

## **INFORMATION COLLECTION: SAFETY IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE** **SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **OBSERVATION**

Observation is one key method of information collection. It is particularly important with younger children or children who are non-verbal or have limited communication skills. However, regardless of age or communication skills, observation alone can tell us critical information about children and their families and out-of-home care providers.

At each contact, make certain to observe:

- ✓ Physical condition of the child;
- ✓ Emotional status of the child, including mannerisms, signs of fear, developmental status; level of comfort in the setting;
- ✓ Child's space, sleeping arrangements;
- ✓ Reactions of the parents or caregivers to the child and other children in the home;
- ✓ Signs of appropriate affection between caregiver and child;
- ✓ Signs that the child can depend upon the caregiver;
- ✓ Signs that the caregiver likes the child and other children in the home;
- ✓ Emotional and behavioral status of the parents or caregivers during the interviewing process;
- ✓ Interactions between family members, including verbal and body language;
- ✓ Physical status of the home, including cleanliness, structure, hazards or dangerous living conditions, signs of excessive alcohol use, and use of illicit drugs;
- ✓ Interaction between child and other children in the home;
- ✓ Congruence between what caregivers say and report and their affect, genuineness; and
- ✓ Signs of empathy for the child.



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**SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS, cont'd**

**SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: CHILDREN**

*Adjust questions based on child's age and developmental level. Follow up as indicated based on responses. Phrase questions in ways the child can understand. Probe beyond the initial responses. Ask for clarifications as needed. Attend to congruence between verbal responses and the affect/emotions of the child. What is the overall emotional state of the child?*

- ✎ So, what have you been doing since I saw you last time?
- ✎ How are things going here at \_\_\_\_ home?
- ✎ How was the visit with your mom/and or dad and or brothers and sisters?
- ✎ How do you think your mom/and or dad and or brothers and sisters are doing now?
- ✎ Tell me about school/day care. What grade are you in? What school do you attend? Do you like it there? What are your favorite and least favorite subjects?
- ✎ Do you have friends at school? Tell me about them.
- ✎ Are you in activities at school or after school? Tell me about them.
- ✎ Tell me about a typical weekday here.
- ✎ What does the family do on weekends?
- ✎ What is the thing you have done with this family that was the most fun since I talked with you last?
- ✎ Tell me about this neighborhood? Do you have friends here you play with? How do you get along? What do you do with them?
- ✎ How about other children here? Can you tell me about them? Do you have a favorite? How do you all get along? What do you do together? Do you ever fight? How often? About what? What happens then?
- ✎ When ---- isn't here, who takes care of you? What is that like?
- ✎ What time do you go to bed? What happens then ( any routines, etc) Who puts you to bed at night? What time? Does anyone sing to you or read you stories?
- ✎ Do you sleep well or not so well?
- ✎ Do you get sick very often? When was the last time? What happened?
- ✎ Overall, how do you feel physically?
- ✎ Who takes care of you when you get sick?
- ✎ When was the last time you went to the doctor? What was that for?
- ✎ On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the most happy ever and 1 being really sad, what number would you give yourself today? Most of the time? (With younger children use happy, sad, mad or scared diagrams) Follow up as indicated by response.
- ✎ What makes you happiest? Saddest?
- ✎ Tell me about the best thing that ever happened to you.
- ✎ Tell me about the best thing that you all did as a family in the past few weeks.
- ✎ What is your favorite way to spend free time?
- ✎ Do you have worries? Tell me about those.
- ✎ Is there anything or anyone that scares you? How scary?
- ✎ Do you help take of care of anyone in the home? Who? What do you do?
- ✎ If you had a magic wand and could change one thing in your life what would that be?

