

## **Interview Skills Development And Practice Handouts**

**5-23-07**

### **Abernathy Family**

**Family Composition:**

Mother: Nancy Abernathy, age 37

Father: Phillip Abernathy, age 39

Children: Melanie, age 15; Patricia age 11

Betsy Davis, maternal grandmother, age 59

Veronica Lewis and Vernon Abernathy, Mr. Abernathy's siblings

Race/Ethnicity: Caucasian

Socio-Economic Status: Middle Class

You are a foster care case manager who has just been assigned the cases of Melanie Abernathy, age 15 and Patricia Abernathy, age 11. The girls were placed in foster care after Melanie disclosed that she had been sexually abused by her adoptive father. The court determined that Mrs. Abernathy would not be able to protect the children because of her denial that anything occurred and her tendency to blame Melanie; therefore, both girls were placed in care.

Although the girls' father, Phillip Abernathy, was arrested he was released on bond after two weeks. He was ordered into counseling by the court and is currently living with his sister, Veronica Lewis. Mr. Abernathy denies having sex with Melanie, but says there may have been some contact that she may have misinterpreted because she is "too sexual." His sister has expressed that she is embarrassed and confused. She can't believe her brother would do that, but she also can't believe Melanie would lie about a thing like that.

The girls' mother, Nancy, does not believe that the abuse occurred. At least not to the extent that Melanie says it did. She stated that she just could not believe that he would violate his own child that way, especially after they went through so much to adopt the girls. She has read, and her mother has told her, that adopted children some times have "issues" and believes that Melanie is making this up about her father to get attention. Mrs. Abernathy's mother, Betty Davis, told her that they should not attend counseling classes. If they do, then everyone will know their business.

Melanie is glad that she told about the abuse, but she feels responsible for the breakup of her family. Patricia is angry at the entire family, but takes all of her anger out on Melanie. Both girls are in counseling and are currently placed in the same foster home. There is a possibility the girls may have to be placed separately if Patricia's anger toward Melanie is not resolved soon.

**Your assignment:**

Considering what you know about this family, plan an initial interview with Mrs. Abernathy. This will be the **first time** that she has met her foster care case manager. The interview should focus on establishing rapport and engaging Mrs. Abernathy.



## **Cedeno Family – Parent Interview**

### **Family Composition:**

Father: Benjamin Cedeno, age 32

Mother: Nina Cedeno, age 30

Children: Tamara, age 7, Sean, age 3

Race/Ethnicity: Mexican-American

Both parents are fluent in Spanish and English

### **Background Information:**

You are working on an investigation (i.e. CPS assessment) involving a 3-year-old boy named Sean Cedeno. This case began when a report was received from a man who stated he was a co-worker of the child's mother. According to the reporter, the boy's mother, Nina Cedeno, confided in another co-worker that her husband "beat Sean with a belt last night." Several months before that, Mrs. Cedeno told another co-worker about her husband's "violent temper," but this is the first time she said anything about her son being hurt. The reporter stated that he has observed bruises on Sean's face on two different occasions when his mother brought him to the store with her. On one occasion, Mrs. Cedeno said that her son was very clumsy and that he keeps falling off a swing at nursery school. The reporter told the intake worker that he has raised three boys, and that they rarely, if ever, got bruises on their faces like the ones he saw on Sean. The reporter also said that the Cedenos have a 7-year-old, daughter, Tamara, and she seemed extremely shy. According to the reporter, Sean is enrolled at a New Beginning Child Development Center. The history screening revealed no previous CPS history and no criminal history. A 24-hour response time was assigned to this report.

After telephoning the director of the day care center to advise her of your plan to interview Sean, you made a visit to Sean's day care center. You met with the center director and Sean's teacher, and observed Sean in the classroom. Sean's teacher, Ms. Lee, said that Sean is a "lovable child," but he can be difficult. She states that he has a very short attention span and does not show much self-control. Her main concern is that Sean is a "hitter" and a "biter." When Sean wants a toy that another child has, he hits or sometimes bites the child. The teacher says that she has to watch Sean more closely than the other children to make sure that no one gets hurt. She told Sean's father last week that unless the biting stops, Sean will not be able to come to the center. According to Mrs. Lee, nearly all the children get hurt on the playground occasionally but she was not away of Sean ever falling off a swing hard enough to injure himself. The teacher states that both of Sean's parents seem very fond of him and she does not remember ever seeing any injuries on Sean other than "normal kid bumps and bruises."

