

Common Errors of Reasoning in Child Welfare

- ➔ Making a decision with insufficient information about the family.
- ➔ Being biased toward remembering either the very first information or, paradoxically, the most recent.
- ➔ Selectively remembering information that supports one's own beliefs.
- ➔ Remembering information that is emotionally charged, vividly detailed, concrete, and recent more easily than information that is old, abstract, dull, or statistical.
- ➔ Being reluctant to change one's mind and/or to revise previously made assessments even when given new information.
- ➔ Fixing on one explanation/conclusion and looking only for information that confirms it or being too quick to dismiss new information that doesn't support it, rather than treating it as information that requires further testing.
- ➔ Failing to detect errors in communication, including hearing others incorrectly, writing records inaccurately, and expressing oneself in vague terms that contribute to misinterpretation.
- ➔ Giving allegations very little weight (or none) when coming from members of the public versus giving much greater weight to allegations coming from professionals.

* **Source:** Munro, Eileen, "Common Errors of Reasoning in Child Protective Work." *Child Abuse and Neglect*, Vol. 23, No. 8, pp. 745-758, 1999.