NATIONAL AMERICAN INDIAN COURT JUDGES ASSOCIATION

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Problem-Solving Skills for Tribal Court Personnel

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Disclaimer

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PROBLEM-SOLVING:

The process of finding solutions to difficult or complex issues.

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Importance of Problem-Solving In Courts

- Helps manage workloads and heavy dockets efficiently
- Leads to fair and informed outcomes
- Maintains public confidence in the justice system
- Improves service to the community
- Builds a positive relationship and collaborative effort between team members

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Skills for Making Problem-Solving Easier

- Analytical thinking -> ability to break down complex issues
- Emotional intelligence-> recognize and manage emotions in any situation
- Creativity -> think outside the box to explore alternatives, especially in unique or community-focused contexts
- Adaptability -> capacity to adjust to change

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Problem-Solving Process

1. Identify the problem
2. Gather relevant information and define the context of the problem
3. Explore possible solutions and strategies
4. Evaluate and choose the best option
5. Implement and monitor the outcome

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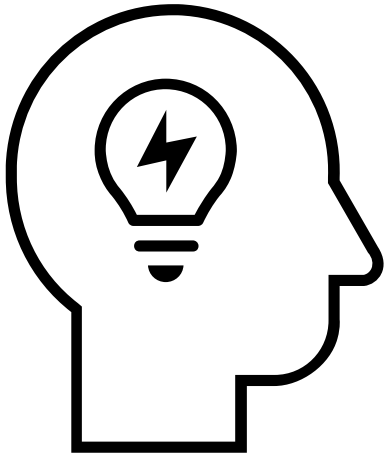
Step 1. Identify the problem

- Frame the problem clearly
- Differentiate fact from opinion
- Break down large issues into manageable parts
- Set a goal for solving the problem



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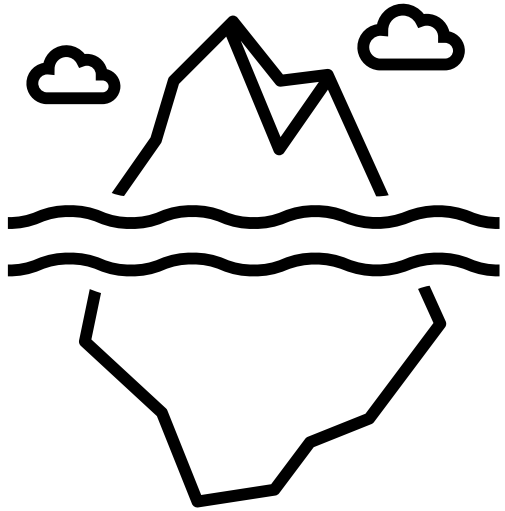
Step 2. Gather information and define context

- Ask questions
- Involve others – different experiences, views, and thinking processes generate better understanding and ideas
- Identify multiple causes for a more robust solution



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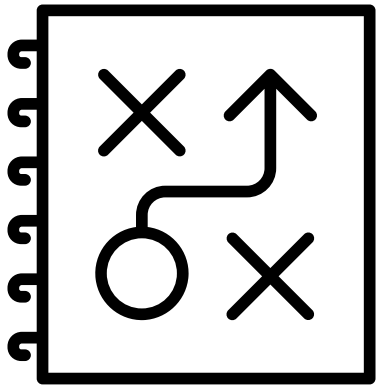
Step 3. Explore solutions and strategies

- Consider time constraints and urgency
- Evaluate scope and impact
- Identify support and resources
- Assign responsibilities, deadlines, and quality expectations



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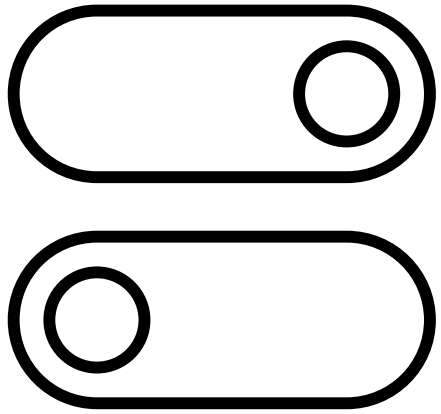
Step 4. Evaluate and choose the best option

- Weigh pros and cons
- Identify potential obstacles or barriers
- Consider feasibility
- Select the solution with the highest likelihood of success



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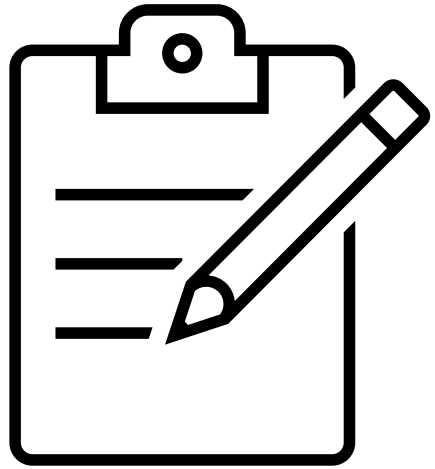
Step 5. Implement and monitor the outcome

- Put the plan into action
- Create feedback loops
- Track progress and adjust if needed
- Evaluate long-term outcomes



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Additional Practical Skills

- Identification of bottlenecks
- Communication and coordination across roles and departments
- Documentation and accuracy
- Support problem solving across the court and tribe

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PUTTING PROBLEM-SOLVING INTO PRACTICE

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Scenario:

The court calendar shows two hearings scheduled in the same courtroom at the same time—one for a child custody case and another for a criminal arraignment. Both attorneys, the parties, and support staff are present and growing frustrated. No one is sure which case has priority.

Questions:

- What is the immediate problem?
- Who needs to be involved in resolving this?
- What are the possible solutions?
- What steps can be taken to avoid this in the future?

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Tools and Resources

- Checklists and templates -> keep decisions and processes structured
- Technology aids -> use technology for case tracking, reminders, and task assignments

Continuous improvement builds better courts and outcomes.

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Questions?

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THANK YOU!

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