

Tips for an Effective Interview

Ever find yourself stuck during an interview? Or you feel like no matter how you go about it, the answers that you are receiving just aren't quite what you're looking for? Making sure that your interview is as effective and efficient as possible can feel like a tricky needle to thread. Because of this, here are some tips and tricks to help support you in doing one of the most important data collecting processes.

Setup

Before you begin an interview, you want to make sure of these main things:

1. You are set up in a private and comfortable environment
2. You have any technology or resources that you may need prepped ahead of time. (Any screen that you may be using to help run the interview or any recording devices that you may be using.)
3. Make sure the guardian can see the screen if interview is in person
4. Have hard copy of the response scale available

If you are comfortable then the guardian will be as well. This helps with gaining more accurate information during the interview. It is important to create a welcoming environment to gather more thorough and effective data. When you set up the space, make sure that the guardian is able to see the screen clearly to answer the questions as you walk them through the interview process. Be sure to also have the response scale available so that the guardian may reference it at any time. Before the official interview starts, let them know that their honest answers help to show ways to improve the program. It is not for "grading" the interviewer/teacher.

The importance of open ended questions

When conducting an interview, there are two main types of questions.

The first of these is the one that you are probably most familiar with and that is a list question.

These can include yes or no questions, or a question where the answers are already predetermined on a list under the question itself. During the interview, however, you will also have to ask more open ended questions. This allows for more information than just the predetermined set to be incorporated into the report data. When you ask an open ended question, this does two main things. One, it helps to gather more than just empirical data, and two, it allows the interview to flow more like a conversation. Because the interview will be more like a conversation, often natural pauses and silence will occur during the process. This is completely okay and you do not have to try and fill all the silence.

Connecting with the interviewee

Conducting an interview and connecting with the guardian while doing so is a balancing act, but it is an attainable goal, especially if you take these steps to help. One of the best things that you can do is to try and build a rapport with the guardian. You can go about this a few different ways. One of the most effective, however, is paying attention to nonverbal cues and silences. When you use silence at appropriate times, it is highly beneficial because it makes sure that the guardian has time to process their answers thoroughly, and that they are not under any kind of pressure or time crunch. An interview is not just a list of questions meant to be gone through in a set amount of time. Another way to connect with the guardian is to make sure to smile! Even if it's over the phone, they can still hear the smile. Assisting with understanding any questions the guardian may have about what they are being asked can ensure that you are getting as accurate information as possible. Having the response scale on hand will help with this!

You want the guardian to be able to trust you so that you can know if something actually is not working for them or their child. The guardian may feel that they have to be eager to please and only give you the positives. By demonstrating that you actually care about the situation at hand, this allows the guardian to be more comfortable in giving their answers.

Post Interview

Ask yourself these three questions:

1. "What did I learn about the family from this interview?"
2. "What specific actions do I need to take as a result?"
3. "Who else do I need to connect with as a result of this interview?"

Some things that you can do to help wrap up the interview is write down any relevant open-ended notes that came up during the process and thank the guardian for their time and answers.