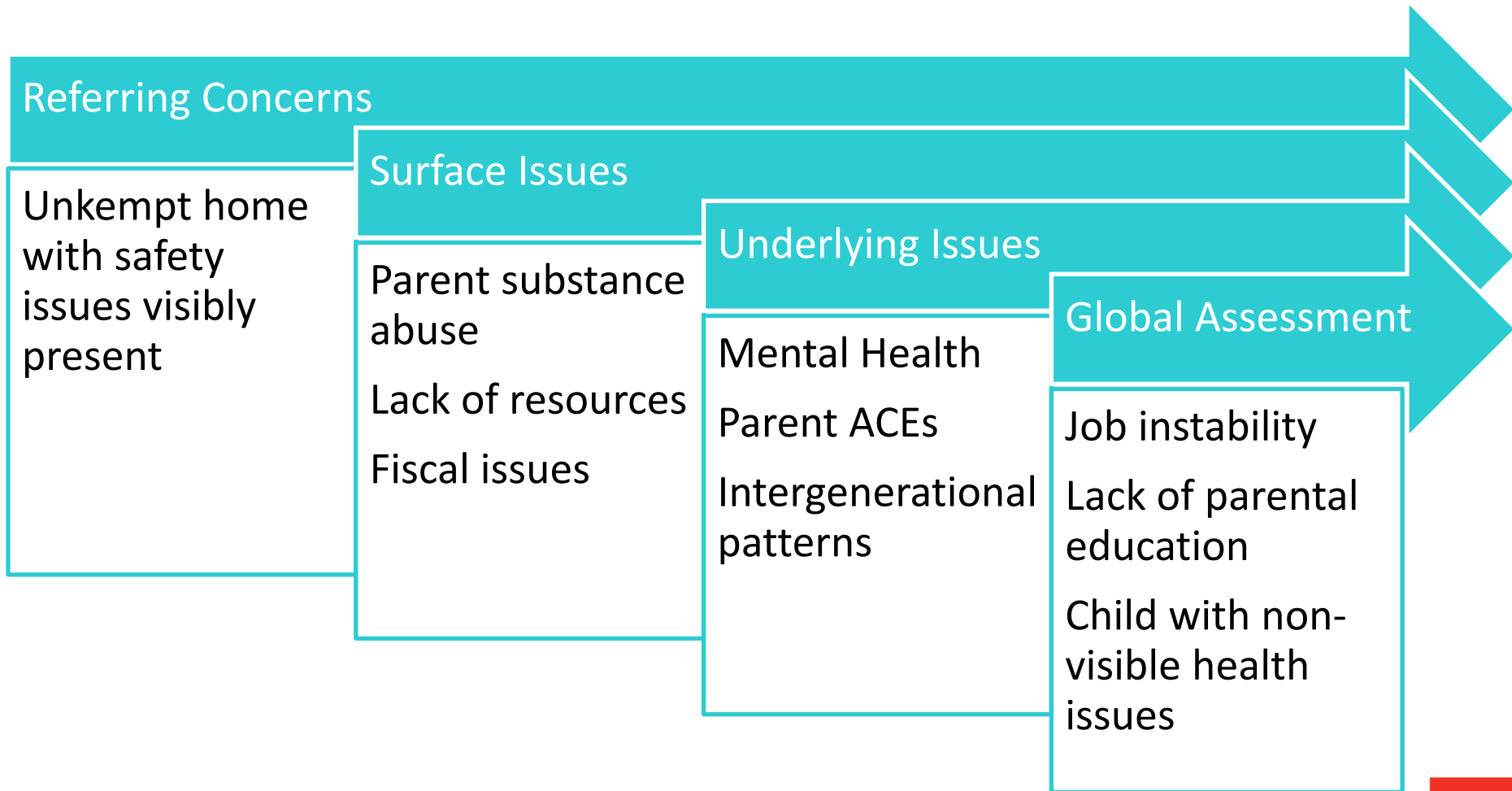




# Context for Global Assessment



# Example



# Explaining Assessment

- Share why you will be asking questions.
  - “I am going to ask you a bunch of questions about a lot of topics to learn more about your family. The reason I am doing this is because I want to be able to better understand how I can help you based on what’s happening with your family. It’s important that I get enough details so that I don’t make wrong assumptions about what you might need to help your situation.”



