

Ethnographic Interviewing

This practice of culturally-sensitive interviewing is called "ethnographic interviewing" (Westby, et al., 2003) and it is one type of evidence-based practice that allows child welfare professionals to gain broad, descriptive information about a person's background and experiences as well as to gain an understanding of how those experiences have affected the person. This practice can be used as a part of strengths-based, solution-focused interviewing and it will serve to highlight which issues represent the important issues in his or her life, in a way that is respectful to the person's culture. Some suggested steps to consider might be:

Preliminary/Preparatory Phase:

- Self-reflection
- Clarify focus about how the family's culture affects agency involvement
- Be clear on the reasons for the ethnographic interview
- Prepare a few global questions
- Ensure there are forms in the person's primary language
- Arrange for a translator, if needed

Beginning/Contracting Phase:

- Set a friendly tone
- Explore ways to work with the family
- Answer questions the family has
- Ask for clarification of the family's terms
- Focus on empathy and understanding

Middle/Work Phase:

- Cover terms that might be used frequently
- Ask prepared questions
- Allow each person to tell their own story
- Set goals
- Address discrepancies

Ending/Transition Phase:

- Summarize

(Adapted from Grote, et al., 2007)