Your observation of Sean in the classroom revealed no unusual behavior. He seemed quite happy, although you noticed that he had difficulty sitting still for any length of time. He was well groomed and dressed. You examined Sean and found several bruises on his bottom. The marks appeared to be belt marks and the skin was broken in two places. The bruises did not appear to require medical treatment. Sean would not tell you how he got the bruises, he just started crying and would not talk.

You then contacted Sean's mother to notify her that you had interviewed and observed Sean in response to a report that was made concerning his well-being. Mrs. Cedenó was very concerned about the report and about who had made the report. She insisted that her children were okay and that they had no problems in their home. She wanted to know what she needed to do to resolve this problem and whether or not the state was going to try to take her child. You advised her that you would be making a home visit to meet with her and her husband concerning Sean.

**Your assignment:**

Using the information provided, plan for your initial contact with the family in their home. The interview will take place with Mrs. Cedenó and should focus on information gathering and an assessment of the children's safety in the home. You may use the template on the next page to help you plan and conduct the interview.

**AREAS TO ADDRESS IN THE INVESTIGATIVE (i.e. CPS ASSESSMENT)  
INTERVIEW**

<b>Identify self by name and present any official identification</b>	<b>Explain the purpose of the visit and describe the investigative process</b>
<b>Condition of the children/safety issues</b>	<b>Condition of the home</b>
<b>Nature of allegations and parent/caretaker response to allegations</b>	<b>Interaction between parent and child</b>
<b>Parents/caretakers perception of the family's situation</b>	<b>Possible solutions/next steps</b>

## **Cedeno Family – Collateral Contact Interview**

### **Family Composition:**

Father: Benjamin Cedeno, age 32  
Mother: Nina Cedeno, age 30  
Children: Tamara, age 7, Sean, age 3  
Race/Ethnicity: Mexican-American  
Both parents are fluent in Spanish and English

### **Background Information:**

You are working on an investigation involving a 3-year-old boy named Sean Cedeno. This case began when the county office received a report concerning about a 3-year-old boy named Sean Cedeno. The reporter stated that he was a co-worker of the child's mother. According to the reporter, the boy's mother, Nina Cedeno, confided in another co-worker that her husband "beat Sean with a belt last night." Several months before that, Mrs. Cedeno told another co-worker about her husband's "violent temper," but this is the first time she said anything about her son being hurt. The reporter stated that he has observed bruises on Sean's face on two different occasions when his mother brought him to the store with her. On one occasion, Mrs. Cedeno said that her son was very clumsy and that he keeps falling off a swing at nursery school. The reporter told the intake worker that he has raised three boys, and that they rarely, if ever, got bruises on their faces like the ones he saw on Sean. The reporter also said that the Cedenos have a 7-year-old, daughter, Tamara, and she seemed extremely shy. According to the reporter, Sean is enrolled at a New Beginning Child Development Center. The history screening revealed no previous CPS history and no criminal history. A 24-hour response time was assigned to this report.

After telephoning the director of the day care center to advise her of your plan to interview Sean, you made a visit to Sean's day care center. You met with the center director and Sean's teacher, and observed Sean in the classroom. Sean's teacher, Ms. Lee, said that Sean is a "lovable child," but he can be difficult. She states the he has a very short attention span and does not show much self-control. Her main concern is that Sean is a "hitter" and a "biter." When Sean wants a toy that another child has, he hits or sometimes bites the child. The teacher says that she has to watch Sean more closely than the other children to make sure that no one gets hurt. She told Sean's father last week that unless the biting stops, Sean will not be able to come to the center. According to Mrs. Lee, nearly all the children get hurt on the playground occasionally but she was not aware of Sean ever falling off a swing hard enough to injure himself. The teacher states that both of Sean's parents seem very fond of him and she does not remember ever seeing any injuries on Sean other than "normal kid bumps and bruises."

Your observation of Sean in the class room revealed no unusual behavior. He seemed quite happy, although you noticed that he had difficulty sitting still for any length of time. He was well groomed and dressed. You examined Sean and found several bruises on his bottom. The marks appeared to be belt marks and the skin was broken in two places. The bruises did not appear to require medical treatment. Sean would not tell you how he got the bruises, he just starting crying and would not talk.

You then contacted Sean's mother to notify her that you had interviewed and observed Sean in response to a report that was made concerning his well-being. Mrs. Cedenó was very concerned about the report and about who had made the report. She insisted that her children were okay and that they had no problems in their home. She wanted to know what she needed to do to resolve this problem and whether or not the state was going to try to take her child. You advised her that you would be making a home visit to meet with her and her husband concerning Sean.

