

## **Communication Skills Lab 5: Interviews to Learn about Family Dynamics**



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# Unit 4.1: Debrief of Field Observations of Exploring and Focusing Skills

## Effective Interview Openings

- Build rapport with children
- Introduce self and job in simple way
- Explain interview purpose and what will happen after
- Give child chance to ask questions
- Putting child at ease

## Information Gathering

- Use of:
  - language
  - attending behaviors
  - appropriate questions
  - positive reinforcement
  - guiding interview
- Were most questions yes/no?
- Was dependable information gathered?

## Interview Closings

- Next steps were discussed with child, including his/her personal safety
- Child questions were invited and answered in age-appropriate way
- Child was affirmed for participating in interview

## Unit 5.2: Interviewing to Learn about Family Functioning

### Activity 2: What questions do I ask to learn about family functioning?

**Instructions:** In small groups, you will develop open questions, and follow-up questions, to learn about the information domains that you are assigned. DO NOT LOOK AHEAD TO THE QUESTIONS PROVIDED IN THE PARTICIPANT GUIDE! There are many optional ways to craft open questions to explore these topics.

**Maltreatment:**

**Circumstances Surrounding Maltreatment:**

**Child Functioning:**

**Adult Functioning:**

**Parenting:**

**Discipline:**

## QUESTIONS TO LEARN ABOUT FAMILY FUNCTIONING

### MALTREATMENT

- Tell me about the child's injury (or effect of maltreatment.)
  - How did the child behave when this happened?
  - How did the child feel about it?
  - How did you feel when this happened?
  - In what ways does this concern you?
  - What treatment did it require?
  - What was child's response to treatment?
  - Is ongoing treatment needed?
- Have other children in the family experienced the same (maltreatment)?
  - Tell me about those times.
- Who else in your family knows about (the maltreatment)?
  - How did they learn about it?
  - What are their thoughts about it?

### CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING MALTREATMENT

- How did this happen?
  - Tell me about other times this has happened.
  - In what ways has this been a problem for you?
  - How will this affect the child's relationship with (perpetrator)?
  - Will your relationship with child be affected?
  - Have there been times with similar circumstances and child didn't get hurt?
  - Tell me what was different about those times it didn't happen.
- Tell me what you do to protect the child from (person) and (behaviors that resulted in harm)?
  - What was different this time?
  - What
  - What needs to happen now?
  - Who in your family could help you keep the child safe from (perpetrator's behavior)

### CHILD FUNCTIONING

- Tell me about your child.
- What does a typical "day in the life" look like for your child?
- What is he or she good at?
  - What does he or she struggle with?
- Tell me about your child's friends. What kinds of things do they like to do together?

- What role does your child take when h/she is with his/her friends? Leader, follower, bully, etc.
- How does your child behave/act in general?
  - Does the child have any current or past behavior problems at home, school, or in the community?
  - Any mental health or behavior diagnoses that affect him today?
  - Describe them for me.
- Does the child have any current or past developmental challenges? Educational challenges?
  - Describe them for me.

### **Physical Health**

- How would you describe your child's health?
  - How does your child's size compare to other children his/her age?
  - When did the child last go to the doctor? For what?
  - Are the child's immunizations up to date?
- Does the child have any present or chronic illnesses?
  - Tell me about that.
  - Does the child take any medications? For what, for how long, how often, response, side effects, etc.
- Was there prenatal exposure to alcohol, drugs or HIV?
- What stress does any of the child's medical conditions place on the family and how do they deal with it?
- When did the child last go to the dentist? Any present dental needs?
- When did the child last go to the optometrist? Does the child wear glasses? Does the child need glasses?

### **Psychological/Emotional/Mental Functioning**

- Has the child ever received a psychological evaluation? If so, what were the results? When was the testing?
- Has the child ever been hospitalized?
- Is the child currently taking any medication? Ritalin? Adderall? Effexor? Etc.?
- How does the child interact with others?
- Who are the child's friends, how often do they interact, what do they do for fun?
- How does the child respond to discipline?
- Is the child's behavior age appropriate?
- Is there a history of problematic behavior?
- How many caregivers has the child had? Explore relationship, time frame and current contact
- Who does the child confide in and discuss personal issues?



- What losses has the child/ren had - people, placements, relationships, things, health, school, etc.?
- How does the child express anger/ hurt/sadness/frustrations/happiness, etc.?
- How does the child show attachment/lack of attachment with caregiver/s?
- How does the child deal with change?
- Does the child demonstrate varied emotions, as appropriate?
- How would the child(ren's) peers describe him/her?
- How would other adults describe him? Her?

