THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

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The C.P.S Interview

We are not detectives we are Curious Social Workers

It’s an Art not a Science

CPS Interview NOT the same as forensic interview

Unique Blend of many interview techniques and styles- broad and versatile

The interview specifics are driven by your role and the information you need (risk and safety, protective capacity, strengths)

Range of Objectives for a “typical” CPS Interview

• Safety, Permanence, Well Being
• Assessment of S, P, WB issues, things that can mitigate those issues, barriers, resources, hope/motivation
• Information Gathering
• Build/sustain relationships
• Assessment of Progress
Stages of the Interview

- Preparation and Strategy
- Introduction/Explanation of role and purpose
  - Set a clear purpose for the meeting so that you are as direct and honest as possible about why you are there.
- Engagement and Rapport Building
  - Greet and engage the client with respect
  - Platinum Rule

Co-constructing Goals of Interview

Interview Stages Cont’d

Exploration and clarification of strengths and concerns

Introducing and co-constructing change strategies
  - Installation of hope ("It can get better. You can do this.")
  - MI and SFQs

Closure and Evaluation of Outcomes

Next Steps

Documentation

Interview Steps Cont’d

- Document during and/or after the interview. Tell the client why you are taking notes and how these notes will be used.
- Summarize the interview and explain (write down) next steps, action items, etc....
HALLMARKS OF A “GOOD” INTERVIEW

- Interviewer Preparation (hx, be obj, have plan)
- Rapport Building
- Gathering/Explaining Necessary Information
- SW 101
- Awareness and managing of power imbalance
- Closure

Social Work Communication and Interview Techniques

- Warmth, Understanding, Reflection, summarizing, clarification, silence, humor, confrontation, interpretation, providing information, offering suggestions, reassuring...

Maintaining an open-mind, exuding respect, being friendly, straight-forward and non-judgmental, purposeful eye contact, listening and empathic responses

There are Good Reasons for their Anger!

- What are they?

What are the behaviors of conflict and resistance?
BUILDING STRATEGIES TO DEFUSE CONFLICT AND PROMOTE ENGAGEMENT

THE ESSENTIAL TASKS OF RAPPORT BUILDING? (FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN)

RAPPORT BUILDING

- Don’t cut corners here!
- Explain Interviewer and agency role
- Find something that makes you real or have a connection to them
- “Start where they are” (Validating anger re: referral and intrusion models acceptance and understanding)
- Behavior, tone and body language must convey SW principles
- Convey: “I can help you”

And a CPS Worker Needs...to be Introduced to Pam!
CULTURAL ISSUES IN INTERVIEWING

- Proper preparation, rapport building and tuning in helps us carefully consider how the interviewer should adapt the interview to accommodate cultural differences BEFORE DURING and AFTER the interview.
- Should be constantly asking oneself:

  "How do the questions need to be modified to meet the cultural needs and/or perspectives of the interviewee? How might my stuff be getting in the way?"

CULTURAL ISSUES IN INTERVIEWING

- Develop "global" questions (some prepared before the interview and some as the interview proceeds).
- Global questions address the person’s perception of how the world works and how people get help and from whom, and accepted ways of problem resolution.
- Global questions also address how the person relates to community cultural values, norms of behavior and worldviews.
ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWING

• Used to obtain a description of the client’s problem from their point of view.
• Enlists the client’s cooperation as a teacher and cultural guide in order to give a description of her or her life circumstances.
• Can help overcome barriers by enabling worker to learn about a client’s culture in a non-threatening, respectful, open manner.

Example: “As we do this interview, I want to get a good understanding of your world and how you see things from your perspective...which may be different than my world and how I see things. As we talk, I’m hoping to ask you questions that allow you to teach me about you’re your family because you are the expert on your family- not me!”

SKILL BUILDING OPPORTUNITY

UTILIZING ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE QUESTIONS ABOUT FAMILY CULTURE
Managing power and authority

- Use client’s perception as foundation for establishing expectations
- Notice reasons behind challenging questions
- Focus on the bottom line of safety
- Minimize intrusion
- Tune into feelings

Managing Power and Authority

- Explain role clearly and check for understanding
- Use client’s perception as foundation
- Acknowledge your inherent power and what that affords you
- Demonstrate your fallibility and credibility
- Tune into what feelings may be behind challenging questions
- Influence, don’t coerce (Avoid “you need to”…)
- Respect family leadership structure

Keys to Engagement

- Foundations:
  - Listen and attend to need
  - Look for strengths
  - Warmth Empathy
  - Genuineness
  - Full disclosure
  - Manage Power and Authority
  - Support change process
- Strategies:
  - Empathy
  - Partializing
  - Reframing
  - Recognizing strengths
  - Strengths chat
Engaging Questions

- Past Successes
- Scaling
- Open-ended
- When…not if
- How
- “Wh” questions
- Exception Finding
- Coping
- Miracle
- Relationship

Signs of Safety

- Understand each person’s perspective
- Look for exceptions to abuse or neglect
- Look for strengths and connections
- Focus on safety goals
- Scale each person’s sense of safety
- Assess motivation and cooperation

Cultural Considerations in Interviewing Children

- Be aware of cultural taboos re: correcting or contradicting an adult. The child may also feel s/he has to give an answer even if s/he does not know.