- Explain our process for assessment.
  - “After we talk through all of my questions , I’m going to use that information to complete an assessment called (FAST – tell them what it stands for). This will tell me the areas that we should consider focusing on. “
  - “It will also give me a rating for safety and risk for your family. This will give me an indication of what types of services and supports your family needs to maximize safety for your children.”

# How to get to good global assessment...

- Take time to build a professional (trusting) helping relationship.
- Show genuineness, empathy, and respect.
- Be curious – ask lots of questions
- Don't shy away from hard to ask questions/topics.
- Ask open questions or on similar topics in a variety of ways.
- “Tell me more...” 5 times! (Get past the buzzwords\*)
- Ask multiple family/team members the same questions.
- Use it as a collaborative process to gain buy-in and bring the team together.
- Offer the client autonomy in decision making where possible and when it's safe to do so.
- Use the FAST items as a guide...



Global  
Assessment

# FAST

## Core Items

Family Together	Caregivers	Youth
Financial Resources	Adjustment to Trauma Experiences	Sexual Abuse
Residential Stability	Medical/Physical	Physical Abuse
Physical Condition of Home	Developmental	Emotional Abuse
Home Maintenance	Mental Health	Neglect
Natural Supports	Substance Use	Traumatic Grief
Family Conflict	Parental Criminal Activity	Witness to Family, School, or
Resiliency	Supervision	Community Violence
Family Safety	Discipline	Relationship with Primary
	Involvement in Caregiving Functions	Caregiver
	Knowledge of Youth and Family	Education
	Needs	Physical Health
		Developmental/Intellectual
		Mental Health
		Substance use
		High Risk Behavior
		Runaway

Global  
Assessment

# What about other formal assessments

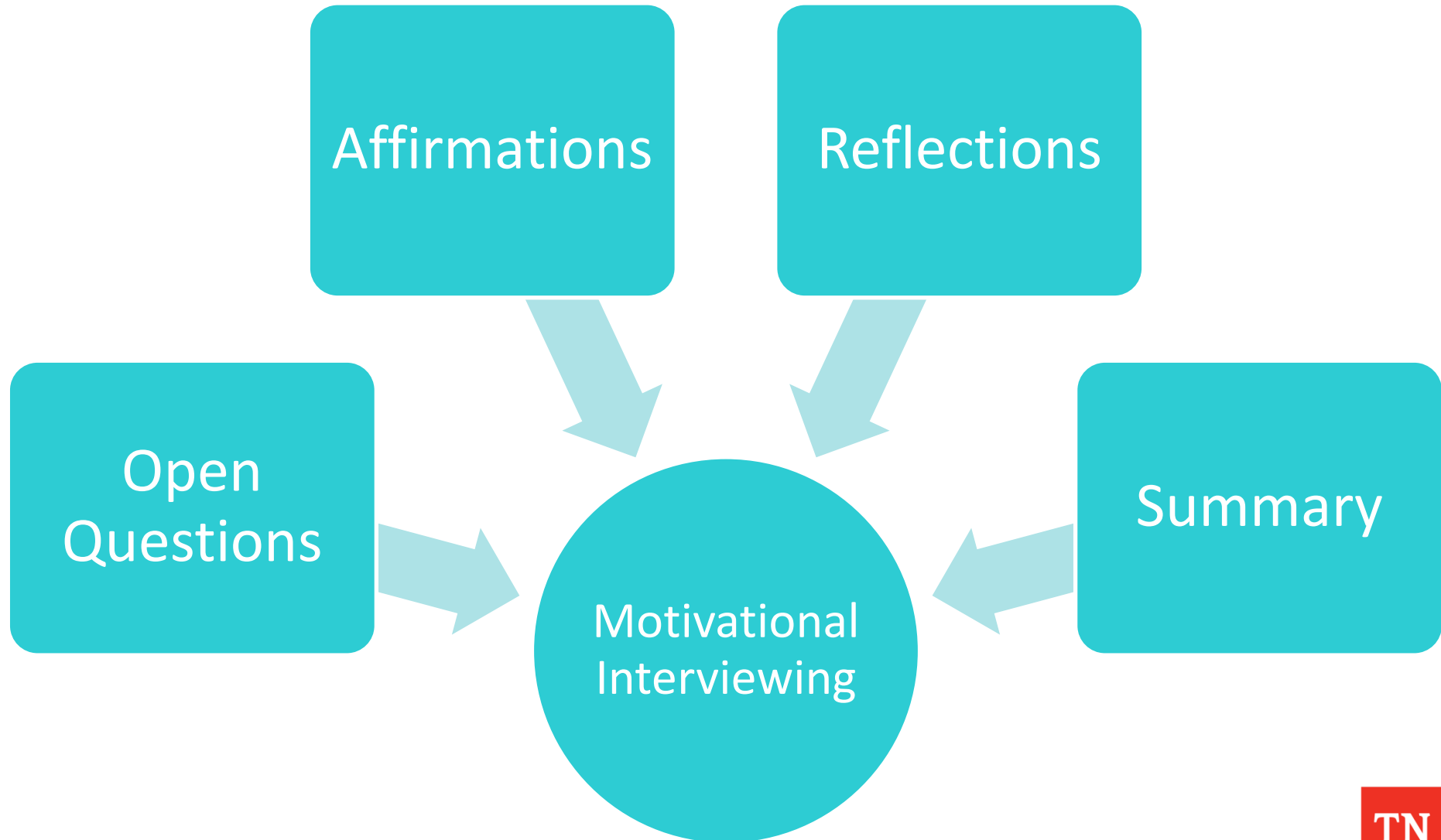
- Potential source of new information
- Use recommendations
- Circle back to check for progress