### **Educational/Intellectual/Vocational Functioning**

- What grade is the child in?
- Has the child ever failed a grade?
- What are the child's favorite subjects? Least favorites?
- Is the child receiving any special education services from the school?
- What grade level is the child reading on?
- Has the child been tested for special education?
- Is the child involved in any extracurricular activities?
- How often is the child in trouble in school, what is it usually for, what are the usual consequences?

### **Employment/Military History**

- Has the child been employed previous or currently? If so, describe when, doing what, what skills involved, and how it impacted the child and family.
- Is there a perception that the child needs to be employed? For what reasons?
- Has the child been involved in any military organization? ROTC, etc. Describe this experience.

### **Legal, Alcohol and Drug History**

- Has the child ever been involved with law enforcement or juvenile court? If so, describe this - when, reason, etc.
- Does the child have a JPO?
- Has there been any indication that the child uses or misuses drugs or alcohol?
- Gotten into trouble with the law because of drugs?
- Gotten really stoned or wiped out on drugs (more than just high)?
- Been accepted into a treatment program because of drug use?
- Treatment history for substance abuse/misuse.

## **ADULT FUNCTIONING**

### **Developmental History**

- Tell me about your childhood
  - Tell me a little about your childhood friends and what you did for fun.
  - When you were growing up, what were ways for members of your family to show: happiness, love/affection, anger, disappointment, frustration, sadness/depression, and stress?
  - Who were you especially close to in your childhood?
  - Who gave you the most difficulty during your childhood?
  - Were you ever afraid at home? Tell me about that.
  - Have you experienced any kind of physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse? Who? When?
  - How were you disciplined as a child?
  - Have you ever been in foster care or were you adopted?
- What do you remember most about your childhood?
  - What would you most want others to know about your childhood?
  - What do you least want others to know about your childhood?
  - What kind of a child did your parents see you as? Tell me about that.
  - How would you compare your childhood to other people's childhood?
  - How did your parents / family solve problems?
  - Did anyone in your family drink or use drugs? Tell me about that.
- When did you leave the home to be on your own?
- What was the biggest disappointment or loss you have had in your life and how did you cope with it?
- Are you in a relationship of which you have been hurt or threatened?
- Have you ever been hit, kicked, or punched by someone close to you
- What weapons are in the home?

### **Physical Health**

- Do you suffer from any serious or chronic health problems?
- Are you or any family member currently under the regular care of a doctor?
- What medications do you take?
- Do you have any type of disabilities that limit what you are able to do?
- How does this affect your ability to meet your children's needs?
- When is the last time you saw a doctor?
- Do you get an SSI check?
- How would you describe your physical health?
- Has a close family member (or close friend) died from a serious medical condition?

### **Employment/Military History**

- What are the monthly financial obligations for the family? Power, Water/Sewage, Garbage, Telephone, Food, Automobile, Insurance, Rent/Mortgage, Other Loans or other expenses?
- What are the amounts of income that are available to the family on a monthly basis from employment, retirement, social security, SSI, Food Stamps, FA/TANF, Child Support
- Tell me about your employment history, beginning with your first job and how long you stayed with the company.
- What are your present needs in regard to your employment?
- Have you ever been in the military or declined from being accepted into the military? Tell about that. Under what grounds were you discharged?
- What kind of barriers do you face with getting/keeping employment?
- What are your hopes and wishes for employment?
- Are other agencies involved in your job placement needs?
- How familiar are you with community programs like The Salvation Army, Red Cross, Mental Health Center or other family resources?
- Assess the availability of resources in the community to meet the needs of the family. Are there family needs that can be met by referring them to community resources?
- What services have you used in the past? When? Tell me about that.

### **Informal Supports**

- If you needed assistance paying a bill, whom would you turn to?
  - When you need someone to watch the children while you and your spouse are out, whom do you turn to?
  - Which family members do you feel are supportive and that you feel care for your children?
- What is your relationship with your neighbors?
- Who are the friends that you turn to when you need support?
- What role does religion or spirituality play in your life?
- Are there ever times you wish you had someone to talk to, go somewhere with, etc., but don't?
- What ideas do you have to meet new people?
- What are things people do or say to show you they care about you?
- What are some things you can do to show people you care about them?
- Tell me about your relatives-who are they? Where are they? What is your relationship with them?
- Who are three people that can provide further information through their interaction with you? How may I contact them? (Here, my preference is to obtain references three different areas: someone who can provide some historical support for the information I've gained, someone that has knowledge of their childcare practices, and someone who can attest to dependability, honesty and trustworthiness? I look at references as not only

being able to provide additional information but to substantiate the information that I have received from the family.)