**Your assignment:**

Using the information provided, plan an interview with the Cedenó's neighbor, Mrs. Sanchez. Mrs. Sanchez will serve as one of your collateral contacts for this investigation. Mrs. Sanchez was chosen as a collateral contact because she baby-sits the children after school and when Mr. and Mrs. Cedenó go out. She lives in the same apartment complex as the Cedenos.

You may use the template on the next page to help you plan and conduct the interview.

## AREAS TO CONSIDER FOR COLLATERAL INTERVIEWS

<p><b>Is this a good collateral, why?</b></p>	<p><b>What information can the collateral provide that is relevant to the allegations being investigated (i.e. to verify or refute parent statements)</b></p>
<p><b>Is a release of information needed?</b></p>	<p><b>How to balance confidentiality with the need for information</b></p>
<p><b>Focus on the interview (e.g. to verify facts such as attendance records, to get an expert opinion such as explanation of injuries, to gather information about care of children and parenting styles)</b></p>	<p><b>Appropriate questions based on the type of collateral and focus of interview</b></p>

## **Jones Family- Part 1**

### **Family Composition:**

Father: Felix Jones, age 35

Mother: Marisa Jones, age 30

Children: Danielle, age 9, Nicole, age 7

Grandmother: Patricia Packard, age 55

Race/Ethnicity: Caucasian

### **Background Information:**

You are a CPS investigator who received a referral on the Jones family case. The CPS investigation was initiated because of a law enforcement report concerning the neglect of two children. The children, Danielle, age 9 and Nicole, age 7 ran to a neighbor's home for help because their parents were having a violent fight. The neighbor called the police. When the police arrived, they arrested both parents and placed the children in protective custody. DFCS was contacted, a case was opened, and the children were placed in an agency foster home.

The next day, the parents bonded out of jail and Mrs. Jones appeared at the DFCS office. She demanded to speak to someone about her children. You were contacted by the front desk and advised there was a parent waiting to see you. You realize you don't have much time to plan this interview, so you quickly read over the little information you have about the family and go out to meet Mrs. Jones.

### **Your assignment:**

Using the information provided, prepare for this initial contact with Mrs. Jones. Use the list of considerations on the next page to help you with this interview.

**Areas to consider for this interview:**

What would you anticipate regarding Mrs. Jones' behavior and attitude?

What strategies will you use to engage the client?

What approach/communication style should you use?

What information do you need to get from her?

What information do you need to communicate to her?

## **Jones Family – Part 2**

### **Family Composition:**

Father: Felix Jones, age 35

Mother: Marisa Jones, age 30

Children: Danielle, age 9, Nicole, age 7

Grandmother: Patricia Packard, age 55

Race/Ethnicity: Caucasian

### **Background Information:**

You are a Foster Care case manager who was assigned the case of Danielle and Nicole Jones. When you received the case, you reviewed the file and learned the following:

The investigation revealed that the night the children were removed from the home. Mr. and Mrs. Jones were fighting because Mr. Jones became enraged when he came home and found his wife smoking crack cocaine with two unknown men in front of the girls. A fight broke out and the girls ran to the neighbor's home. Mr. Jones knew that his wife was using crack cocaine before this incident and had already had several arguments with her about it. He stated that he had come home before and found the girls hungry because their mother had not prepared any meals for them. He has had to call a friend before to come and sit with the girls because his wife stayed out all night and he had to go to work. Before this incident where the police was called, Mr. Jones had told his wife that if she did not stop using, he was going to put her out of the house. He stated that he can't have this wife acting like that because he is a long distance truck driver and is gone for days at a time. When he is on the road, he doesn't know what is happening to his children. He is afraid something is going to happen to the girls or that he will lose his job and then he won't have a way to support the girls.

Mrs. Jones denies that she has a drug problem, although she admits that she likes to party. She says the night the girls were removed she did have friends over (not just men), but swears they were not smoking anything and that the girls weren't even in the room. She says her husband was just "pissed" because she was having fun while he was working. The investigator's assessment determined that there was still open hostility between the parents and that the girls would not be safe in the home at this time.

### **Current Situation:**

The girls have remained in the same foster home and appear to be doing well in the home. Mrs. Jones has attended each of the court hearings, but Mr. Jones has not. He seems to have withdrawn from involvement with the family, and continues to say that he can't be present because he has to work.

**Your assignment:**

Using the information provided, plan an initial assessment interview with Mrs. Jones. This will be the first opportunity you have had to meet with her privately since the children came into care. Your only other encounter with her was in court. The purpose of this interview is to engage Mrs. Jones in the assessment process, including gathering background information that can be used to inform the formalized comprehensive assessment that will be completed. Use the list of considerations below to help you plan this interview.