- Consider the role of shame in the child’s culture

- Consider how customs, traditions, family secrets, etc may be affecting what information is shared

Understand cultural mores around child’s role in speaking to an adult which could influence the content of what they say and don’t say
General Considerations When Interviewing Children

Develop a child centered interview:
• Let the child determine the vocabulary and content of the interview as much as possible.
• Sit at eye level with the child.
• Avoid asking "why" questions.
• Be tolerant of pauses in the conversation.
• Relax

PREPARING CHILD FOR THE INTERVIEW
• Consider Location
• Introduce self & role
• Do you know why I’m/you’re here? (Correct misconceptions)
• Introduction to purpose /ask if they want someone else present
• Establish what is expected during the interview
• Reducing anxiety (incl. “You’re not in trouble…”)

Tips for Communicating With Children
• Ask about one concept at a time. Avoid multiple questions.
• Use the active voice. Use noun-verb-noun order (e.g., “Did Marcos give you that?” much better than “Was that given to you by Marcos?”)
• Avoid pronouns: words like she, he, that, or it, can be ambiguous. Use “your mother” rather than “she”
• Use who, what and where questions rather than when, how and why.
Ground Rules

• “It’s all right not to answer a question.”
• “I don’t know,” and “I don’t remember” are allowed.
• Practice one question that the child can answer, “I don’t know” to.
• Truth vs. a lie- there are some times to do this but not always.

INSTRUCTIONS & PRACTICE

• Don’t know/don’t remember
• Don’t understand
• Tell me everything
• I (interviewer) might make mistakes…
• I (interviewer) might repeat questions….
• I wasn’t there so….
• Agreement to tell the truth

Rapport Building

• Ask kids about kid stuff and spend at least first 3-4 min. on rapport and keep doing it throughout
• Can do a good developmental assessment by asking about a recent event from start to end. (Tell me about your family/what you did at school/etc…)
• During this phase, assess the verbal, recall skills of the child, and let the child know you expect them to do most of the talking.
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<th>Introduce Topic</th>
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<td>• Transition with: “Now that I know you a little better, it’s time to talk about something else.”</td>
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<td>• Reiterate role… “Sometimes I talk to kids who have worries or problems…”</td>
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<td>• Try to minimize/avoid words such as “hurt, bad, abuse.”</td>
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<th>Free Narrative</th>
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<td>• This technique is used after the topic has been introduced to encourage the child to describe events in his/her own words from the beginning to the end.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Be tolerant of silence or pauses.</td>
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<td>• Use neutral acknowledgements such as “uh, huh.”</td>
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<th>DEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENT:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Cognitive/Linguistic (page 27)</td>
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<td>• Social-Emotional</td>
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<td>– i.e. comfort talking to adults</td>
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YOUNG CHILDREN HAVE DIFFICULTY WITH:

• Paying attention (must be efficient)
• Numbers, Time Concepts, Memory
• Difficult vocabulary, Pronouns
• Understanding where their imagination ends and reality begins
• “How” and “why” (Do well with “show me” questions)

Guidelines for Age Appropriate Questions: Early School Age

• Many aspects of language are confusing for children.
• Can typically answer “who, what, where, & how” questions
• Still need simple, brief questions

Children may talk and sound as though they understand, but they may not.

Guidelines for age appropriate questions: School Age

• Does well with free narrative
• May have difficulty knowing exact timing but can answer “when” questions
• Able to define truth and lie (understand difference between pretend and real)
• Very literal (pragmatic language vs. figurative language) so not advised to use idioms or metaphors
• Abstract questions still difficult
INTERVIEWING ADOLESCENTS

- Due to past trauma—may be mistrusting of adults
- Consider what we know about Teen Brain Development: Immature Pre-Frontal Cortex, Effect of Hormones on Limbic System
- Repeat what you think they’ve said to ensure you are on the same page

INTERVIEWING ADOLESCENTS

- Very concerned about their privacy: Discuss confidentiality issues early (i.e. what you have to tell parents)
- More understanding of role of C.P.S. //Consider your feeling about ‘Right to Self-Determination’
- ER: Explore their perceptions and reasons for disclosure
- They need Information, Options and Control (WIIFM)

CLOSURE WITH CHILD

- Thanking child for participation
- Ask about child’s feelings/questions
- Reminder that this is not their fault
- Age appropriate description of next steps
- Ask if they have any questions
- Transition back to less stressful subject
Interviewing Suspected Perpetrator of Abuse

- Determine individual’s understanding of current events
- Move from open-ended to specific questions
- Allow interviewee to provide account before asking specific, follow-up questions
- Listen critically, noting consistencies & inconsistencies
- Pay attention to non-verbal communication

Interviewing Suspected Perpetrator of Abuse

- If interviewee admits to maltreating behavior, thank them for forthrightness.
- If interviewee does not admit to maltreating behavior:
  - State a basic fact of case
  - Ask individual how child might have sustained injury
  - Explore for reasons why child might have named individual as perpetrator
  - Avoid jargon

Interviewing Suspected Perpetrator of Abuse

- For closure, try to leave interview on a positive note.
  - Thank person for time
  - Give business card
  - Request to be contacted if person has additional information
  - Let them know possible next steps
Judgment Skills Practice

- Consider the case examples on page 9
- Would you contact law enforcement and why?
- What role would law enforcement play in this interview?

There are good reasons for their anger!

Anger is a physiological response to threat!

Building strategies to defuse conflict and promote engagement

Skills Practice