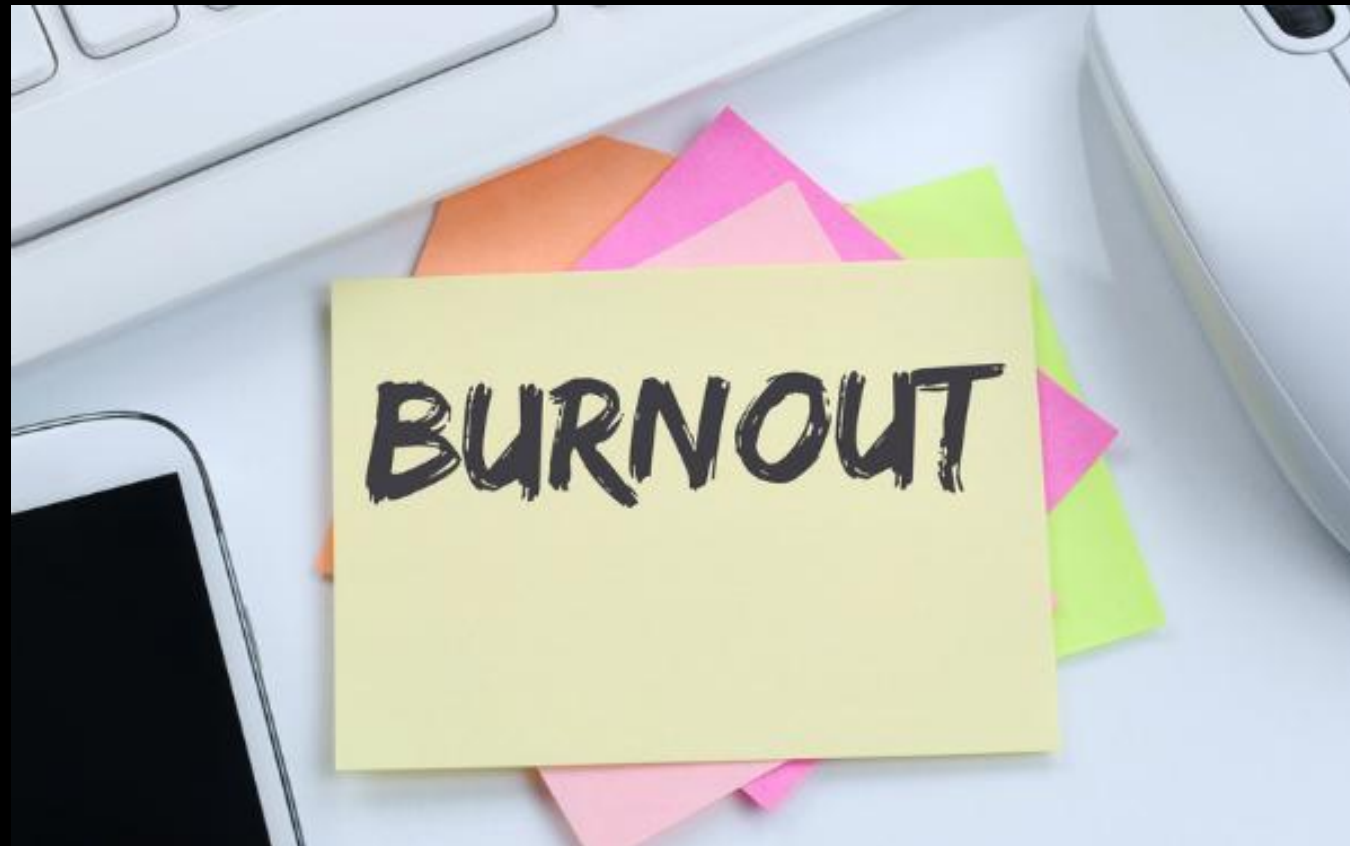




# BALANCING AUTONOMY AND SAFETY: CREATING AN ETHICAL AND TRAUMA-INFORMED APS WORK ENVIRONMENT

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Adult Protective Services  
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# IMPACTS OF DAILY HIGH-LEVEL ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING



