APSWI
Adult Protective Services
Workforce Innovations

Interviewing Alleged Perpetrators

We create experiences that transform the heart, mind and practice.

Academy for Professional Excellence

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About Us

Providing approximately 50,000 learning experiences to health and human services professionals annually, the Academy's mission is *to provide exceptional workforce development and learning experiences for the transformation of individuals, organizations and communities.*

APSWI, or Adult Protective Services Workforce Innovations, is a program of the Academy that provides innovative workforce development to APS professionals and their partners.



San Diego State University

The Academy for Professional Excellence is a project of SDSU School of Social Work. Funding is administered by SDSU Research Foundation.

Purpose of Land Acknowledgement



The purpose of a land acknowledgement is to recognize the relationship of Indigenous peoples to the land. It is multi-faceted in it's meaning. It shows respect to the people of the land, to the land itself and to their relationship to one another. They are statements that recognize the dispossession from the land, the harm brought by colonial practices, beliefs and policies. They validate and recognize the continued presence of Indigenous peoples everywhere. Lastly, when offered in earnest and with sincerity, they are the first steps in reconciliation and healing.

Land Acknowledgement

National Deliveries

For millennia, hundreds of Tribal nations have been a part of this land. This land has nourished, healed, protected, and embraced them for many generations in a relationship of balance and harmony.

As members of the Academy community, we acknowledge this legacy. We promote this balance and harmony. We find inspiration from this land and it's original inhabitants of this Nation.

Making a statement isn't enough. It is important that we share ways people can take action to support Native American people and land back efforts. This can involve researching and learning more about the indigenous communities of the lands you are on at Native Land Digital; returning artifacts and land to their appropriate tribal communities; working to protect and preserve the land, and much more.

For more information and resources, see our Land Acknowledgement page.

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Housekeeping & Introductions



- Set cell phones to silent/vibrate
- Schedule - Please return promptly from breaks and help us keep to the schedule
- Comfort breaks
- Materials
  - PowerPoint Slides
  - Participant Materials
  - Tip Sheet
- Introductions

Course Goal



Enhance your ability to effectively interview alleged perpetrators of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older adults.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this training, participants will be able to:

- Identify purposes of APS interviews with alleged perpetrators (A/P)
- Recognize biases and assumptions of APS professionals and A/Ps that may affect the interview
- Identify safety concerns APS professionals may encounter during the interview process with an A/P
- Utilize a method for planning, organizing, and conducting an interview with an A/P

Experience Interviewing A/P Poll

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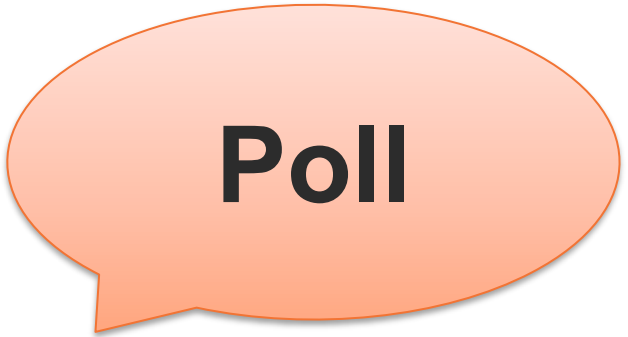
How many A/Ps have you interviewed in connection with an abuse allegation of an older adult?

a) None

b) 1-20

c) 21-50

d) More than 50



Why Does APS Interview A/Ps?

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Why do you interview alleged perpetrators?

What are your goals?

