

Quality Interview Preparation Checklist

As noted during your training, the purpose of the interview is always guided by the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA). As a child welfare professional, it is your responsibility to work toward ensuring child safety, permanency, and well-being. With that in mind, below are questions that will help you prepare for your interview and work toward accomplishing the goal(s) of the interview. Keep in mind that this list is by no means exhaustive; however, the list will assist you in thinking about how to ensure a quality initial interview and quality ongoing interviews.

- Do I know the time frame in which the interview needs to happen (around family schedule, safety considerations/tags, *etc.*);
- If I have to conduct multiple interviews, do I know who I need to interview as well as the order in which I need to conduct those interviews?
 - Who:

55 Pa. Code, § 3490.55(d) (relating to investigation of reports of suspected child abuse) states: When conducting its investigation, the county agency shall, if possible, conduct an interview with those persons who are known to have or may reasonably be expected to have, information relating to the incident of suspected child abuse including, but not limited to, all of the following:

 - (1) The child, if appropriate.
 - (2) The child's parents or other person responsible for the child's welfare.
 - (3) The alleged perpetrator of the suspected child abuse.
 - (4) The reporter of the suspected child abuse, if known.
 - (5) Eyewitnesses to the suspected child abuse.
 - (6) Neighbors and relatives who may have knowledge of the abuse.
 - (7) Day care provider or school personnel, or both, if appropriate.
 - In What Order (stemming from in-home safety assessment protocols):
 - (1) Introduction with parents (whenever possible).
 - (2) Interview with the identified child.
 - (3) Interview with siblings.
 - (4) Interview with the non-alleged maltreating parent.
 - (5) Interview with the alleged maltreating parent.
 - (6) Closure with parents/family. (Hutchinson, July 2009)

Quality Interview Preparation Checklist (Cont'd)

- Do I need to schedule the interview in advance or should it be unannounced?
- Do I know the location of the interview (*e.g.*, family home, office, school, hospital, police station, prison, other);
 - If so, do we need privacy (*i.e.*, a quiet and safe location that will minimize interruptions and eliminate the possibility of being heard by others);
- Do I know who needs to be present (considering specific people or roles versus inclusion of multiple family members and/or community partners)?
- Do I know who plans to be present (again, considering specific people or roles versus inclusion of multiple family members and/or community partners)?
- Am I aware of any dynamics that may affect the interview (*e.g.*, custodial and non-custodial parents and related issues, if any exist, *etc.*)?
- Do I know the purpose of the interview and my role in achieving the purpose of the interview?
 - What type of interview do I need to use and why? (*e.g.*, ethnographic, investigative, forensic, therapeutic *etc.*)
 - What do I need to accomplish during the interview?
 - How will I contract with the person to work toward accomplishing the purpose?
 - How will I work with the person to accomplish the goal using a strengths-based, solution-focused perspective?
 - What information do I have and what information do I need to know? If I need information, how will I get it, while ensuring whenever possible to allow the family to tell their story in their own way? If I need information, what questions will I ask to obtain it?
 - What information do I need to share with the family? (*e.g.*, timelines, resources, expectations, the roles of others involved, how to contact the agency/child welfare professional, *etc.*)
 - Do I have a sense of how to transition through the various phases of the interview? (*e.g.*, introductions, rapport building, transitioning to talking about the issue(s) at hand, assessing/investigating the incident, seeking information needed but not offered during the interview, closing)
- Do I have a clear sense of how I will inform the individual of my purpose and role?
 - Do I have a clear sense of this person's culture and how I may need to adapt to that culture?
 - If so, did I prepare a script to assist me in clarifying my purpose and role?

Quality Interview Preparation Checklist (Cont'd)

- Have I considered the various reactions I may get? In addition, have I considered how I will respond to those reactions?
- Do I know what language the individuals speak as well as how to get an interpreter if necessary?

When using an interpreter, it is important to remember that you should maintain eye contact with the person being interviewed rather than the interpreter.

- Do I have the materials I need to prepare for and conduct the interview? (e.g., service plans, safety plans, releases, resources, notepad, pen/pencil, laptop, identification badge, education records, *etc.*)
- After considering the information above, have I consulted with my supervisor to make sure that I am ready for the interview?

Although consulting with your supervisor appears as the last item on the previous list, there will be times when you will need to consult with your supervisor before making any preparations or during the process of making preparations.

In addition to the concepts previously identified, it is important to note that, at a minimum, quality interviews should be:

- Planful,
- Culturally sensitive,
- Individualized,
- Assessment-oriented,
- In-person,
- Engaging,
- Timely,
- Conducted in the most home-like setting possible,
- Coordinated with others who are involved with the family,
- Exploratory of changes for the child/family,
- Used to coach/help and
- Inclusive of development, monitoring or evaluation of the case plan/goals.

(NCSL, 2006; PA CWTP, 2008; Weintraub, 2008; Pennsylvania Youth Summit, 2008)