**Foundational Element:**

**Areas of Assessment in Child Protective Services**

Welcome to “Areas of Assessment in Child Protective Services” foundational element. In this element, we apply engagement-focused and trauma-informed practice techniques to help elicit relevant and sufficient information, explore how gathering information about parental protective capacities and the areas of assessment help to support decision-making, and plan for interviews with children, families, and others.

These workbook pages will support your learning through this element and aid your supervisor and/or coach in understanding the purpose of the element (see the Element Learning Objectives below), its sections (see Element Sections below), and how they can support you in your learning.

Beginning on page 2, you will find space to capture your responses to activities within the online modules – some of your responses will be brought to Community Huddles, while others will be shared with your supervisor, coach, or colleague for on-the-job application activities.

**Element Learning Objectives**

Upon completion of this element, child welfare professionals will be able to:

* Align the purpose of all assessments with the goal of safety, permanence, and well-being for children and families.
* Describe why gathering accurate, sufficient, and relevant information is essential throughout all phases of interaction with families.
* Explain the purpose and focus of each area of assessment, key information to be gathered, and potential sources of information.
* Describe how the Child Welfare Model of Practice values apply during information gathering – whether observing or probing the 5W’s (Why, Who, When, Where and What).
* Practice developing a strategy for assessment conversations, as well as the need to remain flexible and adapt in the moment.
* Practice documenting information that is objective, accurate, descriptive, relevant, and concise.

**Element Sections**

This element contains the following sections:

* Prework for Community Huddle 1 – online content (25 minutes)
* Community Huddle 1 – virtual session via Zoom (120 minutes)
* Packet 1: Information Gathering at Access – online content (25 minutes)
* Packet 2: Information Gathering at Initial Assessment – online content (85 minutes)
* Packet 3: Information Gathering at Ongoing Services – online content (60 minutes)
* Independent Study – online content (60 minutes)

**Prework for Community Huddle 1**

In your prework for Community Huddle 1, you consider the questions that family members have about CPS involvement. You are introduced to the 5W (why, when, where, who and what) questions and are asked to (1) listen to questions that family members have, (2) consider the emotions, fears, and anxieties that family members are envisioning, and (3) capture your thoughts about the feelings and fears that may be behind the questions that family members asked. Use the sections starting below to record your activities as you complete the online packet.

**Unspoken Fears and Questions**

Consider what unspoken fears and questions family members may have that sit behind each question. For each question below that was asked by a family member, record the unspoken fears and questions the family may have.

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|  | Why are they gathering information, and what are they going to do with it? |
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|  | What if I can’t give them what they want fast enough? |
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|  | What if I don’t want them to have some of this information? |
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|  | Are they going to talk to immigration? |
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|  | Are they going to talk to my landlord? |
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|  | Are they accessing my court record? |
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**Please bring your responses with you to your Community Huddle where you will use them in an activity.**

Space for any additional notes or questions that you’d like to capture for discussion with your agency supervisor or coach.

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**Community Huddle 1**

In the workbook introduction, you learned that the Foundational Elements include Community Huddles as a way to discuss learning and build connections and community with your cohort colleagues.

Community Huddles are held virtually via Zoom. You will find the date, time, and Zoom link for this Community Huddle within the *Welcome to the WiLearn Program* enrollment email that you received from WCWPDS.

Please see that email for details about logging in to the Community Huddle and contact information should you have any questions about the Community Huddle.

During this Community Huddle, we will:

* Explore and discuss our prework activities around the 5Ws and the concerns and questions that families often have as they engage with child protective services
* Consider the 5Ws from the perspective of the child welfare professional whose job is to seek relevant information to ensure safety and inform decision making
* Discuss techniques for bridging the differences between the two perspectives and addressing the concerns and questions of both families and child welfare professionals
* Review the areas of assessment
* Preview element content

In this Community Huddle, we spend time:

* exploring further, through a small group activity, where family members’ unspoken questions, concerns, and fears are coming from, the behaviors that might be displayed as a result of their concerns or fears, and how their past might influence how they could respond to a situation.
* considering the skills and tools from previous Foundational Elements that we need to pay close attention to and apply effectively when gathering information from family members.
* discussing the 5Ws that child welfare professionals need to consider related to gathering information in order to assess safety, strengths, and challenges.