Put responses in chat box
or raise your hand. ✋

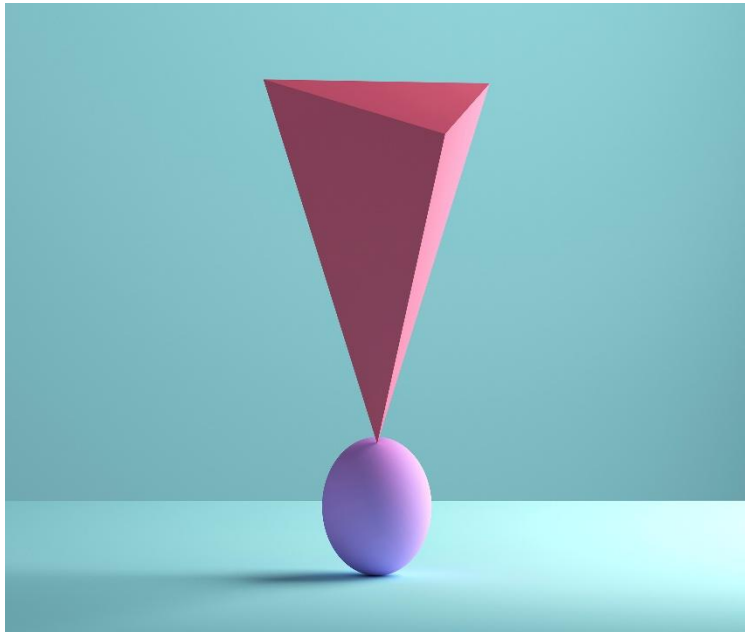


Reasons for Interviewing A/Ps

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- gather information or substantiate facts
- assess A/P's capabilities, credibility, and motivation for conduct
- stabilize/ensure safety by assessing whether A/P should continue to play a role in client's life
- assess A/P's needs and abilities in light of any continuing role, motivation, danger posed to the client, APS professional, and others
- educate A/P, offer resources
- engage in problem solving (when appropriate)
- meet agency and legal requirements

Role Differences Between APS and Law Enforcement



How is your role different from that of law enforcement?

Type your answers in the chat box but **do not** enter them until prompted.

The Differences between APS and Law Enforcement Roles

APS:

- client-focused; LE is perpetrator-focused
- evaluate allegations, assess risk, offer services to reduce risk, and work with community providers to support client's needs
- focus is not on getting a confession or proving that a crime occurred
- goal is to get a statement of what happened and make necessary assessments

Challenges When Interviewing A/Ps

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Discussion Questions:

a. What challenges have you faced or do you anticipate facing when interviewing an A/P?

b. What have you found effective in interviewing an A/P?

Select a notetaker/spokesperson and discuss for 8 minutes

Overcoming Challenges

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- A/P interviews should not "just happen"; they require planning
- are most effective when conducted later in your investigation when you are familiar with case details
- stay focused on your role and goals
  - not conducting a criminal investigation
  - not to obtain a confession
- any APS interview can be challenging
- you may need to work with A/P again



Who Brings Biases to the A/P Interview?

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Who brings biases to the interview?

Type ideas in chat box or raise your hand. 

How Might Biases Affect the A/P Interview?

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a. What are the possible biases and assumptions that your assigned role may bring to the interview?

b. How can these biases and assumptions affect the interview?

Report Out

a. What are the possible biases and assumptions that your assigned role may bring to the interview?

b. How can these biases and assumptions affect the interview?

Select a notetaker/spokesperson

APS Professional?

Alleged Perpetrator?

Safety Considerations

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Focus on safety-
Yours and Your Client's



- Rushing the planning stage of an interview can:
  - reduce our focus on safety
  - lead to incorrect and/or dangerous assumptions about the situation or A/P's willingness to address conduct

- Consider possible sources of danger when approaching every interview

Case Scenario: Charles and Junior: Review



Individually, review the case study of Charles and Junior (Handout) carefully.

Discussion: Safety Considerations

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Think about the case study. You are going to interview Junior.

a. What safety concerns do you have for the APS professional?

b. What safety concerns do you have for Charles?

c. How could you address these concerns?

Thinking About Safety

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- safety is paramount
- typically, A/P knows the environment and location of weapons and other sources of danger
- APS must think about safety and plan

- avoid becoming complacent
- trust instincts
- attend trainings on safety and assessing danger

Video Clip: Safety at a Home Visit

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a. What safety measures did the APS professional employ?

b. If this were your case, what else would you do?



APSWI Training Video: Addressing APS Professional Safety

Interview Considerations and Planning

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Should You Always Interview an A/P?

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Consider Safety

- Will this lead to retaliation against the client?
- Can you create a safe environment to conduct the interview?
- Are there any past or active criminal investigations?