# Using Motivational Interviewing to get there...

1. Express empathy through reflective listening;
2. Develop discrepancy between clients' goals or values and their current behavior;
3. Avoid argument and judgement when confronting unacceptable behaviors;
4. Roll with client resistance (understand that change is difficult and won't be instantaneous even when necessary); and
5. Support self-efficacy and optimism even when faced with having to make difficult non-negotiable safety decisions.
6. Use OARS skills.



# Help them open up... OARS



# Assessment Partnership

- Explain how the assessment will be used to target services and develop a plan:
  - “Now that I have completed your assessment, here are some things that came up for your family. Based on what you shared, mental health and supervising your children came up as areas that if we provide you with the right supports, we could help improve things for your family. I’d like to talk to you about mental health services and parenting services available to you so that we can identify the specific services that are a good fit for you.”



Assessment  
Integration

- Integrated Assessment means that there is a connection between the assessment and the rest of the activities occurring in the case:
  - Conversations with families that gather information to draw conclusions about functioning.
  - Intentional discussion in CFTMs and connection to case plan (permanency plan or IPA) action steps, services selected, and decision making.
  - Re-assessment that demonstrates comparison to past assessments and reflect the changes in family functioning observed.
  - When things aren't going well, assessment information is considered to determine different next steps in case planning.
  - Used in case conferencing supervision meeting to guide discussion to ensure global assessment and integrated assessment throughout the case
  - Used in testimony in court to demonstrate objective assessment and structured case decision making.

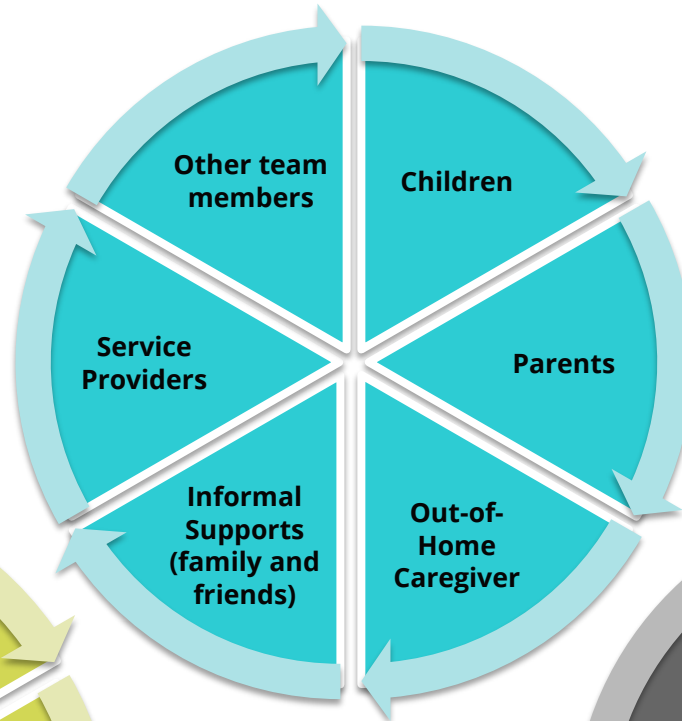
# Global assessment that reviews progress