**Areas of Assessment Summary**

* **Maltreatment** facts of all types of maltreatment found to be present as well as maltreatment alleged and found not to be present. Include the determination and clear and concise explanations of how the determination was reached.
* **Surrounding Circumstances** is focused on the context and precursors leading to the alleged maltreatment. Consider things such as frequency and duration, patterns of behaviors, parental reactions and cultural or religious practices. Information supports maltreatment determinations.
* **Child Functioning** focuses on general behaviors, temperament, and effects of maltreatment rather than the child’s response to intervention. This information is used to establish a level of vulnerability.
* **Adult Functioning** focuseson how the adult caregiver functions in their everyday life outside of being a parent, how they manage life socially, emotionally, behaviorally, and cognitively, and assesses strengths or challenges in managing their day-to-day responsibilities.
* **Parenting (Discipline and Practices)** explores the general nature and approach to parenting. This should be assessed for each child, not just the alleged victim.
* **Parenting Discipline** considers the parent’s understanding of discipline and its role in guidance and learning. Analyze how it aligns with the child’s age, behaviors, and unique needs.
* **Parenting Practices** considers their approach and philosophy, understanding of basic needs, managing, and adapting to the child’s unique needs as well as their perceptions of the child.
* **Family Functioning** considers a family’s overall functioning, strengths and needs, current stressors, and support network (formal/informal). Consider how they communicate, what is the emotional climate, whether roles and boundaries clear. Include any cultural influences.

**Element Content Preview: What’s Next**

* In Packet 1: Information Gathering at Access, you will listen to a child welfare professional fielding a call from a reporter and asking questions to gather relevant information to include in the Access report.
* In Packet 2: Information Gathering at Initial Assessment,you will first listen as the child welfare professional has conversations with family members and then plan who and how you would have collateral conversations with to gather more information. You’ll then have an opportunity to listen to portions of the child welfare professional’s collateral conversations.
* In Packet 3: Information Gathering at Ongoing Services, you will review a family’s Access and Initial Assessment reports and develop a strategy for how to approach your first conversation with them.
* In the Independent Study, you will shadow a more seasoned child welfare professional in your agency during one of their assessment interviews with a family at Initial Assessment or Ongoing Services and debrief with your agency supervisor or coach.

NOTE: In this Foundational Element, we do not come back together for a second Community Huddle. You will apply and build upon the work that you do in the remainder of the online packets in our next Foundational Element: Critical Thinking.

**Packet 1: Information Gathering at Access**

In the Information Gathering at Access packet, you will listen to a child welfare professional fielding a call from a reporter and asking questions to gather relevant information to include in the Access report.

You are asked to (1) listen in on part of the call, (2) make note of the information you consider most relevant within the interaction, and (3) respond to two reflection questions. You will come back to the family and the information that you capture in this workbook in the Critical Thinking in Child Protective Services Foundational Element, which is our next element. Use the sections starting below to record your activities as you complete the online packet.

**Chen Family Access Call Notes**

As you listen to the Access call, capture notes in the space below, specifically making note of the information you consider to be the most relevant in the interaction. Feel free to capture additional information that will help you remember the family and the circumstances, as well.

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**Reflection Questions**

After you have completed the activity within the online packet where you selected the information that you thought was most relevant to include in the Access report for the purposes of making the screening decision, capture your responses to the questions noted in the spaces below.

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|  | How did the Access professional ask clarifying questions to better understand what the reporter was describing and get more specific details around each of the items? |
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Write down the questions you would have asked during the Access call and explain the importance behind these questions.

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|  | Question:  Importance:  Question:  Importance:  Question:  Importance:  Question:  Importance:  Question:  Importance:  Question:  Importance: |
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Space for any additional notes or questions that you’d like to capture for discussion with your agency supervisor or coach.

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**Packet 2: Information Gathering at Initial Assessment**

In the Information Gathering at Initial Assessment packet, you will first listen as the child welfare professional has conversations with family members and then plan who and how you would have collateral conversations with to gather more information. You’ll then have an opportunity to listen to portions of the child welfare professional’s collateral conversations.