Consider if there is a criminal investigation

- Could there be a criminal investigation in Charles and Junior's situation?
- Will your interview compromise the criminal investigation?
  - if so, coordinate with law enforcement
  - consider their guidance

When to Conduct the Interview

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- best if you have already interviewed the client and significant collateral witnesses

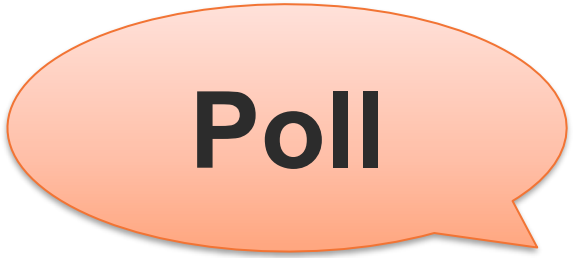
- prior interviews may better prepare you to anticipate A/P concerns, attitudes, relationship to client and others, and defenses/justifications



Note Taking Tips

- it is very important to take notes during the A/P interview
- some of us may have photographic memories
  - it is still best practice to take notes
- notes should be factual
- maintain eye contact as you take notes
- normalize taking notes at the beginning of the interview
  - "I will be taking notes while we are talking. I want to be sure I correctly recall what you tell me and notes help me do that."
- we will discuss documenting the A/P interview later in the training

Conducting the Interview: Poll



How do you *most often* conduct A/P Interviews?

a. In person
b. Using remote technology such as zoom
c. By Telephone

Planning and Organizing the Interview

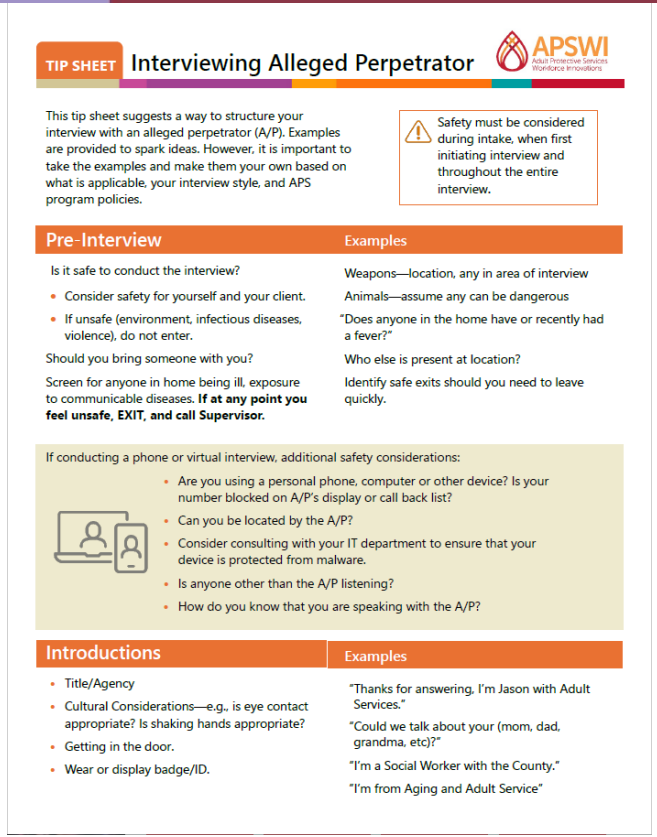
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Planning is key to an effective A/P interview

Helps you:

- identify what you want to learn
- avoid overlooking something important
- anticipate issues that may arise

Interviewing A/P Tip Sheet



TIP SHEET **Interviewing Alleged Perpetrator**

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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 what is applicable, 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?	Weapons—location, any in area of interview
• Consider safety for yourself and your client.	Animals—assume any can be dangerous
• If unsafe (environment, infectious diseases, violence), do not enter.	"Does anyone in the home have or recently had a fever?"
Should you bring someone with you?	Who else is present at location?
Screen for anyone in home being ill, exposure to communicable diseases. **If at any point you feel unsafe, EXIT, and call Supervisor.**	Identify safe exits 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	"Thanks for answering, I'm Jason with Adult Services."
• Cultural Considerations—e.g., is eye contact appropriate? Is shaking hands appropriate?	"Could we talk about your (mom, dad, grandma, etc)?"
• Getting in the door.	"I'm a Social Worker with the County."
• Wear or display badge/ID.	"I'm from Aging and Adult Service"

(Only showing page 1 of 3)

Reviewing the Tip Sheet

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Explanation of Events: One Allegation/Subject at a Time	Examples
• 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."