# IMPACT

## On Worker



☐ Burn-out

☐ Fatigue

☐ Internalized Guilt

☐ Anxiety

☐ Secondary Trauma

## On Workplace



☐ High staff turnover

☐ Cases not worked thoroughly

☐ Cases not closed on time

☐ Poor documentation

☐ Conflicts in workplace

## On Client



☐ Case closure without appropriate intervention

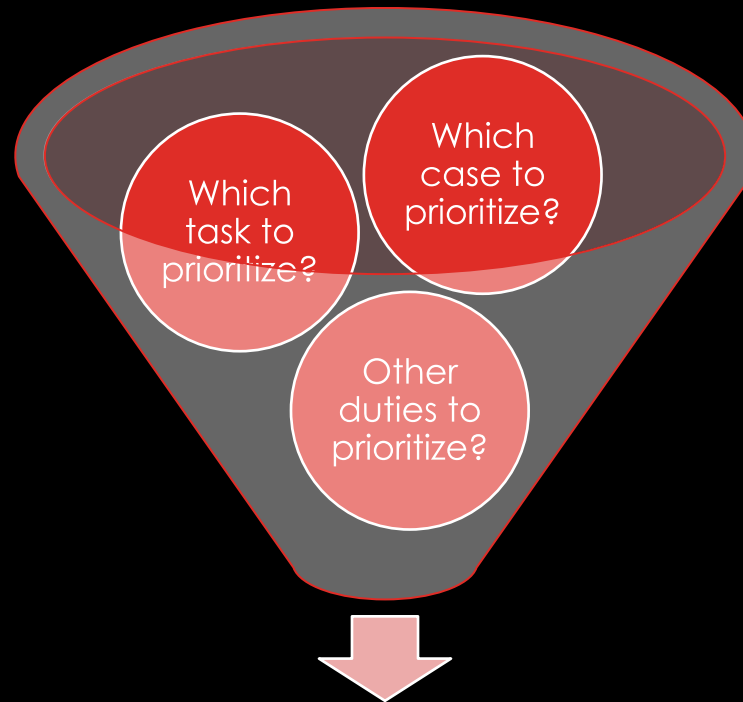
☐ Inadequate exploration of client's refusal/capacity

☐ Increased risk (recidivism, falls, hospitalizations, injuries, death)

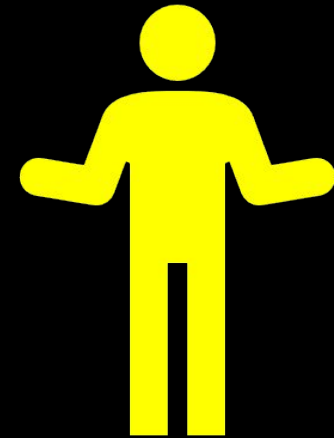
☐ Client complaints

# IMPACT ON WORKER

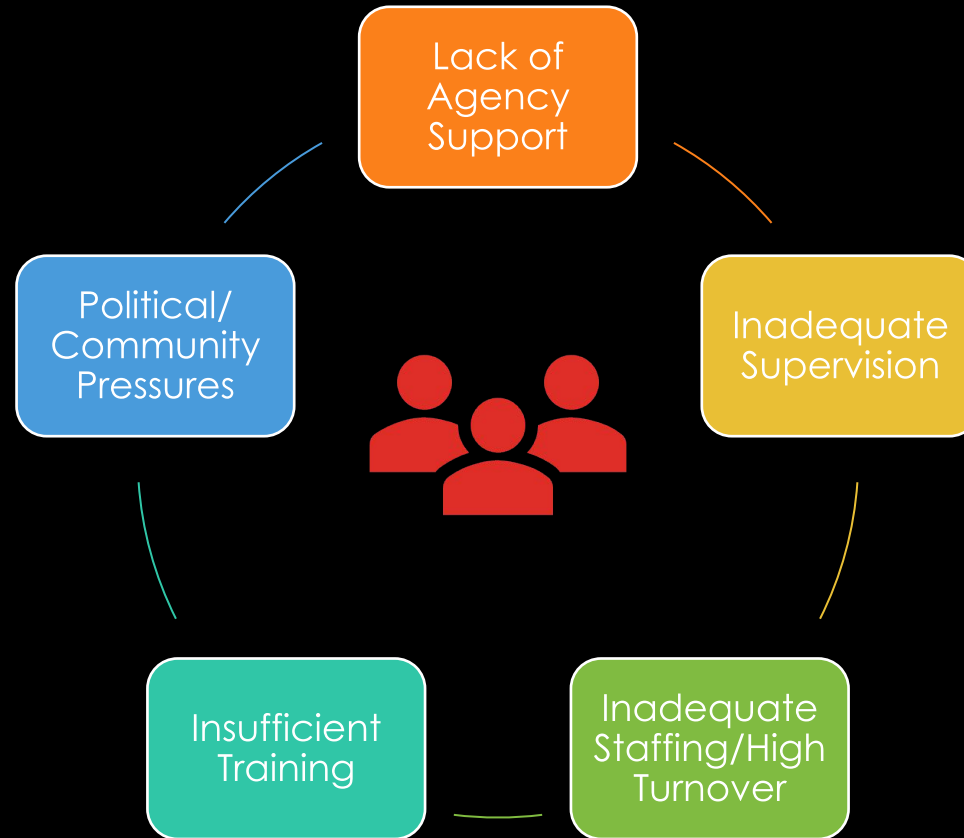
With so many competing daily tasks how does the Investigator make the time needed to fully consider ethical dilemmas?



