

Questioning

Questioning is making requests for more information as to the nature of the problem/situation to get a fuller picture of the concern expressed.

- a) **Open-ended questions:** Can be used for the purpose of stimulating conversation. (“Can you please describe what you saw, step by step?”)
- b) **Closed-ended questions:** Restricted questions that are useful for eliciting specific information. (“Did you take him to the doctor?”)
- c) **Probing questions:** Used when an issue needs clarification at progressively deeper levels. (“Tell me, how was Jessica hurt?”)
- d) **Directiveness:** Give directions and tell the other person what information is needed, without being authoritarian or bureaucratic. (“We can best help Isaiah if we know some specific information. I will ask you some questions, and I’d like for you to answer them as best you can.”)
- e) **Redirection:** Used to interrupt if the information being given is unproductive or not relevant. (“Now I need to you give me some specific information about how the child was hurt.”)

Steps of Effective Questioning

1. Identify the topics and types of information you need to gather.
2. Decide which type of answer(s) you want (e.g., yes or no, detailed description, clarification/elaboration, etc.)
3. Decide which type of question(s) will most easily get you that information.
4. Decide whether to use a structured sequence of questions, a “go with the flow” sequence, or a combination of these two.
5. Begin the interview and ask questions one at a time.
6. Listen carefully to the response. Did it match the question?
7. Think about how you want to respond to the answer: do you need to ask a follow up question to obtain further clarification/elaboration, move to a new topic, or end the interview?
8. Repeat steps 2-7 until the interview is ended.

Note: Steps 1 through 4 can be done as preparation prior to the interview.