Reviewing the Tip Sheet (Continued)

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Post Interview

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

Encouraging the A/P to Speak with You

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- requires that the APS professional create a productive tone for the interview
- considers what the A/P needs in order for APS to accomplish its goals
- like a conversation with a client, the A/P interview is a conversation with a purpose
    - It is not an interrogation to obtain a confession to a crime.
- interview needs to be based in honesty, trust, objectivity and neutrality

Meeting the A/P's Needs



What does Junior, the A/P in the case scenario, need from APS in order to participate in the interview?

Enter answers in the chat, wait to press enter until prompted.

Setting a Professional Tone (1)

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- describe your job responsibilities (if not already mentioned)
- ask A/P how they wish to be addressed, e.g., Junior or Mr. Jones

- keep A/P focused on purpose of the interview—get their perspective on situation and how it could be improved or addressed

- if you cannot legally answer a question, say so

    - state law prohibits me from discussing who made the report; who I have spoken with already

Setting a Professional Tone (2)

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- stay neutral
- be careful with terms such as “investigation”
- keep a neutral tone, avoid making accusations
- do not threaten A/P with notifying law enforcement or other authorities (unless A/P threatens you or your client)

If A/P is reluctant or unwilling to speak with you, consider statements/approaches like:

- I really value your point of view; you can help me understand what may have been happening
- I am gathering information, I have not arrived at any conclusion
- perhaps we can offer help with your mother’s caregiving needs

Questions to Encourage Information Sharing

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open-ended to get narrative responses
- encourages providing more information
- may help keep A/P calm and de-escalate anger

specific closed questions
- Yes-no questions close off answers

forced choice closed questions
- may not provide the right choice
- use to clarify closed answers



Effective Types of Questions

Goal of an interview is to get beyond a yes or no response to providing complete information.

open-ended questions

- Tell me about yourself?
- Tell me about your father?
- What are the best parts of the relationship?
- How did you come to live with your father?
- How did you become his attorney in fact (or agent)?
- What are your thoughts on being your father's POA (attorney-in-fact)? Are there responsibilities you find stressful or challenging when acting on behalf of your father? How do you handle situations where you may disagree?

Forensic Interviewing

Forensic Interviewing is an interviewing method to encourage more information gathering/sharing.

Examples:

- Tell me everything you can about your father?
- Describe a day with your father and what you do for him?
- Tell me everything you can about your living arrangements.
- You said that there was a problem with your father last Tuesday.
  - When you are ready tell me everything you can about the problem…
  - How you felt when he did those things…how you reacted to what happened…
- You said the phone rang. Tell me everything about that call….

Thinking About Rapport

Rapport is:

- a central part of your investment in the interview and the A/P
- not a "one and done" or check box when completed
- conversation, not an interrogation
- is ongoing throughout interview if A/P stops responding to questions

Goal is to gain trust and create an environment for:

- sharing information
- explaining APS' goal and role
- assessing A/P's communication style and needs,
- and gauging interest and interaction levels

Rapport Building: Individual Work

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Using the Handout: Case Scenario Charles and Junior

- Develop three (3) to five (5) questions that will help build rapport with Junior
- Please record your questions as you would actually ask him

You will have eight (8) minutes to develop your questions, unless everyone finishes sooner

Report Out - Rapport Building with Junior

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What questions would you ask Junior to establish rapport with him?

Case Scenario: Charles and Junior: Exploring the Allegation

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Instructions:

- Develop four (4) to six (6) questions you would ask Junior about your assigned allegation
- Select a different spokesperson to report out.
- You have 10 minutes to work on your questions.

Group Assignments:

- Allegation #1: financial abuse and misuse of authority under the power of attorney

- Allegation #2: neglect resulting in weight loss and medication mismanagement, not taking Charles to medical and therapy appointments, and having him live in a basement without heat or cooling.

- Allegation #3: emotional/psychological abuse based on threats to lock him out of house, berating, intimidation with weapons and dog.