### **Psychological/Emotional/Mental Functioning**

- How does your family show affection?
- What are the stressors for you and your family?
  - Ever used alcohol? How much? How often? When last? When first
  - Ever used or experimented with any illegal drugs? What kinds? How much? How often? When last? When first?
- Tell me a little about your friends now. How long friends? How often seen?
- What was the highest level completed in school?
  - Where did you attend school?
  - Were you in any special classes while attending school?
  - How well did you perform in school? Were you on grade level? Did you receive any special services?
  - What level are you able to read on? Can you read and understand the words in a newspaper?
  - How would you describe your reading skills?
- How would you describe your feeling emotions on a really good day? On a really bad day?
  - How do you deal with / relieve stress?
  - How do you show anger/sadness/happiness, etc.?
  - Have you or any relatives ever been hospitalized or treated for depression? Tell me about that.
  - Do you exhibit any of the common signs of depression i.e. changes in appetite, sleep patterns, lethargic? Tell me about that.
  - Oriented to Person, Place, and time?
  - Ever had a psychological evaluation and if so, do you know what the findings were?
  - Have you ever seriously attempted suicide?
- Have you been emotionally abused (severe criticism, verbal cruelty)?
- Have you ever been physically abused?
- Have you ever experienced sexual abuse or attack? Tell me about that.
- Have you ever been arrested? What for? What was the outcome?

### **PARENTING**

- Tell me about your child.
  - What is important to you about being a parent?
  - Describe your daily interactions with your child.
  - What does a typical “day in the life” look like for your child?
- What is the most special thing about parenting your child?
  - The most difficult thing?
- What is he or she good at?

- What does he or she struggle with?
- How does your child behave/act in general?
- Does the child have any current or past behavior problems at home, school, or in the community? Any mental health or behavior diagnoses that affect him today?
  - Describe them for me.
- Does the child have any current or past developmental challenges? Educational challenges?
  - Describe them for me.
- Does the child have any current or past health related problems that affect him today?
  - Describe them for me.
- Tell me about your child's friends.
- How often do you/your children talk with or see your parents/siblings/relatives?
- Where did you learn about parenting?
- Tell me about your child's behaviors that "push your buttons," escalate you, or cause you to feel angry?
  - Under what circumstances?
  - What are the disciplinary approaches you use?
- Tell me about the family that you grew up in.
  - Describe your relationship with your parents/siblings.
  - What types of things did you do?
  - What are some of your fond memories?
  - Your sad or hurtful memories?
  - What did you like best about your parents' upbringing of you?
  - What did you like least?
  - How were you disciplined?
  - What did you get in trouble for growing up?
  - What were the rules or behaviors around drinking and drugs?
  - Hitting?
  - Sex?

### **DISCIPLINE/BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT**

- What are some of the expectations that you have of your children?
  - How do your children react when you tell them to do things around the home?
  - How do you expect your children to interact with you or with teachers or adults?
  - What are some of the rules in your house?
- What do you think the role or job of a parent is?
- What do you see as your role or responsibility to teach and guide your kids about drinking?
  - Drugs?
  - Hitting?
  - Sex?
  - Stranger safety?
  - Peer pressure?

- Dating?
  - Safe touching?
- What do you find most challenging about managing your child's behavior?
- How does your family use discipline?
- Can you give me examples of what types of discipline you feel appropriate for: talking back, lying, stealing, children who don't do as they are told?

## **Questions—Best Practices**

- Obtain information
  - Relevant
  - Detailed and descriptive
  
- Help person interviewed tell their story
  - Person feels listened to
  - Person feels understood
  - Person does not “shut down”

## **Interviewing Best Practices**

**Use of motivational interviewing style and skills to achieve:**

- Autonomy
- Collaboration
- Evocation
- Roll with Resistance



## Lab Activity 3: Skills Practice

### Jolene

#### Hotline Intake and one note from CPI first interview with Jolene:

Hotline intake pertains to substance misuse/illicit drugs and environmental hazards on a 10, 9 and 7 year old children. Jolene, the mother of three children, moved to Florida about one year ago and has been homeless for last three weeks. Jolene has no money, food or running water. She sent one of the children to a friend's to get food and has utilized others for bathing and food. Jolene had her children removed in 2004 for drug usage in Indiana. Mom has history of using meth and may be using again. She is Bipolar and gets a disability check. Report appears legitimate due to the source so services intervention will be needed. Mom has priors out of state; no criminal history is found, however it is reported that she has prior arrests for battery and drug charges.

When CPI arrives at the address provided by hotline, she finds mother and children are living in an upstairs apartment that consists of 3 bedrooms and 1 bath. The apartment is sparsely furnished but clean and child's clothing and toys are well organized when worker arrives. Mother has just returned from food shopping.