You are asked to practice at several steps in the initial assessment interview process. You will (1) think about and write down how you would interact with the family member or collateral contact, (2) listen in on the interaction between the Initial Assessment professional and the family member or collateral contact, (3) outline your strategy for approaching each collateral contact, (4) practice taking notes on what you hear during the interview with the family members and collaterals contacts, (5) complete a personal reflection where you consider what you’ve learned in the previous Foundational Elements, and (6) consider the impact of your own biases and values in conducting and documenting the conversations.

You will come back to the family and the information that you capture in this workbook in the Critical Thinking in Child Protective Services Foundational Element, which is our next element. Use the sections starting below to record your activities as you complete the online packet.

**Chen Family Interviews**

* 1. **Interview with Benji**

As you listen in on the Initial Assessment professional’s conversation with Benji, pay attention to:

* How the Initial Assessment professional introduces herself and explains the process
* How the initial Assessment professional frames questions to learn more about the family and gather relevant information for the Areas of Assessment.

As an Initial Assessment professional, how would you introduce yourself to Benji? Write your response below. Then, press the “continue” button in your packet to listen to the interaction between the Initial Assessment professional and Benji.

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What would your response or follow-up question be to Benji? Write your response below. Then, press the “continue” button in your packet to listen to the interaction between the Initial Assessment professional and Benji.

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How would you respond to Benji’s question? Write your response below. Then, press the “continue” button in your packet to listen to the interaction between the Initial Assessment professional and Benji.

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* 1. **Interview with Mr. Peng Chen**

As you listen in on the Initial Assessment professional’s conversation with Mr. Peng Chen, pay attention to:

* How the Initial Assessment professional introduces herself and explains why she is there
* How the initial Assessment professional frames questions to learn more about the family and gather relevant information for the Areas of Assessment.
* Any information that Mr. Chen provides in his responses that offer additional clues about the family’s circumstances and potential collateral contacts.

As an Initial Assessment professional, how would you respond to Peng’s statement? Write your response below. Then, press the “continue” button in your packet to listen to the interaction between the Initial Assessment professional and Peng.

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If you were completing this Initial Assessment, at this point in the conversation what other areas are you curious about learning more about? Write your response below.

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* 1. **Outline Your Strategy for each Collateral Contact**

Starting on the next page, you will find a list of the collateral contacts who the Initial Assessment professional interviewed. The names are in the order they are interviewed by the Initial Assessment professional. Outline your strategy for each interview before you press the play button to hear that interview.

Under each name, you will find a space to outline your interview strategy for each collateral contact (using the questions below as your guide for developing the strategy) and space for taking notes of the Initial Assessment professional’s interview with each collateral contact.

Outline your strategy for how you would approach the conversation with each collateral contact, using the following questions:

* Where would you speak with them?
* What information do you want to learn?
* Why is it relevant? What area of assessment would it help inform?
* How would you ask these questions?

1. Carol Matthews, Benji’s social studies teacher

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|  | **Outline your strategy for how you would approach the conversation with Carol Matthews, using the 4 questions listed below**.  Where would you speak with Carol Matthews?  What information do you want to learn?  Why is it relevant? What area of assessment would it help inform? |
|  | How would you ask these questions? |

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|  | **Space for taking notes of the Initial Assessment professional’s interview with Carol Matthews.** |
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1. Haya Chen, Peng’s mother and Benji’s grandmother

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|  | **Outline your strategy for how you would approach the conversation with Haya Chen, using the 4 questions listed below**.  Where would you speak with Haya Chen?  What information do you want to learn?  Why is it relevant? What area of assessment would it help inform? |
|  | How would you ask these questions? |

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|  | **Space for taking notes of the Initial Assessment professional’s interview with Haya Chen.** |
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1. Aki and Rai Shin, Benji’s neighbors

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|  | **Outline your strategy for how you would approach the conversation with Aki and Rai Shin, using the 4 questions listed below**.  Where would you speak with Aki and Rai Shin?  What information do you want to learn?  Why is it relevant? What area of assessment would it help inform? |
|  | How would you ask these questions? |

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|  | **Space for taking notes of the Initial Assessment professional’s interview with Aki and Rai Shin.** |
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1. George and Nancy Cotter, live downstairs from Benji