**Areas to consider in this interview:**

Family composition (i.e. clients description of her family - who does she consider to be family)

Client perception of the reasons children are still in care

Client understanding of what will happen next with the case

What client wants to see happen with her family

Client strengths to be explored

Client's level of motivation

## **Kimball Family**

### **Family Composition:**

Mother: Delois Kimball, age 28  
Father: Jessie Kimball, age 30 (incarcerated)  
Children: Michael, age 8, Katerris, age 6, Maya, age 2  
Race/Ethnicity: African-American

### **Background information:**

You are a CPS Family Preservation case manager who has been working with the Kimball family for about 4 months. The initial report involved the neglect of three children who were living in unsafe living conditions. When the CPS investigator went out to the home, the home was unsanitary and presented an unhealthy living environment for the children. The home had no running water and no electricity. The children's mother, Delois Kimball, was unemployed. The children's father, Jessie, was incarcerated. Her oldest son, Michael who was 8- years-old had been caught stealing bread and lunch meat from the local convenience store.

Maltreatment was substantiated, risk was indicated, and a case was opened for services. A Family Plan was developed that included financial assistance to get the utilities in the home established, a substance abuse assessment for Mrs. Kimball, parent aide services, and referrals to the agency's family independence program to determine if the family was eligible for public assistance. The substance abuse assessment confirmed Mrs. Kimball's need for treatment. Mrs. Kimball was referred to an appropriate treatment program and a relapse prevention plan for the safety of the children was developed. Also, the family began to receive TANF and Food Stamps. The children were allowed to remain in the home with these services in place.

### **Current Situation:**

It has come to your attention that Mrs. Kimball has been missing treatment sessions at her outpatient treatment program. Mrs. Kimball is supposed to report to treatment 3 days a week, but the treatment center provider states that over the last two weeks, Mrs. Kimball has missed 2 days each week. You are concerned because of Mrs. Kimball's history of substance abuse.

**Your assignment:** As a part of your monthly contact with the family, interview Mrs. Kimball to discuss her progress toward her Family Plan goals and to determine if there are any barriers that need to be addressed to insure she attends substance abuse treatment as scheduled.

**AREAS TO ADDRESS IN ONGOING CASE MANAGEMENT**

<p><b>Review case progress</b>          Are services still relevant and realistic for family          Has the family been using services and what progress has been made toward goal achievement?          Assessment of all participants involvement in the case process (e.g. service providers, extended family, case manager, other agency personnel)</p>	<p><b>Children’s safety</b>          Are safeguards still in place and being followed?          Has any component of the plan changed?          Has the child’s protection and safety been compromised because the plan was not followed?          If the situation has changed, assess child’s current safety level and decide whether child can continue to be protected in the home</p>
<p><b>Steps in place for goal attainment</b>          Are steps realistic &amp; specific          Are time frames for accomplishing each step reasonable          Are there any barriers to client completing each step?          How can these barriers be addressed?</p>	<p><b>Family perception of progress</b></p>
<p><b>Expectations of progress expected prior to next contact</b></p>	<p><b>Possible solutions/next steps</b></p>

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEWING SKILLS ASSESSMENTS AND CHECKLIST

This appendix contains the *Interviewing Skill Self-Assessment*, *Interviewing Skill Checklist*, and *Interviewing Skills Strengths and Needs* referred to and used throughout this course. The skill assessment and action plan will be included in the Participant Guide. The checklist will be a separate handout to be distributed to participants during the course. They are included here for the trainer's reference.

# Interviewing Skill Self Assessment

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**Directions:**

For each skill, rate your skill level using the rating scale provided.

Rating Scale 1 to 4

1= Needs development. I am not sure how to do this.

2= Beginning skill. I try to do this, but am really not comfortable with it

3= Moderate skill. I do this quite a bit, but I don't think I am as effective as I could be

4= Highly Skilled. I do this routinely. I could probably train others to do it.

Skill	Rating			
	1	2	3	4
<b>Preparation</b>				
Analyzes available information before conducting interviews.				
Determines who should be interviewed.				
Determines what information needs to be collected during the interview.				
Determines when interview should occur based on policy and the purpose of the interview				
Determines where the interview should occur based on policy and the purpose of the interview				
Determines how the interview should be conducted (i.e. appropriate interviewing strategies)				
Develops a checklist of topics to cover.				

**Directions:**

For each skill, rate your skill level using the rating scale provided.

Rating Scale 1 to 4

1= Needs development. I am not sure how to do this.

2= Beginning skill. I try to do this, but am really not comfortable with it

3= Moderate skill. I do this quite a bit, but I don't think I am as effective as I could be.