## Lab Activity 3: Skills Observation

### 1. Opening of Interview

- a. Was greeting respectful? How so?
- b. Was purpose explained?
- c. Was personal expression provided?
- d. Was purpose of meeting explained in an understandable way?
- e. If necessary, were immediate concerns addressed effectively
- f. Any suggested improvements?

### 2. Information Gathering

- a. Was there appropriate use and mix of listening skills (attending behaviors, reflections, reflections, silence, and exception-finding)?  
Examples:
- b. Was there appropriate use and mix of focusing skills (open, closed, indirect, and solution-focused)?  
Examples:
- c. Was there use of additional engagement skills (reframing, positive feedback, developing discrepancy)?  
Examples:
- d. Did the interview have a conversational flow?

**3. Examples of how the interview:**

- a. Promoted Autonomy
- b. Promoted Collaboration
- c. Evocation of feelings and beliefs
- d. Rolled with resistance

## Unit 5.3:

# Common Interviewing Challenges

- Labeling trap
- Premature focus trap
- Blaming trap
- Expert trap
- The phenomenon “the need to not know”

## Interview Planning and Closing Phases

INTERVIEW PHASE	PURPOSE	BEHAVIORS AND SKILLS REQUIRED
3. PLANNING PHASE	A. Information Giving and Directions B. Influencing	Demonstrate Interviewing Skills 1. Use of reframing 2. Use of Motivational Interviewing
4. CLOSING PHASE	A. Check Family Understanding B. Follow-up Information Requested C. Expectation of Further Visits D. Appreciation	Answer Questions or Provide Clarification

# Unit 5.4: Follow-up Field Activities

## Field Activities for Adult Interviews

1. Conduct a field observation of a parent/caregiver interview, documenting your observations on the “Adult Interviewing Skills Observations” in your participant guide. Remember to develop a working agreement with the person you observe. Any of the following types of professionals may be observed:

- CPI
- Case Manager
- Adoptions Specialist
- Independent Living Specialist
- Child Protection Team/Children’s Advocacy Center forensic interviewer (this would need to be worked out with your supervisor)

Try to “catch” detailed examples of effective skills observed, and some examples of missed opportunities. The goal is not to capture a detailed analysis of all skills observed, just highlights.

2. Conduct an interview of a parent that is observed by another participant from this class, a field support consultant, or other individual as agreed by your trainer and supervisor. The person who observes you is expected to record their observations and conduct a feedback session with you.
3. The interview may be any of the following:
  - A parent who is part of your extended family network, or a family friend.
  - A caregiver such a relative caregiver, foster parent (this would need to be worked out with your supervisor). In such situations, you will need to identify one child in the home who would be the focus for the interview.

The purpose of the interview is to use all of your interviewing skills to learn about the following:

- a. Person’s adult functioning
- b. Child functioning (pick one child in home who parent or caregiver is responsible for)
- c. Parenting
- d. Discipline

4. Following the interview, you will develop a written summary of what you learned from the parent, using the “Summary of Parent Interview” provided. The summary will require that you organize what you have learned into the information domains of child functioning, adult functioning, parenting, and discipline. You will be turning in your written summary to the trainer when you begin your specialty track.

[illegible]

## Adult Interviewing Skills Field Observation

Person Conducting Observation \_\_\_\_\_  
Person Observed \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** This tool is for purposes of recording information about skills used during an interview of an adult. The observations should “catch” behaviorally specific details of some positive and negative examples. It is not expected to capture any analysis of every interviewing skill observed, only the highlights.

### 1. Opening Phase of Interview

- a. Build rapport
  - Introduce self and job in simple way
  - Provide a personal expression
- b. Establish a working relationship
  - Purpose of interview
  - Address immediate concerns

### 2. Information collection

- a. Use of Exploring Skills
  - Physical attending
  - Psychological attending
  - Use of reflections
  - Use of silence
  - Use of Exception Finding Q's



- b. Use of Focusing Skills
  - o Summarization/Clarifying Q's
  - o Open, Indirect, Solution-focused questions

**3. Planning phase**

- a. Information giving and choices
- b. Influencing
- c. Directing

**4. Interview Closing**

- a. Check family understanding
- b. Follow-up information requested
- c. Expectation for further visits
- d. Appreciation

**5. What I might have done differently**

## Summary of Parent Interview I Conducted

Interviewer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person Observing: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe “role” of parent, e.g. Birth mom, birth dad, foster mom, etc. (Do not provide name) \_\_\_\_\_

### Written Summary of Information Learned from Parent:

a. Child functioning

b. Adult functioning

c. Parenting

d. Discipline

e. Information that I didn’t learn, and wished I had asked:

**Assessment of Interviewing Skills**

Based on feedback from the person who observed me and my own self-assessment, these are the interviewing skills that:

I am beginning to be proficient with:

I will need much practice with: