

FACILITATION SKILLS

Potential Questions to Ask For Supervision

How might this parent be feeling?

How might a parent who feels this way behave?

How might these feelings impact their interpersonal connections with their children, the foster parents, or child welfare professionals?

What skills from Handout #1 would you use to acknowledge/address this persons feelings?

Over the long haul, what could you do to work with a parent coming from this place? What can you predict about her future interactions with her child(ren), professionals, and foster parents if involved?

IDEAS ON HOW TO HANDLE EMOTION, DISAGREEMENT AND CONTROVERSY

DO:

- Explain the purpose of the meeting
- Keep the focus on the goal – to make the best possible decision that promotes the safety, permanence and wellbeing of the child and family
- Acknowledge the emotion, try to understand and encourage the person to describe their emotion, if they are able
- Accept emotions, controversy and disagreement as natural and to be expected
- Ask the individual “what do you need” – recognize the family’s expertise
- Communicate cooperative intentions
- Identify and clarify areas of disagreements and differences
- Negotiate over issues
- Stay flexible and assist the group to do the same
- Establish and refer to ground rules

DON'T:

- Interrupt

- Take it personally
- Be critical of the person, judge, label, accuse or insult
- See ideas and decisions as win/lose situations

What Can I Do When...

A group member is exhibiting difficult individual behavior?

- When it is a staff member, you might want to approach the person in private, point out the problem, discuss and coach them in more desirable behavior. Approach them as an ally, not as an authority
- Try not to judge the behavior as right or wrong
- Attempt to maintain the balance between protecting the group from the distracting behavior and protecting the individual from undue attack
- Accept the behavior. Describe it. Ask about it
- Legitimize their feelings, perceptions or right
- Refer to the ground rules if needed. Allow the group to self-monitor, if able

Some types of individual behaviors may include...

Monopolizing/dominating the discussion – *speaking too often, long or loud, making it difficult for anyone else to participate*

- Stop the person, thank them for their input and inform them we need to hear from everyone
- Remind of time limit
- Break eye contact. Stop giving focused attention
- Summarize what the person has said and move to someone else
- Give the person a specific time-limit
- When you know in advance this may be a problem, propose in the ground rules that “everyone monitor air time.” Explain that may mean talking less for some and more for others

Non-participation/withholding – *being unable or unwilling to speak up*

- Recognize and acknowledge that the process and/or discussion can be overwhelming and intimidating
- Recognize that participation is individual. Goal is that each person says everything that he want to say and is listened to during the meeting
- Determine if the participation is unbalanced due to too many staff or professionals present
- Invite person to participate. When they speak, be attentive and an active listener
- Understand that some people may not be able to participate due to cognitive/emotional issues
- Ask easy questions (yes/no) or questions that allow the person to be the expert or speak with confidence. “Can you tell us about what your child...”

- Thank them for participating

Blaming others, attacking, criticizing or picking an argument

- Describe the behavior in a nonjudgmental manner
- Redirect, to focus on the issues at hand, resolutions
- Ask client what they could have done to change situation
- Indicate that we are not here to point fingers, but to make the best safe plan for children
- Establish a clear plan for how to make better choices in the future to eliminate further blaming of others
- Stop the argument. Ask for and record a statement of each individual's position. Engage other group members in discussing their positions
- Ask the person what the group could do to respond to their concern

Denial/minimization – *being unable to recognize or acknowledge concern or seriousness of problem*

- Ask for their perception. Ask clarifying questions to reaise their awareness level
- Repeat, clarify purpose, focus. Stress why safety concern is of importance to the agency
- Emphasize effects of the caregiver's actions on children. Explain possible consequences
- State facts
- State the differences and ask why
- Look for what is in common
- Acknowledge the differences in the stories and attempt to reconcile them

Lying

- Respectfully confront with evidence
- Allow the person to explain, share their feelings

- Have others share what their experience was regarding the topic
- Acknowledge the disagreement, difference and inconsistency. Ask the person if they can assist the group to understand why
- Don't have to address if not helpful to the process of the meeting

Crying

- Acknowledge the feeling and pain
- Respond empathically: as if they need a moment to recover, offer tissues etc
- Encourage a family member to comfort, if appropriate

Hostile/negative/antagonistic demeanor – *Negative expressions can be either verbal or nonverbal*