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- ✎ If you had a magic wand and could change one thing at home what would that be?
- ✎ What do you do the best?
- ✎ What hopes and dreams do you have for the future?
- ✎ Tell me about the rules at this home.
- ✎ Who makes the rules?
- ✎ Are they the same for everyone?
- ✎ Do you usually follow the rules?
- ✎ What do \_\_\_\_\_ (out-of-home caregiver(s)) do if you get into trouble or do something they do not like?
- ✎ When was the last time you did something that-----did not like? What happened then?
- ✎ What happens when you do something that \_\_\_\_\_likes? Tell me about the last time this happened.
- ✎ What does-----do if another child here does something that makes you angry or sad?
- ✎ Does -----have any nicknames for you? What are they?
- ✎ What chores or responsibilities do you have? What happens if you do them well and on time? What happens if you don't?
- ✎ What does-----do to help you out?
- ✎ Does-----help you with homework?
- ✎ Do you feel close with----? Tell me more about that.
- ✎ Does-----play with you? When you play what games/activities do you do? Do you get to choose what to play?
- ✎ Do you get to do the same things as the rest of the family (outings, trips, holiday celebrations, etc)?
- ✎ Who puts you to bed at night? What time? Does anyone sing to you or read you stories?
- ✎ Who does the cooking here? What kinds of things do you have for breakfast? Dinner?
- ✎ Do they fix meals all the time? Part of the time? Not very often?
- ✎ Who helps you takes baths? Brush your teeth?
- ✎ Do you have things you brought from home? (or previous placement homes) Do you get to use them? Where do you keep your things?
- ✎ Who do you go to when you want to talk about something important?
- ✎ How do you feel about being here? How is it different from being with your parents?
- ✎ Is there anything else you want to tell me or talk about?

Always end the interview by assuring that child knows what is happening with their family and what will happen next.

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**SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS, cont'd**

**SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: ADULTS**

*Tailor questions to kinship or foster placements. Follow up as indicated based on responses. Phrase questions in ways the adult can understand. Probe beyond the initial responses. Ask for clarifications as needed. Attend to congruence between verbal responses and the affect/emotions of the adult.*

- How have things been going since we last spoke?
- How is your family doing overall?
- Is anything new or different going on?
- What changes have happened since I saw you last? Any placement changes? Tell me about those?
- \_\_\_\_ (child's name) has been here for \_\_\_\_ (time period). How is that going?
- How does this child fit with the types of children you wanted to care for?
- How does having this child in your home compare to what you thought it would be like? Positives/Negatives?
- What kinds of expectations do you have for \_\_\_\_ (this child)?
- How does this child get along with other children in the home? Other adults here?
- Tell me about \_\_\_\_ (this child)? How does he/she seem to be adjusting here?
- Describe the child for me. (Listen for behavioral and emotional detail and prompt as necessary.)
- How has having \_\_\_\_ (this child) here changed your family?
- If child has special needs ask how challenging those are. How do you cope with those demands?
- What is the best/funniest thing \_\_\_\_ (this child) has done lately? The most challenging?
- How does \_\_\_\_ (this child) relate with other children in the home?
- Do you have any upcoming events planned for the family? How will \_\_\_\_ (this child) fit in with that?
- How does \_\_\_\_ (this child) help out around the home?
- When was the last time you had to discipline \_\_\_\_ (this child)? What for? Did that work? What else did you try? Do you use the same discipline with this child as with others? How is it the same or different? How often do you have to discipline this child? What for?
- What is the most stressful thing about having this child in your home?
- What is the most stressful thing going on in your life now?
- How does your spouse feel about having this child in your home?
- What are the basic rules in your home? How well does this child respond to those? Do you need to make exceptions for this child in terms of rules?
- Tell me about morning and bedtime routines.
- How long do you think you will continue to have this child in your home?

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**SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS, cont'd**

- If there is a relationship with the placed child's family ask:
  - When did you last see the child's family? Who did you see? How did that go?
  - What thoughts do you have about how the child's parents are doing?
  - In your view, are they ready to take care of \_\_\_\_\_(this child).
  - Are you getting along with the child's family? What special challenges do you face with them?
  - Do they try to have contact with the child that is not approved? How do you handle that?
  - Do you worry about the child being safe if they go home?
- Does the child talk about their family? How is he/she reacting to this separation from them?
- What special things (attachment objects for example) does this child have? Where are they? Can the child have them whenever they want? Can I see them?
- Tell me about all of the appointments the child has. (Treatment, medical, dental, visitation, etc). How is that going? Do you have any trouble getting the child there? How does the child respond to these appointments?
- What kinds of activities do you do for fun? How often?
- Who do you rely on for help and support?
- What community or social events are you involved in?
- What social events, groups or activities is the child participating in?
- How do you take care of yourself?
- How is your energy level? Are you finding yourself exhausted a lot of the time?
- Who takes care of\_\_\_\_(this child) when you go out? Tell me about them. How does that work? Does\_\_\_\_(this child) like the person?
- Are there any new health issues for anyone in your family?
- Any new friendships or relationships?
- What about the other children in the home. Tell me about them and how they are doing? Any challenges with them?
- What kind of supports can we provide to help out?
- Is there anything else we need to talk about?