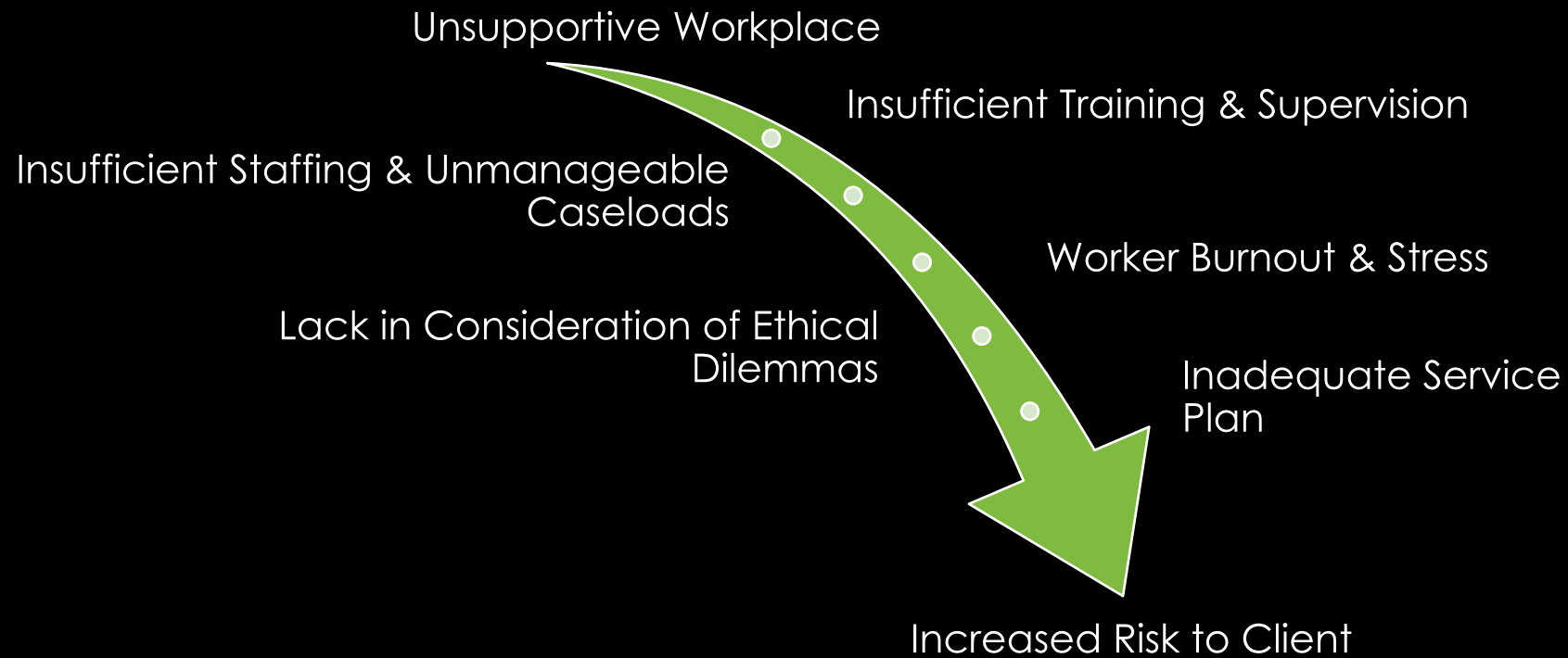
APS Investigator



# IMPACT ON WORKPLACE

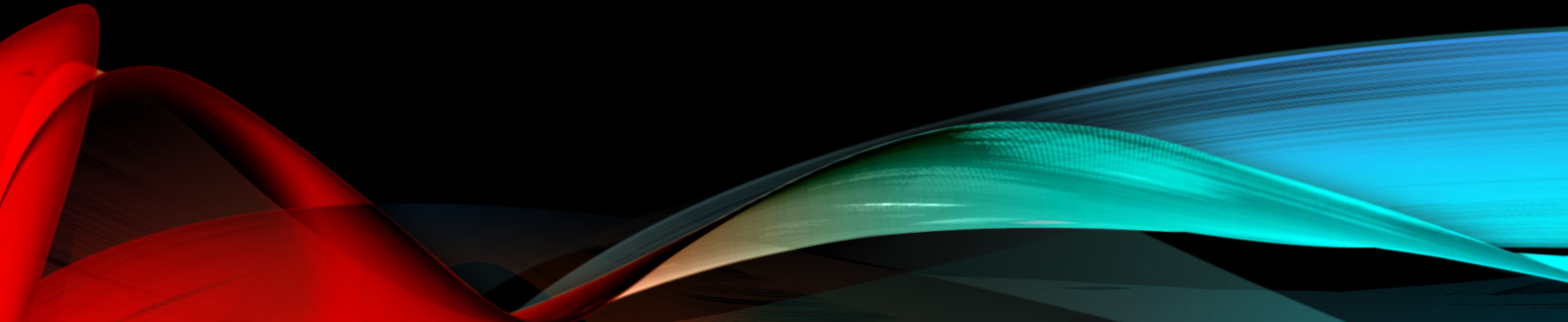


# IMPACT ON CLIENT

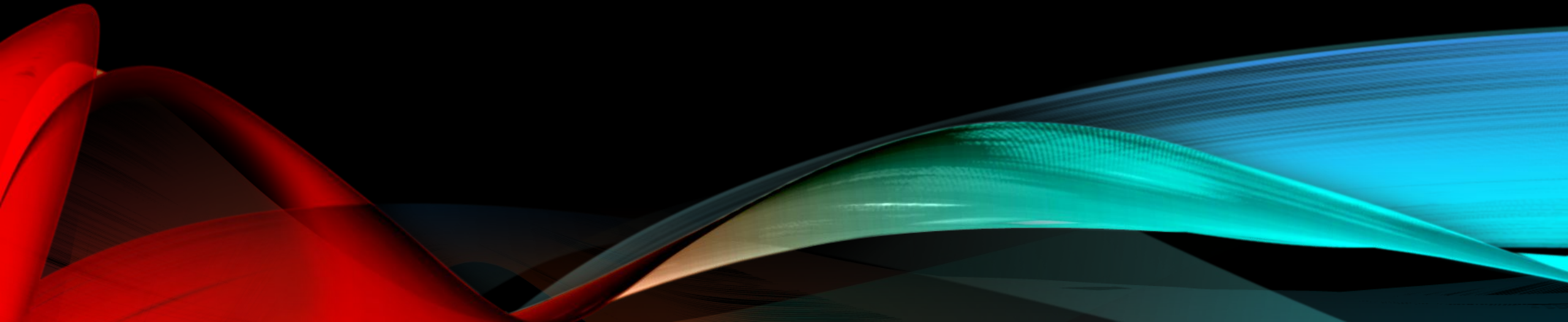




# ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING IN APS



In the comments section please send a word/phrase that comes to mind when you think of ethical decision-making in Adult Protective Services.







**Worker Self-Awareness**

Maximized Independence

**Respect**

**Autonomy**

**Client's Best Interests**

**Safety**

**Self-Determination**

**Client Rights**

Willingness to Work with Your Client

**Least Restrictive Intervention**

**Do No Harm**

# COMMON ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN APS

The family who insists that you place the unwilling client in a higher level of care.

The wandering client whose family refuses to provide supervision or placement.

The client with mental capacity who refuses medical treatment and services.

The abusing adult child in the basement who client does not want to remove.