Report Out - Exploring the Allegation

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Allegations:

- Financial abuse
- Neglect
- Emotional/Psychological abuse

Tips for Exploring Allegations

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- goal is to let A/P narrate, using open ended questions
- clarify after A/P has narrated their information
- cover one allegation at a time, ask directly until all questions about the allegation are answered
- do not disclose sources of information ”The report says…”; “Records I have reviewed say…”; “I have spoken to a number of people who have shared that…”
- do not confront denials, educate on proper conduct, or engage in problem solving while obtaining A/P’s account. Leave those for later in the interview

Case Scenario: Charles and Junior: Exploring A/P Explanations (Defenses and Justifications)

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What are Junior's likely justifications and defenses for the allegation of:

Financial Abuse

Neglect

Emotional/Psychological abuse

Tips for Exploring Explanations (Defenses and Justifications)

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Useful Questions:

- If I were to speak with others about what has been happening, what do you think they would tell me?
- Who else knows what has been happening?
- Who have you spoken to about what has been happening?
- Have you sought help for what has been happening?

Watch for attempts to distract, misdirect, or take control of the interview

- Many perpetrators come across as likeable, sympathetic
- Do not collude or support A/P's bad behavior
- Do not label the A/P as an abuser or other "charged" term.

Video Clip: Carlos and Allegation of Caregiver Neglect

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Note the techniques the APS professional uses to advance the interview



Case Scenario: Charles and Junior: Dealing with Changes in Levels of Cooperation

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During the interview, Junior becomes angry and verbally aggressive, he shouts at you that you are just out to get him into more trouble, and this is all rigged to trap him into saying something that is untrue.

Until now he has been answering most of your questions.

a. What may be happening to cause this behavior?

b. How will you manage the behavior?

Raise hand or put ideas in chat box.

Tips for Addressing Changes in Levels of Cooperation

- stay calm. take control and ask A/P to lower voice.
- maintain your neutrality and attempt to create and maintain an atmosphere of calm and reason; avoid accusatory questions
- refocus on purpose of interview and importance of gaining the A/P's perspective

If unsuccessful, take a short break or end the interview

- if you are concerned for your own safety or your client's, leave and call LE or a supervisor for help
- follow agency policy if A/P asks to speak to an attorney

De-escalation Techniques



Image created by Google Gemini. 2026.

- Active listening techniques can address volatility and keep the interview going.
- Keeps your tone neutral and communicates to the A/P that you are really listening and care about what the A/P is saying.

  - Use verbal and nonverbal cues
  - Open Ended Questions
  - Mirroring/Reflecting
  - Emotion Labeling
  - "I" Messages
  - Effective Pauses
  - Summarizing

Case Scenario: Charles and Junior: Concluding the Interview

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a. How would you conclude the interview with Junior?

b. What are your goals in concluding the interview this way?

Put ideas in chat box or raise hand.

Goals When Concluding the Interview

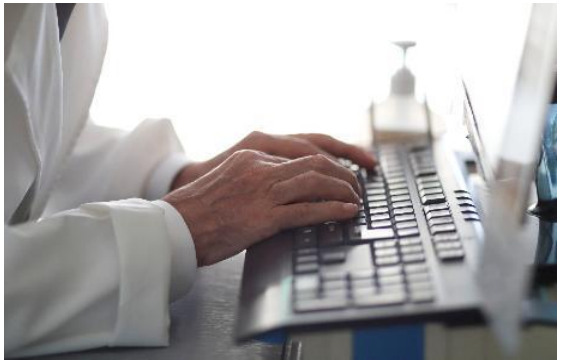
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Concluding the interview in a way that allows:

- cooperative problem solving
- acceptance of helpful services
- "next time" and moving forward
  - may need another call or visit
  - may help in the future
  - safe for other APS professional
  - social services provider



Documenting the Interview



- be complete, include exact quotes
- remain neutral and objective
- avoid unnecessary conclusions and labeling
- document interview details:
  - date, start and end time, location, everyone present, and what you learned.
- describe demeanor (behaviors) not your reactions to them

Interviewing A/Ps Summary Points

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Today we discussed:

- many reasons APS professionals interview A/Ps
- safety Considerations
- getting the most from the interview
- tip Sheet
- how to conduct the interview
- ways to keep the interview productive
- concluding the interview

- develop your own style
  - watch others and adopt what works for you
  - practice

Questions?



P-I-E



- **P**riceless piece of information
  - What has been the most important piece of information to you today?
- **I**tem to implement
  - What is something you intend to implement from our time together today?
- **E**ncouragement you received
  - What is something that you already are doing and were encouraged to keep doing?

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Thank You!

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