

Using the Interactional Helping Skills in Child Welfare

PRELIMINARY OR PREPARATORY PHASE SKILLS:

(to prepare for the work ahead)

- Tuning in to Self
- Tuning in to Others

BEGINNING OR CONTRACTING PHASE SKILLS:

(to develop a contract to assure safety and well-being)

- Clarifying the Worker's Purpose and Role
- Dealing with Issues of Authority
- Reaching for Feedback

MIDDLE OR WORK PHASE SKILLS:

(to assess strengths, safety, risks, and family functioning and to facilitate change that meets the mission of safety, timely permanence and well-being)

- Questioning
- Reaching Inside of Silences
- Communicating Information

ENDING OR TRANSITION PHASE SKILLS:

(to close the process)

- Summarizing

Shulman, Lawrence. 1999. *THE SKILLS OF HELPING INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, GROUPS, AND COMMUNITIES* (Fourth Edition), Itaska, IL: F.E. Peacock Publishers, Inc.

Using the Interactional Helping Skills in Child Welfare (continued)

1. **Preliminary or Preparatory Phase:** Preparing to do the work before meeting the client/family.

Examples: These are activities the caseworker does within him/herself (such as “Tuning in to Self” and “Tuning in to Others;”) or activities done with the supervisor or other workers, such as checking the archive files for prior referrals, etc.

2. **Beginning or Contracting Phase:** Establishing a protective partnership with the client/family and developing the contract for work.

Examples: This includes activities the caseworker does with the client/family at the start of the relationship, such as introductions, explaining the caseworker’s role and purpose for the contact; explaining the concerns about safety, and getting agreement for the work to proceed.

3. **Middle or Work Phase:** Doing the work of facilitating the desired/required changes to assure safety, permanency and well-being of the children.

Examples: This is the “casework” we often think about when we use this term. It includes home visits, office visits, and contacts with other service providers, including the schools and law enforcement. It involves helping the family to make the required changes so agency involvement will no longer be needed.

4. **Ending or Transition Phase:** Closing the process and helping families to transition to supports in the community.

Examples: This is the casework done with the family at the end of the life of the case, so that the case can be closed and the family can continue to maintain the changes they have made to assure safety, permanency and well-being for their children without agency involvement. It may be only part of a contact or might involve several contacts over several weeks.