

# 5 Whys: Stage A Examples

“Problems” often start out as overly broad statements or generalizations with no basis in fact. The 5 Whys is designed to guide the Team to ferret out root causes of problems to address with strategic goals and strategies.

Stage A discussion confirms for the Team that they have arrived at the statement of a problem suitable to be further probed and refined using 5 Whys.

The two examples of Stage A discussion illustrate how the Team took the broad original problem statement areas of ‘Families’ and ‘Independence’ and, through asking ‘What’ questions, arrived at problem statements specific enough to analyze for root cause.

Use these examples as a guide for how your Team’s discussion should unfold.

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## Example 1: Families

### ‘What Questions’ Used by the Team:

- “What about families is a problem?”
- “What is the nature of our concern about families?”

### 5 Whys Stage A: Guidelines for Problem Statements

- Provides a complete and accurate description of the problem
- Includes more information than a word or two about a broad area of concern
- Is based on facts and not opinions or conjecture of what might or could happen
- Is understood in the same way by all members of the Team

### Summary of Team Discussion:

Some families do, but many do not attend IEP meetings once their kids are in middle school. Its not unusual for parents to be less involved in teacher parent conferences for older kids. But for kids with disabilities it is an important time to figure out what will happen after high school. Do they know about agencies who serve adults? Have they made connections on their own?. Do they get the information they need from what we provide? Our experience is that many families don’t start asking questions until the last year of high school.

The Team used the Guidelines above to sum up their discussion in a more well-defined Problem Statement.

### New Problem Statement to Analyze with 5 Whys:

- “Families start transition planning too late.”
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## Example 2: Independence

### ‘What Questions’ Used by the Team:

- “What about independence is a problem?”
- “What do we see that makes us think kids are not independent?”

### 5 Whys Stage A: Guidelines for Problem Statements

- Provides a complete and accurate description of the problem
- Includes more information than a word or two about a broad area of concern

- Is based on facts and not opinions or conjecture of what might or could happen
- Is understood in the same way by all members of the Team

### **Summary of Team Discussion:**

Independence is a broad area, encompasses lots of skills. We are thinking about kids having skills to make their own choices, see themselves as workers, know their PINS and about the world of work so they can actively participate in the transition planning process. It includes being able to work on their own, without a lot of prompting, to know when to ask for help, to follow directions, to think for themselves. Likely there are many 'problem areas' associated with Independence that can't all be tackled effectively at the same time.

The Team used the Guidelines above to sum up their discussion in a more well-defined Problem Statement.

### **New Problem Statement to Analyze with 5 Whys:**

■ "Youth do not know about their own skills or about the world of work."

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## **Conclusion**

Example 1 shows the broad area of 'Families' and illustrates how the discussion using 'What' questions led to a problem statement based on Team's own experience. Example 2 shows how 'What' questions provided the Team a process to narrow their concern to a specific aspect of the broad area of 'Independence'. There is not one right 'answer' for the way a problem is described, but there is only one answer that is right for each Team.