

Effective Interviewing - Clients with Mental Illness and Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities

With: Christine Ashworth and Jerre Wortham

We will discuss "Effective Client Interviewing." Client can be anyone who is over or under the age of 65 who has been diagnosed with a mental illness or intellectual/developmental disability. Come prepared to learn about dynamics and how these risk factors can contribute to Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation. We will focus on basic skills for interviewing clients who are verbal and non-communicative. In addition, we will discuss how to overcome common obstacles in communication.



Activity 1: What Clients Want Investigators to Know

- Please understand that what I am telling you is real to me. It hurts me when I can see you don't believe me.
- Please understand that the medication I am on may affect my memory. It is important that you take my statement as soon as possible after I report the allegation.
- Please understand that because of my medication I may function better at some times than others. You may need to visit me more than once.
- Please understand that my perception of details may be impaired because of my mental illness. Ask other clients if they saw the incident.
- Please understand that I am scared of staff retaliation for reporting abuse. Do what you can to make me feel safe.
- Please calm my fears of being abused again, in case you don't confirm my report of abuse this time.
- Please don't get angry at me when it is clear that I am seeking attention by reporting abuse. You may be my only contact from the outside.
- Please take your time in listening to me. I often feel that people are too busy to hear what I have to say.
- Please understand that because of my illness or my medication I may not be able to write. You may have to help me write my statement.
- Please understand that I may be terrified, even of you. It may be necessary to ask me if I would like to have someone I trust be with me during the interview.

- Mary Dees

Mental Health Consumer Advocate



Activity 2: Dynamics of Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Case Scenario

Nicole is an employee of a state supported living center. She just had a third child two months ago and the father of the child is not contributing to the baby's care in any way. Nicole has moved in with her sister, Jana, who has a problem with alcohol and drugs. Jana and her two teenaged children are constantly screaming and yelling at one another. The oldest teen also has a drug problem. Nicole's other two children are three and five. The five year old attends kindergarten. Nicole and her kids must all sleep in the living room area, since her sister has only a two-bedroom house. Nicole barely makes enough money to feed and clothe her children and has begun working very long hours.

Kim is a resident of the state supported living center. She has a diagnosis of bipolar disorder and functions in the mild range of intellectual disability. She is very hostile toward Nicole. It is Nicole's job to help Kim with her daily bath and other personal care tasks.

One day Nicole comes to work after having been up all night with the baby, who seems to be coming down with a cold or virus. She goes into Kim's room to help her get ready for her shower. Kim begins cursing Nicole and shouting obscenities. Nicole takes Kim's arm and repeatedly urges her towards the shower room. Kim spits in Nicole's face. Nicole then grabs Kim's arm with more force and pushes her toward the shower area.

- 1) Name two things about the perpetrator that predisposed her to commit abuse.

- 2) Name two things about the client that made her a likely target of abuse.

- 3) What are two things about the situation that made abuse a predictable outcome?

Activity 3: Pre-planned Responses

What is your pre-planned response to the following?

- 1) A client refuses to speak to you.
- 2) A client is discussing matters that are off topic.
- 3) A client is very emotional and is having difficulty articulating the facts.
- 4) A client won't sit still long enough for you to take a statement.



Activity 4: Overcoming Common Obstacles

Easy Words: List simple words for the ones listed

Physical Abuse - _____

Neglect - _____

Exploitation - _____

Emotional Abuse - _____

Injury - _____

Sexual assault - _____

Semen - _____

Threaten - _____

Excessive force - _____

Witness - _____

Venereal disease - _____

Statement - _____

Mechanical restraint - _____

Activity 5: Overcoming Common Obstacles

Anchors: List some examples of anchors to describe time

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Activity 6: Taking Statement: Non-Verbal

Discuss and write three things about communication you learned from the video.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Activity 7: Augmented Alternative Communication

Examining the clientele which you investigate list and discuss with your learning partner the types of assisted devices and the importance considerations for your interviews.



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