



ADVANCED INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES: HANDLING SENSITIVE ISSUES WITH CHILD CLIENTS

Basic Interviewing Principles for Lawyers

- Gather as much information as possible from external sources before meeting the child.
- Recognize that establishing a connection with the child will take time and building trust will take longer.
- Use repetition, revisit issues, and recognize that a child's understanding does not come right away.
- Communicate in an accessible, developmentally appropriate fashion.
- Explain your role and responsibilities (including confidentiality).
- Explain the court process and roles of the other players.
- Review decisions which must be made in the process and available options.
- If the child will be in the court room, explain expectations and rules of conduct.
- Recognize the importance of the child's relationships and the role of family, peers, & others in the child's "community."
- LISTEN to the child & be alert to the child's concerns and priorities. Give the child some control over the agenda.
- Gather as much information as possible from the child; validate information obtained from other sources.
- Elicit the child's perspective on the court involvement and the child's wishes.
- Give the child time and space to make decisions and permission to change.
- Maintain contact throughout the court process and meet with the child in a variety of settings.
- Draw on the expertise of other professionals.
- Don't shy away from being an advisor.
- Consider using role-playing and help the child hypothesize about the future.
- Recognize how your personal life history – values, expectations, bias, and assumptions – may affect your relationship with the child.
- Be mindful of ethical and professional standards of practice.
- Conclude sessions with a "recap" of the discussion (to confirm your understanding) and review what will happen next, including what you be doing and/or presenting in court.