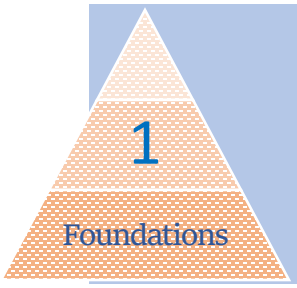

Motivational Interviewing
Foundational Considerations
Working Collaboratively with Parents and Caregivers

Motivational Interviewing is a guided style of communication Children Services Professionals can add to their existing techniques and strategies that supports improved outcomes for parents and families affected by parental substance use and child maltreatment. This non-confrontational style of collaborative communication may increase opportunities for purposeful parent and family engagement, thereby increasing chances for meaningful change. Motivational Interviewing guides the identification of and commitment toward a parent's own reasons for change, reducing reliance on punishing or reactive interactions. This guided, collaborative style of communication may reduce the weight on the shoulders of the caseworker – freeing both parent and caseworker to explore more meaningful and lasting healthy changes.

> Motivational Interviewing is not a replacement for what you are already doing, but it is a helpful addition to what you are already doing. It is a way of working *with* parents and caregivers, rather than working on them.

Motivational Interviewing, or MI, is a particular way of talking with people about change and growth to strengthen their own motivation and commitment.

Person-Centered Guidance

The key to MI is remaining centered between the extremes of Directing and Following. At one end of these extremes, the Directing Style assumes the professional has all the answers, tells people what they need to do, and expects compliance. At the other end, the Following Style assumes all people need to change is a sympathetic listener that offers no input or feedback. Neither of these styles is truly collaborative. MI emphasizes a collaborative partnership in the center of these two styles by using a Guiding Style – drawing on strong listening while also offering guidance when useful.

The guiding philosophy, or Spirit, of MI is built on four basic aspects – often described as 'the four habits of the heart'

- Partnership: working in collaboration with the parent and family. This is working with the parent, not working on them.
- Acceptance: a non-judgmental approach that respects the rights and expertise of the parent/family and supports an increased ability to explore change.
- Compassion: an intentional and purposeful dedication to the best interests and well-being of the parent and family.
- Empowerment: helping parents and families recognize what expertise and motivations they already have, and affirming their autonomy – or ability to choose.

Source and additional information: Motivational Interviewing Fourth Edition: Helping People Change and Grow by W. Miller and S. Rollnick (2023). Guildford Press.