



NC Department of Health and Human Services

Conducting an Effective Interview

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Allison W. Smith

Deputy Director, Economic and Family Services

Emma Burgy Burnette

Program Manager, Economic and Family Services

Objectives

- The purpose of an effective interview
- Client interactions and why it is so important
- Techniques for effective questioning
- Key elements of professional interviewing
- When should an interview be conducted
- Interactive interviewing session



THE PURPOSE OF EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWING



The Purpose of an Effective Interview

- One of the primary and key duties of an eligibility worker is to interview clients.
- Interviewing provides the opportunity for both the worker and the client to seek and give information.
- While most interviews occur at the time of application and recertification, anytime you and your client communicate, essentially you are conducting an interview.

The Purpose of an Effective Interview

- Interviewing gives applicants the opportunity to gain an understanding of the agency, programs, benefits, and the requirements they must meet to satisfy program guidelines.
- It also provides an opportunity to educate clients about other services and agencies that may offer programs and services they need.
- An interview gives the client an opportunity to present information in their own words which may give you a better understanding of their situation.

The Purpose of an Effective Interview

- By completing an effective interview, you will secure the information necessary in order to determine eligibility and it gives the client a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities.



CLIENT INTERACTIONS AND WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT

Client Interaction

- Three of the most important traits for you to be a successful interviewer are empathy, communication, and professionalism.
- It is important to remember that clients are being asked personal questions followed by requests for verification of private information that they probably don't even discuss with close friends and family.
- Being sensitive to that and being tactful in how you interact is vital for easing the client's concerns.

Client Interaction

Key Points to remember while interacting with clients:

- People react differently to personal questions being asked of them.
- Recognize and eliminate barriers that may surface because of age, gender, language, and racial differences.
- People who are elderly, disabled, or have learning disabilities may require more of your time and assistance.
- Attitudes towards authority can in fact influence a client's interaction with you.
- You do not have to put up with abuse, such as bad language, physical threats, violence etc.

Techniques for Effective Questioning



Open-Ended Questions

Advantages of Open-Ended Questions

- Encourages more client participation
- Provides more complete explanation of answers
- Gathers more information

Disadvantages of Open-Ended Questions

- Allows the client to ramble
- Takes more time
- May result in some unnecessary, irrelevant disclosure of information.

What are some examples of open-ended questions?

- Tell me about your situation.
- Tell me about the work that you do.
- Tell me about the money you received last month.
- Tell me how you paid the rent.
- Tell me about who lives in your home.

Remember, asking leading questions is extremely important!

Closed-Ended Questions

Advantages of closed-ended questions

- Shortens the interview time.

Disadvantages of closed-ended questions

- Allows for minimal client participation.
- Eliminates explanations and in turn, information.
- May appear to be an interrogation.

What are some examples of closed-ended questions?

- What type of bank accounts do you have?
- How many hours do you work?
- How many people live with you?

Making the Most of the Interview



" NCDHHS, Social Services | County Process For Energy Payment Reimbursement | 2023

How to make the most out of your interview

- Try to resolve all verification issues during the interview so the case can be dispositioned as quickly as possible.
- Use collateral contacts to verify eligibility information with third-party sources.
 - Examples: Calling the employer to verify income, contacting a provider to verify medical expenses, calling the landlord to verify rent, etc.
- The more YOU can verify, the less time the application/recertification will be left in pending status.

How to make the most out of your interview

- It is important to remember that your body language says more than the words you speak!
- When interviewing your client, make eye contact and be an active listener!
- While listening to your client, nodding during the interview shows you hear what they are saying and is a non-verbal way of showing support to your client.
- When your body language is perceived as supportive and caring, the interview is more likely to render the results you are looking for.

How to make the most out of your interview

Make sure to use the DSS-8207 as your interview guide. Do not use the printed ePASS application the applicant submitted online.

When you use the DSS-8207 as your guide, you control the information you receive from the applicant. When an applicant submits an ePASS application, they control the information they provide. They can choose what information they provide.

The DSS-8207 is the best tool to ensure you are asking the necessary questions to conduct an effective interview.

When to Conduct an Interview



When should I conduct an interview?

- At every application
- Once every 12 months for recertifications
- Any time information on the recertification is questionable
- In-person visits
- When client requests an interview (whether in-person or by phone)

Interviewing Scenario #1

Single parent of 2 children

Not working

Rent \$450

Utilities not included in rent

No child support reported

Interviewing Scenario #2

72-years-old applicant

Receives SSD and a pension (not company paying pension was not identified on recert)

Owns the property and it is paid off

Reported adult child lived in the home and cooked and ate together at last recert but did not list anyone living in the home at this recert

Interviewing Scenario #3

21-year-old comes in to apply for FNS and reports living alone at the same address used by parents for their FNS case.

Mother reported on her case that the applicant moved out two months ago and does not know the new address.

Applicant reports working at Amazon part-time.

Reports paying rent in the amount of \$700 including utilities.

Interviewing Scenario #4

Married couple applying for FNS for themselves and 3 children

Wife comes in the agency to apply for family

Husband works

Wife is a stay-at-home mom

They rent their home

One child is disabled receiving SSI

Interviewing Scenario #5

22-year-old applying for FNS for herself and 1 year-old child

She lives with a male she identified on the application as a friend but shares the same last name as the child

She reports making \$40 wkly babysitting

She does not report any living expenses

Let's take some time
to put what you have
learned to use!



Can you spot the incorrect interview question?

- Do you have any shelter expenses like rent, mortgage, or property taxes?

- Who lives with you?

- Are you working?

- Your only income is SSI, right?

Answer

Do you have any shelter expenses like rent, mortgage, or property taxes?

Who lives with you?

Are you working?

 Your only income is SSI, right?

Which one is the assumption-based leading question?

- Do you rent or own your current residence?

- Does anyone else live in the home with you?

- Aren't you still working at Walmart?

- Will your mother still help pay your light bill now that you are back to work?

Answer

Do you rent or own your current residence?

Does anyone else live in the home with you?

 Aren't you still working at Walmart?

Will your mother still help pay your light bill now that you are back to work?

Client reports no income but reports monthly expenses like rent and utilities. Should you ask the client how they meet their monthly obligations?

Yes

No

Answer



Yes



No



Questions?