

Conducting Interviews

An interview is a face-to-face contact with persons who are likely to have the information about the family, their needs, their strengths, and the referral complaint. This would include immediate and extended family members, and collateral sources such as neighbors, other professionals serving the family, and school personnel. The worker should also interview all persons known to have first-hand information about the alleged complaint. With each respondent, the worker must:

- Establish an initial level of trust early in the interview by clearly stating the purpose of the contact and reaffirming the agency's intent to work collaboratively with the family.
- Create a safe and supportive environment that encourages respondents to talk about the referral and its ramifications.
- Use open-ended, clarifying, and supportive interviewing strategies to fully explore the family's situation.
- Demonstrate empathy and understanding for the family while helping them fully understand the potential seriousness of the situation.
- Ask more specific, close-ended questions to validate facts.
- Use process-oriented interviewing to explore the family's feelings and concerns and to provide encouragement and support.

Source: *Field Guide to Child Welfare* by Judith S. Rycus and Ronald C. Hughes