

ASSESSMENT QUESTION GUIDE

INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

Questioning begins with eliciting the client’s point of view. These questions convey the sense that the worker values the client’s input and perspective and promotes the engagement process. Also, the worker can follow each question with “What else?” or “Can you tell me more about that?” in order to get more information or greater clarity.

“Tell me what you know about the concerns raised about child’s care (or injury)?”

“How is it that someone might think that your child may have been harmed or been neglected?”

“Who else might have had access to your child during that time?”

“Have there been other instances where concerns have been raised about your care of the child (ren)?”

“Have you ever felt that you might not be meeting the child’s needs or not supervising or protecting them?”

“What tells you that you are doing an adequate job taking care of your child (ren)?”

Questioning moves to more specific questions about the allegations that prompted the intervention. If the allegations involve injury to the child, the worker may want to follow this line of questioning that attempts to draw the clearest possible picture of how the injury occurred and the context in which the injury happened. The object is to attempt to generate a kind of eye witness account of events.

The use of specific, sequential questions is sometimes called chaining. Every question attempts to create the next logical link in the series of actions and responses that made up the injury event or events. This level of detail is important in regard to understanding what may have happened and in determining if inconsistencies or contradictions are present.

The worker begins by describing the injury or injuries that have been documented or reported. The exact questions used and their order will vary depending on the particular circumstances. The questions below are offered as options.

“Tell me where you were and what was going on before the incident where your child was hurt?”

“Who else was present when the child was injured?”

“Show me where the incident happened (if it occurred in the home and that is where the interview is taking place).”

“So what happened next?”

“And then what happened?”

“What did you say or do then?”

“What did the other person say or do then?”

“What did the child say or do then?”

“When did you first notice that the child had been hurt or was in distress?”

“What did you observe that indicated the child had been hurt or was in distress?”

“What did you do then?”

“How did you know that was how you should respond?”

“Has this situation with you child happened before?”

“How did you respond then?”

“What made the situation in which the child was hurt different?”

Exploring contradictions and inconsistencies. If the explanation given by the client contradicts or is inconsistent with the injuries or medical evidence, the worker may want to use confrontational questions in the “Colombo” style of confrontation.

“The medical evidence or explanations given by the child or others is different than what you have presented to me. How would you explain the differences?”

“From what I know about the kinds of injuries your child has, it’s difficult for me to understand how they could have occurred given your explanation. Help me understand how that could be.”
(Example: injuries on front, back and inner thighs of child’s legs and buttocks are not consistent with parent’s explanation of a fall from a bicycle or fall down steps.)

“What puzzles me is you say you didn’t take the child to the hospital for two days after the injury because you didn’t think it was serious and the child seemed to be OK. However, the doctor says the injury would have caused severe pain and the child would likely not have been able to walk. What do you think about that?”

“You say that the child was running and fell and hit his head on the wall. The child says you hit him on the head with a frying pan because he wouldn’t finish his breakfast. That’s a very different version. What do you think about that?”

GENERAL ASSESSMENT QUESTION GUIDE

Introduction of questions to the client: Example

“Mr. and/or Mrs./Ms. Jones, I am going to ask you some questions about yourself and your family that will help me to better understand if there are any additional risks to your child that I or possibly you may not be aware of. Also, another purpose of these questions is to help us identify strengths and resources that you and your family have that may help to keep the child(ren) safe and healthy. Do you have any questions before I begin?”

Note: The worker should be prepared to recognize and compliment the client for any positive qualities or accomplishments or positive steps the client may have taken or is taking to keep the child safe and properly cared for.

Given specific case circumstances, the worker must decide which of the following questions are appropriate to be asked at the initial visit, which ones are best asked at a later visit, what questions should be omitted entirely and what new questions should supplement the list below.

Sample questions to parents about children

“Tell me about your children. How would you describe _____ (name)?”

“What qualities do you like best about your child(ren)?”

“What behaviors would you like to see changed in your child(ren)?”

“What do you expect your child to do for you?”

“What would your child say are the times that he/she feels most safe?”

“What would your child say are the times that he/she feels most unsafe or afraid?”

“What do you believe about how children should be taught how to behave?”

“When a child doesn’t do what a parent tells him/her to do, how do you think the parent should correct him/her?”

“Does the child’s age influence how you would correct him/her?”

Sample questions to parents about their own childhood experiences

“How did you learn about parenting?” “From whom?”

“How are your ideas and parenting practices similar to or different than your parents (or the people who raised you)?”

“When you were growing up, did you ever live away from your parents?” If Yes,
“Tell me about that.”

“Tell me about your growing up years. What were some of the best times you remember? What were some of the worst times?”

“Were there times when you didn’t feel safe?” “Tell me about those times.”

“How did you cope with those unsafe or scary times?” “Who helped you?”

“Looking back on your childhood and teen years, do you believe by today’s standards you might have been physically, emotionally or sexually mistreated or neglected?”

Sample questions related to parents about keeping children safe

“If you were harmed or mistreated, what are you doing now as a parent to help keep your children safe from that kind of harm or fear?”

“Are there times when your child(ren) misbehaved and you felt like hitting him, even hurting him, but didn’t?” “How were you able to do that, not hitting or hurting him?”

Sample questions about parents’ relationships & safety

“How did you and your spouse/boyfriend/girlfriend meet?”

“What qualities in the other helped you decide to be a couple or stay together?”

“What qualities or behaviors about the other person would you like to see changed?”

“How do the ways in which you treat each other help the children feel and be safe?”

“Are there ways and times when you treat each other that make the child feel unsafe?”

“What would I see and hear if I were here when you were angry at each other?” “Would I hear insults, cursing, threats?” “Would I see anyone get pushed or hit?” “Tell me about that?”

“What would your children, friends or relatives say about what needs to change in your relationship to create a safer, happier home?”

“Have you (either of you) called the police or had the police called on him/her because of a problem in this relationship or any other relationship? Tell me about that.”

“Have either of you had a Protection From Abuse order issued against you?”

“Do you (either of you) have children from a different relationship? Where are they?”

Sample questions about arrest/criminal history

“Have you ever been arrested and charged with a violent crime or assault against an adult or child? Tell me about that.”

“Where you ever convicted of a violent crime or assault against an adult or child? Tell me about that.”

“Have you ever been convicted of any crime?” Tell me about that.”

Sample questions about drug & alcohol use

“Tell me about what part alcohol plays in your daily life?”

“Has anyone ever told you that they thought you had a problem with alcohol?”

“Is drug or substance use a part of your life?”

“Has anyone ever told you that they thought you had a problem with drugs, either prescription or non-prescription?”

“Have you ever been arrested for drug use or possession?”

“What would family members, friends, employer, your children say about how alcohol or drugs influences your personal behavior, work behavior, parenting or behavior toward each other?”

Have you ever been in an alcohol or drug rehab program? What was the outcome?

Sample questions about mental health/supports/change

“When you are feeling stressed or down or overwhelmed, who do you turn to for support?”

“How often do you feel that way?”

“Have you ever had health or mental health problems that required you going to a hospital, or made you unable to care for yourself or your children?”

“Are there any supports that you had in the past, but don’t have now?”

“What would it take to get those supports back, or to find replacement supports?”

“Considering all that we have talked about, what do you think needs to change in order for you children to feel and be safe, and for you to feel like and be an effective parent?”