**Case Analysis Guide**

1. Describe what is going on by noting:
   1. Who are the key actors? What do we know about each of them?
   2. What are the key systems involved? What do we know about each?
   3. What does the problem seem to be? What are the underlying problems/issues?
   4. What are the key sources of tension? What has lead up to this decision moment? What has changed to make this particular moment such a difficult one to negotiate?
2. Explore the key sources of tension by considering:
   1. What roles do different actors play in creating/sustaining a tension?
      1. How can you make sense of these roles? How does an actor’s background, attributes, culture, beliefs, etc., shape his/her perceptions? His/her behaviors? It may help spur your thinking to consider: How might things be different if a male actor were female? If a Black actor were white?
   2. What roles do systems play in creating/sustaining a tension (issue/problem)?
      1. How can you make sense of these roles? How does a system’s structure, organization, functionality, resources, location, rules, norms, expectations, etc., shape the kinds of experiences the key actors are having?
   3. How do interactions among actors and systems relate to a tension?
3. Assess how additional knowledge and/or theory could deepen your understanding of the key sources of tension, and integrate that additional knowledge:
   1. What is known about people with the attributes of the key actors? (e.g. developmental stages, cultural differences, gender differences, life transitions, people experiencing particular types of stressors, etc.) – look for both theories and empirical evidence!
   2. What is known about systems like those at the center of this case? (e.g. bureaucratic systems, hierarchical versus flat organizational structures, segregated neighborhoods, the impact of high job stress and low resources on worker productivity, strengths-based versus deficit-based service environments, etc.) – look for both theories and empirical evidence!
   3. How does this additional knowledge shape your thinking about the key sources of tension?
4. Develop a problem formulation that focuses attention on the central tension/issue that must be addressed if the decision-maker is to move things forward in a productive way, while clarifying the key individual and systems factors that are most salient to why/how this issue has come to be.
5. Develop alternative strategies that the decision-maker could realistically use to address the central issue. Be sure that each strategy begins in the specific moment/situation in which the decision-maker finds him/herself – that is, if the decision-maker is in the midst of a heated argument, do not suggest a strategy that will start tomorrow, assuming that somehow he/she has gotten through the argument. Your strategy will often extend from the current moment into the near future, but you must articulate your strategy for getting from where things are right now, to a point where the key issue has been resolved enough to move forward productively.
6. Look for evidence to support your strategies – what does the research literature tell us is likely to work? What does theory predict will happen if a particular strategy is selected? What does your own practice experience tell you about the pros and cons of each strategy?
7. Choose the best strategy, and justify that choice.

Case analysis worksheet

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Describe/identify key actors, systems, and sources of tension |  |
| Explore sources of tension (what do we know about actors, systems, interactions between actors and systems) |  |
| Identify types of knowledge needed (what empirical knowledge and theory is useful for better understanding sources of tension), and locate appropriate knowledge |  |
| Integrate new information with your own thinking to determine what, at the core of everything, is going on? |  |
| Formulate your central problem.   * Does your statement focuses attention on what needs to be addressed in order for the decision-maker to move forward productively? * Does your statement clarify the [few] factors most salient to this problem coming to be? * Is your statement succinct (eg ideally one or two sentences, and no more than 3) |  |
| Develop alternative strategies.   * Is each reasonable? * Is each distinct? * Does each start in the moment and get us through the central problem to a place where things are productively moving forward? * What evidence supports each strategy? | 1.)  2.)  3.) |
| Choose your strategy and justify this choice   * How does your strategy respond to the central problem? * What makes this strategy better than the alternatives? |  |