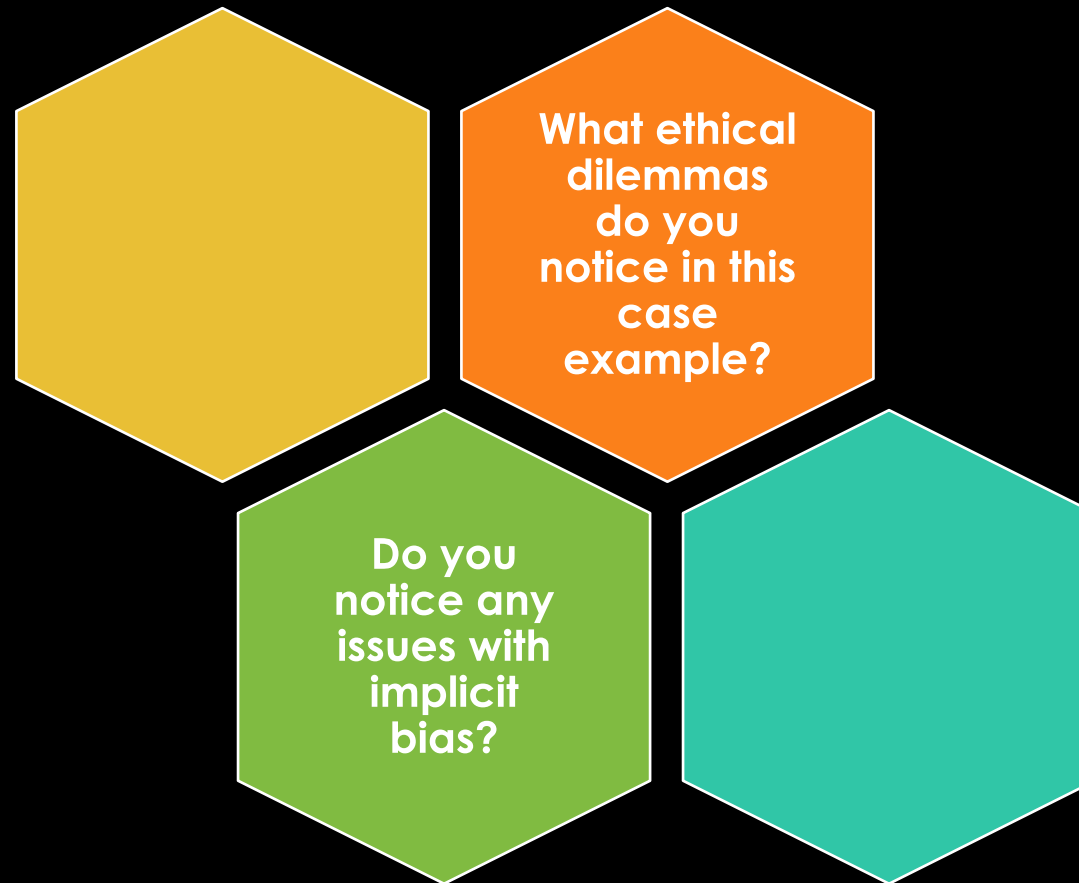
The neighbors who want the hoarding client removed.

A client at high medical risk who has mental capacity and refuses treatment.

A client who appears to lack capacity but is consenting to a service plan.

Family refuses to use funds for client's care despite availability of financial resources.

# CASE OF MS. B



# IMPLICIT BIAS



The diagram consists of four horizontal bars of increasing width, each preceded by a white circle. The circles are connected by a thin line that starts from the top-left and ends at the bottom-left. The bars are colored in a gradient from teal to blue. The text is white and centered within each bar.

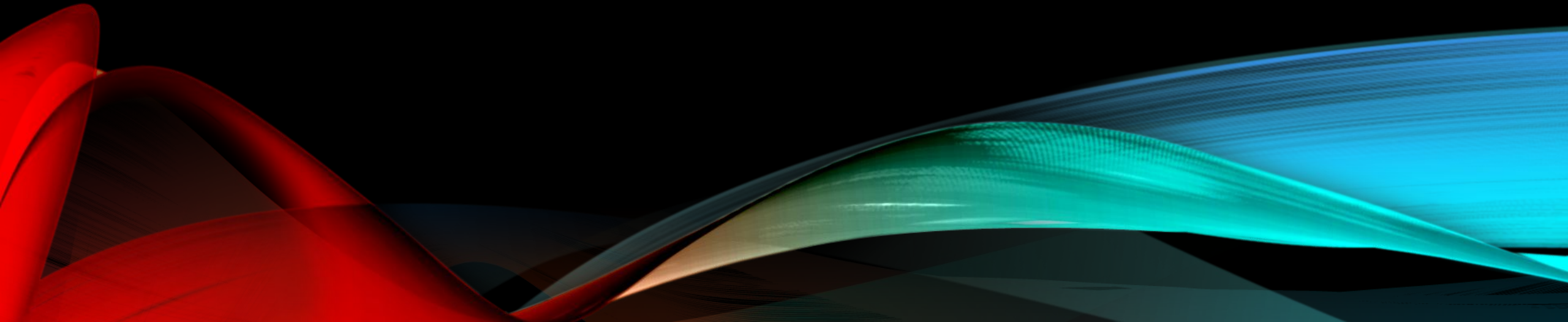
Unconsciously and inherently held attitudes towards others and associated stereotypes and assumptions

