

This tip sheet suggests a way to structure your interview with an alleged perpetrator (A/P). Examples are provided to spark ideas. However, it is important to take the examples and make them your own based on the situation, your interview style, and APS program policies.



Safety must be considered during intake, when first initiating interview and throughout the entire interview.

Pre-Interview

Examples

Is it safe to conduct the interview?

- Consider safety for yourself and your client.
- If unsafe (environment, infectious diseases, violence), do not enter.

Should you bring someone with you?

Screen for anyone in home being ill, exposure to communicable diseases.

If at any point you feel unsafe, EXIT, and call Supervisor.

Weapons—location, any in area of interview

Animals—assume any can be dangerous

“Does anyone in the home have or recently had a fever?”

Who else is present at location?

Identify safe exit should you need to leave quickly.



If conducting a phone or virtual interview, additional safety considerations:

- Are you using a personal phone, computer or other device? Is your number blocked on A/P's display or call back list?
- Can you be located by the A/P?
- Consider consulting with your IT department to ensure that your device is protected from malware.
- Is anyone other than the A/P listening?
- How do you know that you are speaking with the A/P?

Introductions

Examples

- Title/Agency
- Cultural Considerations—e.g., is eye contact appropriate? Is shaking hands appropriate?
- Getting in the door.
- Wear or display badge/ID.

“Thanks for answering, I’m Jason with Adult Services.”

“Could we talk about your (mom, dad, grandma, etc)?”

“I’m a Social Worker with the County.”

“I’m from Aging and Adult Services.”

Spend Time to Build Rapport

Have a conversation, not an interrogation.

Create an environment for disclosure.

Demonstrate respect for their time.

Acknowledge décor, pictures, etc. in environment.

“Thank you for taking time to talk to me.”

“Tell me about yourself...” (job, military, interests)

“What do you enjoy doing?”

Explanation of Events: One Allegation/Subject at a Time

Let A/P narrate.

Open ended questions.

Discuss one allegation at a time – ask directly.

Make sure that your questions are answered and not deflected.

“We received a report about some concerns regarding your Mom’s health (safety, finances).”

“I was hoping you could tell me more about...”

“I would really like to hear from you and get your perspective on what has been happening.”

“Help me understand how your dad got that bruise?”

“Perhaps my question was not clear,” then repeat the question that was not answered.

“Thank you for that information. Can you tell me...?” and repeat the question that was not answered.

Clarifying Questions

Only after getting the explanation of events, go back to ask clarifying questions.

By topic or events.

Existence of collaterals or information/evidence supporting the account.

Explore justifications and defenses.

"Do I correctly understand that (repeat what you have been told)?"

"If I heard you correctly, you said that he called you a name, and you became angry. What is the next thing that you did?"

"Do you have a copy of the POA/contract/form you described?"

"Have you shared what happened with anyone else?"

Educate if Appropriate

Describe relevant laws or rules/regulations.

Remain objective and neutral as you educate-- do not label the person.

"What appears to have occurred/what you have told me may be considered elder abuse/neglect, exploitation."

"When you left your dad alone overnight instead of staying with him, that may be considered neglect."

"How else could you have responded to this situation?"

Engage in Problem Solving as Appropriate

Resources for A/P

"How could we prevent (bed sores, being delinquent in the rent payment, etc.)?"

"Would you be interested in getting additional support caring for your mother?"

"How would you feel about getting support for yourself around your substance use/gambling/mental health challenges?"

"What are you comfortable doing?"

Wrapping Up the Interview

Ask if there is anything else the person wants to tell you.

Thank the person for their time and for being willing to speak with you.

- If you know what happens next, inform them if appropriate and safe to do so.
- Keep the door to further interaction open—consider if you may want to invite the person to contact you if additional information comes to mind.
- Attempt to end on a conversational note .

"What else would you like to tell me that we didn't cover?"

"Is there anything else you want me to know?"

"Is there anything I did not know to ask you?"

"Thank you for speaking with me today. I really value your perspective in helping me understand the situation better."

"Do you have any questions for me?"

"If you remember anything else or have questions, please call me."

If asked, provide a brief summary of what happens next.
"I'm going to go back to my office and mail you the resources we talked about."

Post Interview

Document the interview.

As close in time to interview as possible so memory is clear and fresh.