- Focus in on primary areas (2s and 3s on FAST) and touch on secondary areas (0s and 1s). Has there been improvement, decline or are they stuck?
- Highlight areas of strength and celebrate wins/offer praise.
- Talk about effectiveness of services
  - ...in addition to what was completed. (get past compliance focused)
- Talk about ongoing areas of concern



# The How, Who and What of Monthly Contacts...

Who?



What?



How?



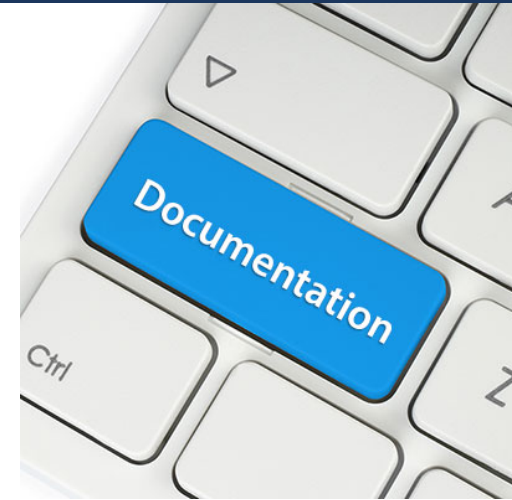
# Assessment adds up



# Documenting Formal Assessment

Documentation reflects :

- ✓ Highlight 2s and 3s from the FAST.
  - ✓ Summarize and describe circumstances that resulted in the score.
  - ✓ Explain how you plan to address the area through services or supports. If you're not going to, explain why.
- ✓ Include 0s and 1s that are functional strengths to be leveraged in case planning.
- ✓ Describe the high points and recommendations from other professional assessments and next steps planned.
- ✓ When subsequent FAST are scored, highlight the areas of improvement, stability or decline and explain how important areas will be addressed
- ✓ Between formal assessment document progress made in detailed notes



# Documenting Informal Assessment

- Describe the depth and detail of conversations
- Avoid buzzwords\* –use Behavioral Descriptors
- Draw conclusions about underlying causes.
- Go beyond the presenting issues and ensure all areas are covered (Global Assessment)
- Connect information gathered to decisions made
- Describe how you, the caseworker, engage the family



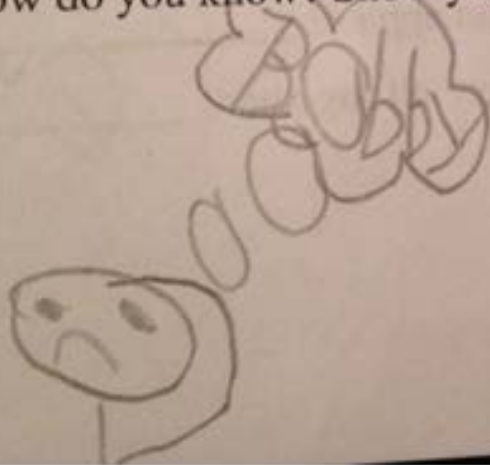
# Show your work!

**MGSE1.NBT.7**

11. Bobby has four dimes. Amy has 30 pennies. Which child has more money?

Bobby ✓

How do you know? Show your thinking.



# Ok, that was funny, but what do you mean?


- Describe:

- How you interact with the family.
- Suggestions you provide to the family.
- How you coach them to work their plan.
- Support you give them in overcoming barriers.
- How you address ongoing concerns.
- How you make connections to other team members.
- Praise you share for accomplishments.
- How you followed up on all of the services in place and the progress being made.
- The decisions you made and why you made them.

You learned....

So you plan to do....

Because you think it will help accomplish...



**Goal:** Improve quality of informal assessment

**Plan/Action Steps:**

1. Ask questions I'm curious about
2. Don't shy away from difficult topics
3. Refocus efforts on better descriptions in case notes.
4. Show my work!

**Update your Small Test of Change**

# Evaluation

## Course Title:

Quality Contacts: Focus on Assessment

**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 blue bar.

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Thank you