Involving racial groups, genders, LGBTQ population, immigrants, religions, cultural groups

Both the individual and the client harbor often unrecognized implicit bias

Consequences: lack of trust, refusal to accept certain service providers, failure to appreciate client's cultural background/differences/attitudes

# TRAINING APS INVESTIGATORS ON ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING



# NEW STAFF ORIENTATION

## 6-Week New Staff Orientation Schedule



- Assignment of a Peer Mentor for the first 6 Weeks
- State of Maryland New Worker Training Course
- Interviews with Supervisors of Other Programs in our Section
- Study of Program Manuals, Local Statutes, Internal/External Resource Guides, and Reviews of Completed Investigation Documentation

## Slow and Graduated Case Assignment Schedule



- Week 2 – Case 1 Assigned
- Week 4 – Case 2 Assigned
- Week 6 – 1 Case/Week Rotation
- Week 10 – 2 Cases/Week Rotation
- Full Case Rotation & On-Call Rotation at Investigator/Supervisor's Discretion





# ONGOING STAFF TRAINING

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NAPSA Certificate Program Monthly  
In-Person (now virtual) Modules

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Partnerships with Agency & Community  
partners to train staff

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Team is encouraged to seek  
agency-sponsored trainings and local  
trainings during work hours

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# BUILT-IN TOOLS TO ASSIST WITH ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING

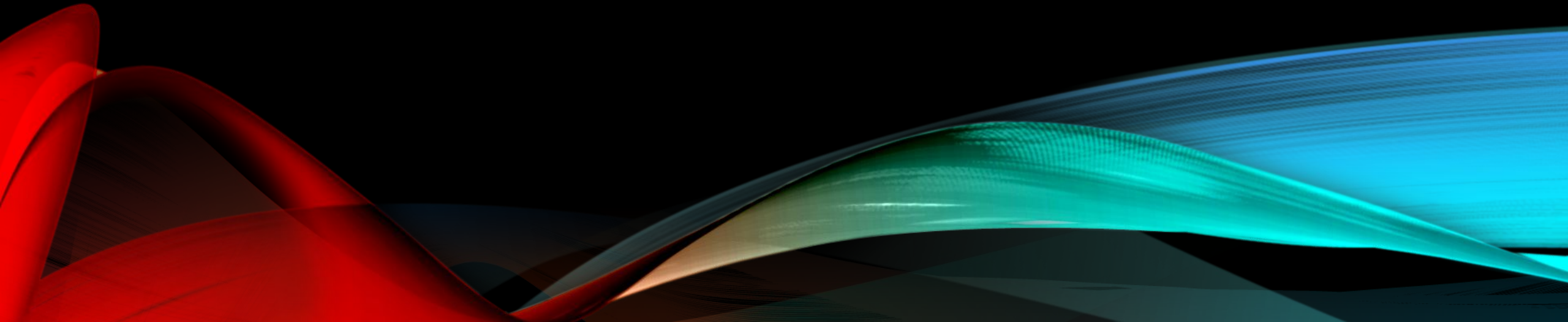
One-on-One Supervision

Group Supervision

Peer Support

Appointed Specialist Investigators (Hoarding & Financial Exploitation)

# SAFETY & SELF-CARE OF STAFF



# SAFETY TRAINING



# PROMOTION OF SELF-CARE

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## Formal Benefits

Employee access to County & Union Wellness Program, Fitness Benefits, and Stress Reduction resources

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Employee Assistance Program availability for therapy with up to 6 sessions for each incident

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## Informal Benefits

Was a lot easier pre-pandemic!