- Acknowledge the person's point of view. Listen
- Recognize and acknowledge their anger by a reflective statement, remain calm, speak in a soft voice
- Clarify reason for anger and attempt to deal with underlying reasons
- Give an opportunity to vent and check for safety of all
- Make a point of thoroughly paraphrasing the individual's view the first couple of times the person speaks. Stick very close to their exact wording
- Point out the negative pattern
- Ask if there is any part of the discussion/work being done which the person feels positive or good about
- Explore alternative solutions while allowing the individual to state what the worst consequence could be
- Ask for their opinions about what is needed. Record the options. Ask the group to respond
- Remind of ground rules

Yelling/Screaming

- Ask everyone to take a deep breath to regain calm and remind why everyone is here. Restate meeting purpose and goals and what must be accomplished
- Speak in a calm voice. Don't allow yourself to be pulled in
- Value everyone's feelings and reframe given the purpose and importance of the meeting
- Let everyone express their feelings to the extent possible – may be loud, animated
- Stop/pause, silence, breathe and refocus

Threats/Physical Attacks

- Set ground rules at the beginning and reiterate as needed during the meeting
- Stay calm and confident, monitor your tone of voice – speak calmly
- If there is a threat to other person, determine if the person is fearful. Assess if they feel this is a real threat and ask with they feel they need to do
- Remove others from the room if possible
- Offer individuals a chance to leave room/dismiss if too volatile
- If information is know up-front, may put security on alert
- Call security, use security measure, call police
- “Trust your gut” Be self –aware

Leaving the room

- Ask another team member to check on the person (a support person)
- Invite the person to return
- Watch for signs of escalation and give permission to leave
- Thank them for coming back. Validate their feelings
- Encourage the person to stay
- Acknowledge consequence – the meeting will continue without their input
- Remind others why we are here

Talking off the subject – *being out of synch and appear to be talking irrelevantly*

- Understand the issues being dealt with are emotional and the individual is under a great deal of stress. Ask and answer questions that will assist

- Consider that there may be other things going on - mental health issues, substance use etc.
- Try to direct the person or the group to come back to their point
- Explain how the group planned to proceed and let the individual know the group will get to their issues

Hopeless/Overwhelmed

- Review strengths/better times
- Offer support systems to help
- Let person know that agency wishes to help through this time. Give an opportunity to discuss how they feel about the situation
- Acknowledge difficult situation and assist in identification of support systems
- Identify options to reduce stress and improve coping skills

Inappropriate language

- Remind of ground rules and explain that the language may be offensive/condescending
- Consider the context
- Monitor the group's reactions
- Sometimes "let it go"

Passive-aggressive behavior

- Stress importance of everyone's input and participation in decisions
- Engage as much as possible in discussion – continue to ask for input, opinions and clarifying points
- Address solution-seeking questions to that person in hopes he/she will engage
- Make everyone feel and know that each person's opinion matters and everyone should respect one another
- Ask questions that would prompt the person to own their feelings and direct them appropriately

Non-verbals and indirect verbals

- Recognize incongruent behavior, comments

- Comment on what it looks like
- Provide an “I” message

Interrupting others – *cutting off others who are speaking or jumping into a conversation too soon, disrupting the sharing of information and showing disrespect for the other person. Interruptions can be verbal or disruptive, distracting nonverbals*

- Stop the interrupter and ask the person to wait while the speaker completes their thought
- Ask if the interrupter would like to write down their thoughts to ensure that they don’t lose them and then to share rather than interrupt
- Remind of the ground rules
- Be neutral and consistent. Don’t allow some to interrupt and not others

Having side conversations – *making private comments or carrying on another discussion with their neighbor*

- Ask them to stop. Point out how it distracts
- Ignore them if it appears to be beneficial or necessary for the family member
- Ask them to share
- Ask if they can hold until...
- Ask the group if they can hear one another
- Stop the conversation and look at the people talking
- Repeat the topic under discussion and ask if everyone can focus on it and have just one conversation at a time
- If staff, in addition to intervening as above, address outside of the meeting

Inserting personal agendas – *repetitiously inserting a concern or a disagreement – “Yeah, but...”*

- Acknowledge the concern and comment
- Paraphrase or record the point, thank the person and move on
- Ask the person what they want the group to do with the information
- Give the person a time limit

Repeating the same point over and over – *not being able to let go of something. (This is a variation of inserting a personal agenda)*

Handout #1

- Acknowledge the importance of the point and the person's passion, advocacy and/or determination
- Demonstrate that the person has been heard and the point recorded
- Explain when the point will be dealt with
- Ask if the person can let it go for now
- Give the person a final time-limited opportunity to make their pitch