

✱ Gathering Family Information ✱

→The following guidelines can be used to learn more about a family's cultural values and preferences within the context of a family systems approach to intervention. Although the guidelines are not to be used as a checklist or interview protocol, they do include questions about family attitudes, beliefs, and practices that could influence the services and the approach to providing services. They can be used to help professionals determine the kinds of questions and the issues that are often mediated by culture and to assist in matching services to the family's way of life.

Part I--Family structure and child-rearing practices

- Family structure
 - Family composition
 - Who are the members of the family system?
 - Who are the key decision makers?
 - Is decision making related to specific situations?
 - Is decision making individual or group oriented?
 - Do family members all live in the same household?
 - What is the relationship of friends to the family system?
 - What is the hierarchy within the family? Is status related to gender or age?
 - Primary caregiver(s)
 - Who is the primary caregiver?
 - Who else participates in the caregiving?
 - What is the amount of care given by mother versus others?
 - How much time does the child spend away from the primary caregiver?
 - Is there conflict between caregivers regarding appropriate practices?
 - What ecological/environmental issues impinge upon general caregiving (i.e. housing, jobs, etc.)?
- Child-rearing practices
 - Family feeding practices
 - What are the family feeding practices?
 - What are the mealtime rules?
 - What types of food are eaten?
 - What are the beliefs regarding breastfeeding and weaning?
 - What are the beliefs regarding bottle feeding?
 - What are the family practices regarding transitioning to solid food?
 - Which family members prepare food?
 - Is food purchased or homemade?

- Are there any taboos related to food preparation or handling?
- Which family members feed the child?
- What is the configuration of the family mealtime?
- What are the family's views on independent feeding?
- Is there a discrepancy among family members regarding the beliefs and practices related to feeding a child?
- Family sleeping patterns
 - Does the infant sleep in the same room as the parents?
 - At what age is the infant moved away from close proximity to the mother?
 - Is there an established bedtime?
 - What is the family response to an infant when he or she awakes at night?
 - What practices surround daytime napping?
- Family response to disobedience and aggression
 - What are the parameters of acceptable child behavior?
 - What form does the discipline take?
 - Who metes out the disciplinary action?
- Family response to a crying infant
 - Temporal qualities--How long before the caregiver picks up a crying infant?
 - How does the caregiver calm an upset infant?

Part II--Family perceptions and attitudes

- Family perception of child's disability
 - Are there cultural or religious factors that would shape family perceptions?
 - To what/where/whom does the family assign responsibility for their child's disability?
 - How does the family view the role of fate in their lives?
 - How does the family view their role in intervening with their child? Do they feel they can make a difference or do they consider it hopeless?
- Family's perception of health and healing
 - What is the family's approach to medical needs?
 - Do they rely solely on Western medical services?
 - Do they rely solely on holistic approaches?
 - Do they utilize a combination of these approaches?
 - Who is the primary medical provider or conveyer of medical information?
 - Family members? Elders? Friends? Folk healers? Family doctor? Medical specialists?
 - Do all members of the family agree on approaches to medical needs?
- Family's perception of help-seeking and intervention

- From whom does the family seek help--family members or outside agencies/individuals?
- Does the family seek help directly or indirectly?
- What are the general feelings of the family when seeking assistance--ashamed, angry, demand as a right, view as unnecessary?
- With which community systems does the family interact (educational/medical/social)?
- How are these interactions completed (face-to-face, telephone, letter)?
- Which family member interacts with other systems?
- Does that family member feel comfortable when interacting with other systems?

Part III--Language and communication styles

- Language
 - To what degree:
 - Is the worker proficient in the family's native language?
 - Is the family proficient in English?
 - If an interpreter is used:
 - With which culture is the interpreter primarily affiliated?
 - Is the interpreter familiar with the colloquialisms of the family members' country or region of origin?
 - Is the family member comfortable with an interpreter of the same sex?
 - If written materials are used, are they in the family's native language?
- Interaction styles
 - Does the family communicate with each other in a direct or indirect style?
 - Does the family tend to interact in a quiet manner or a loud manner?
 - Do family members share feelings when discussing emotional issues?
 - Does the family ask you direct questions?
 - Does the family value a lengthy social time at each home visit unrelated to the plan goals?
 - Is it important for the family to know about the worker's extended family?
Is the worker comfortable sharing that information?

Source: *Developing Cross-Cultural Competence* by Eleanor W. Lynch and Marci J. Hanson, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 1998.