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|  | **Outline your strategy for how you would approach the conversation with George and Nancy Cotter, using the 4 questions listed below**.  Where would you speak with George and Nancy Cotter?  What information do you want to learn?  Why is it relevant? What area of assessment would it help inform? |
|  | How would you ask these questions? |

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|  | **Space for taking notes of the Initial Assessment professional’s interview with George and Nancy Cotter.** |
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1. Coach Smith, Benji’s basketball coach

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|  | **Outline your strategy for how you would approach the conversation with Coach Smith, using the 4 questions listed below**.  Where would you speak with Coach Smith?  What information do you want to learn?  Why is it relevant? What area of assessment would it help inform? |
|  | How would you ask these questions? |

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|  | **Space for taking notes of the Initial Assessment professional’s interview with Coach Smith.** |
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1. Ruth Devore, Activity Coordinator at the Boys and Girls Club

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|  | **Outline your strategy for how you would approach the conversation with Ruth Devore, using the 4 questions listed below**.  Where would you speak with Ruth Devore?  What information do you want to learn?  Why is it relevant? What area of assessment would it help inform? |
|  | How would you ask these questions? |

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|  | **Space for taking notes of the Initial Assessment professional’s interview with Ruth Devore.** |
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* 1. **Reflection Questions**

Capture your responses to the reflection questions in the spaces below.

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|  | How is cultural awareness important in considering this family’s circumstances? |
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|  | What signs of trauma were noted during the interviews? |
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|  | Where might it be especially important to consider your biases and values in conducting and documenting these conversations? |
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|  | Given the current information, is this a family you would see needing CPS intervention? |
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**Packet 3: Information Gathering at Ongoing Services**

In the Information Gathering at Ongoing Services packet, you will review a family’s Access and Initial Assessment reports and develop a strategy for how to approach your first conversation with them in Ongoing Services.

You are asked to (1) review the Chavez Family Access and Initial Assessment reports, (2) record answers to a series of questions in your workbook, (3) revisit the 5W questions families may ask, (4) develop a strategy for your first meeting with the Chavez family, and (5) record your answers to a series of Areas of Assessment Thought Questions in your workbook. Use the sections starting below to record your activities as you complete the online packet.

**Review the Chavez Family Access and Initial Assessment Reports**

The online packet refers you to your workbook to find two handouts: Chavez Family Access Report and Chavez Family Initial Assessment Report. You will find these handouts posted as separate handouts on the WCWPDS website in the same area that you downloaded these workbook pages. The handouts are entitled:

* “Foundational Element Workbook - Areas of Assessment in Child Protective Services - Appendix A”
* “Foundational Element Workbook - Areas of Assessment in Child Protective Services - Appendix B”

**Chavez Case Reports Review Questions**

After you have read the Chavez Family Access and Initial Assessment reports, continue on through the online packet, stopping to record your answers below to the series of questions as they arise in the online packet.

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|  | * 1. What key information led to this family being opened for Ongoing Services? |
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|  | * 1. Record the results from your appraisal of your Chavez case reports review below.   Accurate \_\_ Relevant \_\_  Objective \_\_ Concise \_\_  Descriptive \_\_ |
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|  | * 1. Is there any information or language that you think should not have been included? Are there any buzzwords, value-laden words, or judgmental words used rather than facts? |
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|  | * 1. What was your reaction while reading? Does any of this information have the potential to trigger bias for you? |
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**Strategizing and Planning: First Ongoing Services Meeting with the Chavez Family**

Before your meeting with the Chavez family, consider how you want to approach the first Ongoing Services conversation with them.

Use these guided questions to strategize and plan your meeting:

* What tools or practices from prior elements will be important to apply when engaging for the first time with this family?
* What questions (5Ws) and concerns might the family have that you want to address?
* What will you do to set the tone for this relationship and establish a collaborative approach?

Use the space below to record your approach.

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**Areas of Assessment Thought Questions and Activity**

You will find a series of thought questions specific to the Chavez families for each Area of Assessment. After reviewing the thought questions listed below, use them to more specifically describe (1) current areas of concern, (2) new or clarifying information needed, (3) collateral contacts you may want to speak with and why, and (4) your questions and how you will ask them.