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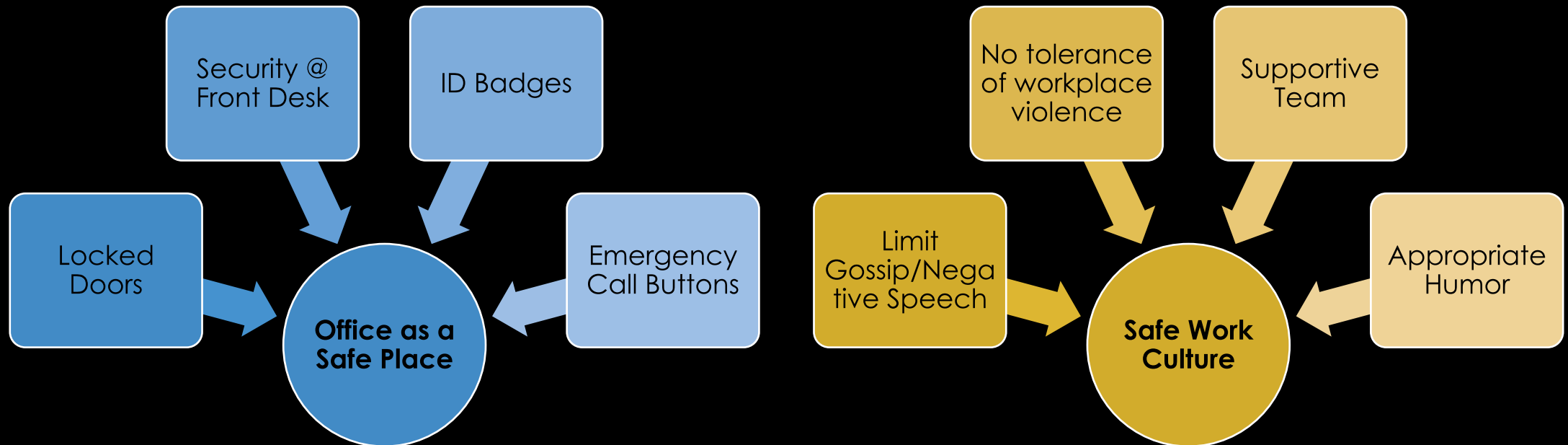
Office support groups, lunch clubs, book club, meditation, yoga, Zumba, etc

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Holiday parties, retreats, birthdays, and other celebrations

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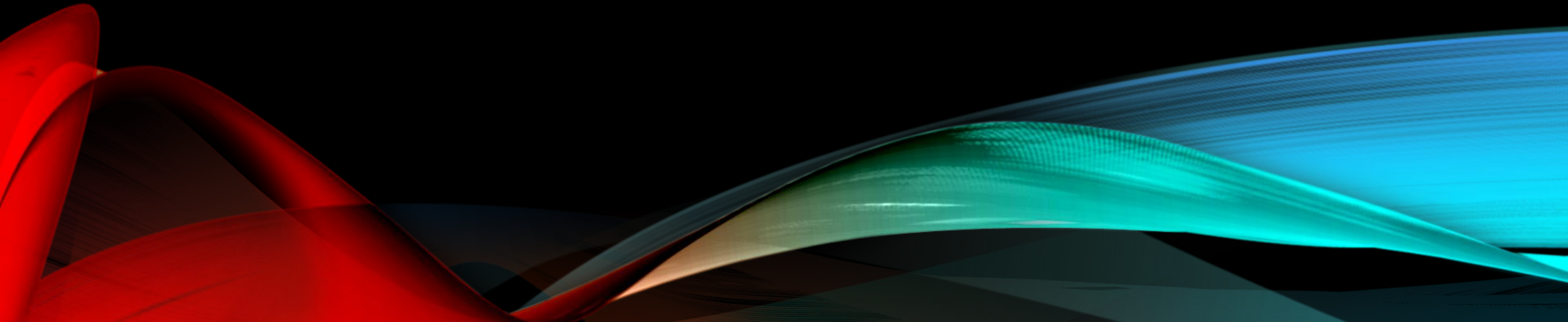
# SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT





How have your investigation procedures changed?

- A. No Face to Face visits
- B. Hybrid Model (For ex. Risk is estimated and only the cases with high risk received face to face visits)
- C. No Change in investigation procedures



# MONTGOMERY COUNTY'S APS RESPONSE PROTOCOLS DURING COVID



# ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS DURING COVID



Balancing Risk Of  
Client/Worker  
COVID Exposure  
vs. Risk & Safety  
of the Client

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