4= Highly Skilled. I do this routinely. I could probably train others to do it.

Skill	Rating			
	1	2	3	4
<b>Engagement</b>				
Greets child, adult or family.				
Asks what names and/or how to address interviewed member(s).				
Observes interviewed member(s)' communication style and adjusts accordingly.				
Demonstrates interpersonal helping skills – empathy, respect, and genuineness in communication with family				
Uses specific strategies (e.g. mutual interests, compliments, etc.) to develop rapport.				
States honestly, matter-of-factly the purpose for interview or develops purpose with member.				
Explains confidentiality and addresses client's concerns about this issue				
Demonstrates authority in a manner that indicates no hidden agenda, and is supportive and non-threatening.				
Uses preferred terms to describe member's culture.				
Avoids making cultural assumptions.				
Acknowledges any cultural differences and respectfully engages client to help interviewer increase understanding.				
Avoids imposing personal values and beliefs.				
Appropriately responds to anger, hostility, "attitude"				

**Directions:**

For each skill, rate your skill level using the rating scale provided.

Rating Scale 1 to 4

1= Needs development. I am not sure how to do this.

2= Beginning skill. I try to do this, but am really not comfortable with it

3= Moderate skill. I do this quite a bit, but I don't think I am as effective as I could be.

4= Highly Skilled. I do this routinely. I could probably train others to do it.

Skill	Rating			
	1	2	3	4
<b>During the Interview</b>				
Uses a variety of interviewing technique including active listening, summarizing, and paraphrasing.				
Uses a variety of question formulations including open-ended, clarifying, and solution focused.				
Avoids questioning pitfalls like "why" questions and leading questions.				
Reframes by restating negative statements into positive statements.				
Keeps interview on track or refocuses interview if it gets off track.				
Is able to successfully gather needed information from client.				
Is able to a successfully communicate information to client.				
Mirrors appropriate nonverbal communication behaviors.				
Identifies and amplifies client strengths.				
Appropriately responds to anger or hostility				

**Directions:**

For each skill, rate your skill level using the rating scale provided.

Rating Scale 1 to 4

1= Needs development. I am not sure how to do this.

2= Beginning skill. I try to do this, but am really not comfortable with it

3= Moderate skill. I do this quite a bit, but I don't think I am as effective as I could be.

4= Highly Skilled. I do this routinely. I could probably train others to do it.

Skill	Rating			
	1	2	3	4
<b>Closing the Interview</b>				
Checks to determine if the interview goals were accomplished.				
Summarizes what has been accomplished, what's left to accomplish, what decisions were made, what decisions are left to be made.				
Praises efforts of interviewed member(s).				
Reviews assigned tasks.				
Schedules next meeting.				
Invites questions from interviewed member (s).				
<b>After the Interview</b>				
Reviews and evaluates interview.				
Makes appropriate documentation of the interview.				
Reflects on interview performance and determines strengths and ways to improve.				





## Interviewing Skills Checklist

**Directions:**

For each skill, rate **each interviewer** using the scale below.

### Rating Scale 1 to 4

1 = Didn't demonstrate this skill

2 = Demonstrated this skill, but did not seem at ease. Please keep working on it.

3 = Somewhat at ease with this skill and used it fairly effectively. Please do more of this in your interviews. The more you do it, the more comfortable you will become.

4 = Totally at ease with this skill and used it very effectively. Great job!

SKILLS	1	2	3	4
Making introductions				
Explaining role				
Communicating purpose of interview				
Addressing interviewee by name				
Noticing client's communication style and adjusting accordingly				
Putting client at ease				
Developing rapport				
Explaining confidentiality and addressing interviewee's concerns				
Balancing authority				
Acknowledging and responding to cultural differences				
Responding to anger, hostility, "attitude"				
Active listening				
Exploring client's key words (i.e. echoing)				
Summarizing at appropriate times.				
Paraphrasing				
Using silence at appropriate times				
Using open-ended questions				
Using clarifying questions				
Using scaling questions				
Using relationship questions				
Using the Miracle Question at appropriate times				
Exploring for exceptions (using exception finding questions)				
Identifying and amplifying client strengths				
Avoiding "why" questions and leading questions				
Maintaining a position of not knowing				
Formulating next question from interviewee's last question				
Giving compliments				
Keeping the interview on track or refocusing if needed				
Gathering information				
Communicating information				
Mirroring appropriate nonverbal communication behaviors				
Determining if interview goals have been accomplished				
Summarizing interview				
Reviewing agreed upon tasks/steps/goals				
Praising/complimenting interviewee				
Inviting questions from interviewee				