1. **Thought Questions**

Maltreatment:

* Describe the allegations and findings of maltreatment from the agency perspective.
* Who are your collaterals, and do you need more information?
* How are you going to approach gathering the information?

Surrounding Circumstances:

The events bringing the family to the attention of CPS are often described in Surrounding Circumstances. It can be frustrating to a family to explain the events around the maltreatment multiple times. What is your understanding of the surrounding circumstances?

* Do you understand events leading up to the maltreatment?
* What do you feel like you need to know or understand better?
* Does the family understand the circumstances? Can they describe the maltreatment and their perspective?
* What would you have asked of the family?
* What would you have asked of the professional?

Child Functioning:

* Do you have a good picture of Jennae?
* How are you planning to engage with her?
* Do you have questions about her support system?
* Who is included in her support system?
* If you do not know this information what is your plan to gather it?
* What information are you going to share with Jennae?

Adult Functioning:

* What would you like to know about Laura that is not captured here?
* Why do you want to know this information and how are you going to gather it?
* Are there other people (collateral contacts) who could tell you more about Laura? If so, how would you approach gathering this information?
* What information are you going to share with Laura about your role?

Parenting Discipline and Practices:

* Do you have the information you need about disciplinary practices?
* If not, what is your plan to gather what you need?
* What methods of information collection will you try to use?
* What do you know about Laura’s protective capacities? What might enhance her protective capacities?
* How does her history impact her parenting choices?
* Does your view of parents in general impact how you see Laura’s parenting?
* Who do you want to talk to understand more about Laura’s parenting?

Family Functioning:

* What do you know about the family and their functioning?
* Where are areas where you need more information and why do you need more?
* What do you want the family to share with you about their support system that is not already known?
* Are there any other stresses that are not documented?
* Are you confident that the family understands why they are involved with the agency?

1. **Activity**

Use the space below to more specifically describe (1) current areas of concern, (2) new or clarifying information needed, (3) collateral contacts you may want to speak with and why, and (4) your questions and how you will ask them.

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|  | What areas of concern do you want to address? |
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|  | What new or additional clarifying information do you need? |
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|  | What collateral contacts do you want to seek out? |
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|  | What questions will you ask and how will you ask them? |
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**Independent Study**

In the Independent Study packet, you will shadow a more seasoned child welfare professional in your agency during one of their assessment interviews with a family at Initial Assessment or Ongoing Services and debrief with your agency supervisor or coach.

In the Independent Study, you will (1) make arrangements to observe a colleague’s interview with a family at Initial Assessment or Ongoing Services, (2) observe and take notes of the interview, completing the appropriate assessment documentation form, and (3) debrief your documentation your agency supervisor or coach. Use the sections starting below to complete your independent work.

**Observe an Interview with the Family**

1. Make arrangements to observe a colleague’s interview with a family at Initial Assessment or Ongoing Services.
2. Once you have made arrangements to observe the interview, talk with your colleague about the goal of the interaction for gathering information. Does the CPS professional have areas they would like to focus on and questions in mind they intend to ask? Jot that information down in the box below.

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1. Observe and take notes during the interview or meeting - noting what you saw and heard, or additional questions you might have.

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1. Complete the appropriate assessment documentation form.
2. Debrief your documentation your agency supervisor or coach.

Space for any additional notes or questions that you’d like to capture for discussion with your agency supervisor or coach.

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**Commitments**

* Using the Action Plan on the next page, take 5 minutes to capture 2-3 commitments that you will make to apply what you have learned in this element.
* Be specific, describe what you will do and when.
* Consider what support you will need from others in delivering on these commitments.
* Share the Action Plan with your supervisor or coach the next time you meet with them.

**Action Plan**

**Areas of Assessment in Child Protective Services**

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| Please list three important concepts, ideas, or skills which you plan to take from the training and implement in your work. | |
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| Identify a plan to implement these concepts upon return to your agency. | |
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| Identify resources that will help you to implement this plan. | |
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| Identify any barriers to the implementation of this plan. | |
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***Please share and discuss your Action Plan with your supervisor and/or coach.***