

Structuring the Interview

Preliminary/Preparatory Phase

- Determining Location, Sequencing, Timing, and Primary Interviewer
 - Who will interview the referral source, each of the family members involved and any collateral people?
 - Where will the interviews take place?
 - When will they be interviewed? In what order?
 - What information should be secured during each interview?
 - Who should be present during the interview?

Beginning/Contracting Phase

- Introductions and Roles
 - How should the interviewer(s) address the interviewee? What name should the interviewee call the interviewer?
 - What information does your agency require you to provide about whom you are and what you do?
 - What role will each person play during the interview?
- Purpose of the Interview
 - What are we doing here today?
 - What has the interviewee been told prior to the interview?
 - What is the interviewee's reaction to the pending allegations or purpose of the interview?
- Contracting for the Interview
 - What are the rules for communicating during the interview?
 - Are there any language barriers? How will these be addressed?
 - Who will have access to the information?
 - What are the possible outcomes?
 - What information can be released without the interviewee's permission?
 - Do Miranda rights need to be given?
 - How will the child's safety be assured?
 - Who else should be notified or involved (other parent, elder, another child)?
 - Who can help/be supportive?
- Building Rapport
 - How do we engage the interviewee?
 - How do we make them feel comfortable during the interview process?

Structuring the Interview (Cont'd)

- What types of questions are asked initially?
- What are the names/nicknames of the people involved?
- What is their relationship to the person being interviewed?
- What words do they use for various family and household members?
- **Basic Assessment**
 - Where does the interviewer gauge the interview in relation to the cognitive and/or developmental level of the interviewee? How did the interviewer arrive at that conclusion (school/medical report, report of family member, observation)?
 - What is their understanding of prepositions (before/after; in/out; under/on top of)?
 - What is their understanding of time (today, yesterday; afternoon; 3:00; after favorite TV show)?
 - What does the daily family routine look like?
 - Is it different for different days of the week?
 - Who gets up first in the morning?
 - What is the morning routine around using the bathroom, eating, dressing, getting to work/school?
 - What do people do during the day?
 - Who takes care of the children?
 - When does the family come back together?
 - When do people in the household take baths/showers? Who helps the children?
 - What are the different rooms of the house/apartment/living quarters?
 - Where does everyone sleep?
 - What household rules are there? What happens if someone breaks them?

Middle/Work Phase

- **Questioning Regarding the Referral Issues**
 - Zone in on the pending allegations:
 - Where did the allegations occur?
 - Do you remember the last time _____ (presenting problem) happened?
 - How did you handle it then?
 - What's different this time?
 - What do you see as the solution?
 - Provide the best opportunity for an uninterrupted interview.
 - Encourage the sharing of free-flowing information.

Structuring the Interview (Cont'd)

- Explore “taboo” areas (areas of sensitivity and deep concern).
- Determine if the interviewee has been coached or encouraged to tell their story a particular way by any other person or outside circumstances.
- Find out what the consequences might be if the interviewee does not say what they were supposed to?
- Obtaining Details
 - Determine what other pieces of information need to be secured.
 - Clarify inconsistencies.
 - Ask if there is other information the interviewee would like to share that would be important for the interviewer(s) to know.

Ending/Transition Phase

- Ending
 - Bring the interviewee back to a less sensitive topic area:
 - On a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the best possible conditions, can you tell me where you are with always having the _____ (presenting problem) taken care of?
 - If you woke up tomorrow morning and _____ (referral issue) was taken care of, what would that look like?
 - Who could help or support you to actually make those changes?
 - Are there any services that interest you?
 - Let the interviewee know that their collaboration, assistance and information is appreciated.
- Transitions/Next Steps
 - Summarize the key points of the interview and how they relate to the original purpose.
 - Assist the interviewee in identifying what actions need to be taken next.
 - Discuss next steps.
 - Determine how the current safety and ongoing risk to the child will be addressed.
 - “Leave the door open” for future interviews.