



MARYLAND

FAMILY POLICY IMPACT SEMINAR

Ladder of Inference: A Tool for Working Through Policy¹

To improve inquiry:

- Ask others to make their thinking visible
- Use unaggressive language
- Compare assumptions
- Together, gently walk down the ladder↓

| | | |
|--------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| START WITH | → | BELIEFS & ASSUMPTIONS |
| MAKE | ↓ | INFERENCES |
| REACH | ↓ | CONCLUSIONS |
| ADD | ↓ | PERSONAL/CULTURAL MEANING |
| FINISH WITH | | OBSERVABLE DATA |

To improve advocacy:

- Make your thinking process visible
- Publicly test your conclusions and assumptions
- Slowly, walk up the ladder ↑

| | | |
|-------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| ADOPT | | BELIEFS & ASSUMPTIONS |
| MAKE | ↑ | INFERENCES |
| REACH | ↑ | CONCLUSIONS |
| ADD | ↑ | PERSONAL/CULTURAL MEANING |
| START WITH | → | OBSERVABLE DATA |

A copy of this and other policy tools is available at the Maryland Family Policy Impact Seminar website: <http://www.hhp.umd.edu/FMST/fis/MDresources.htm>

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¹ The author acknowledges this tool has an unknown original source.

