# Interviewing Alleged Perpetrators

This tip sheet suggests a way to structure your interview with an alleged perpetrator (A/P). Examples are provided to spark ideas. However, it is important to take the examples and make them your own based on the situation, your interview style, and APS program policies.

## Pre-Interview

- Is it safe to conduct the interview?
  - Consider safety for yourself and your client.
  - If unsafe (environment, infectious diseases, violence), do not enter.
- Should you bring someone with you?
- Screen for anyone in home being ill, exposure to communicable diseases.
- If at any point you feel unsafe, EXIT, and call Supervisor.

### If conducting a phone or virtual interview, additional safety considerations:
- Are you using a personal phone, computer or other device? Is your number blocked on A/P’s display or call back list?
- Can you be located by the A/P?
- Consider consulting with your IT department to ensure that your device is protected from malware.
- Is anyone other than the A/P listening?
- How do you know that you are speaking with the A/P?

## Introductions

- Title/Agency
- Cultural Considerations—e.g., is eye contact appropriate? Is shaking hands appropriate?
- Getting in the door.
- Wear or display badge/ID.

### Examples
- “Thanks for answering, I’m Jason with Adult Services.”
- “Could we talk about your (mom, dad, grandma, etc)?”
- “I’m a Social Worker with the County.”
- “I’m from Aging and Adult Services.”

## Spend Time to Build Rapport

- Have a conversation, not an interrogation.
- Create an environment for disclosure.
- Demonstrate respect for their time.

### Examples
- Acknowledge décor, pictures, etc. in environment.
- “Thank you for taking time to talk to me.”
- “Tell me about yourself...” (job, military, interests)
- “What do you enjoy doing?”

## Explanation of Events: One Allegation/Subject at a Time

- Let A/P narrate.
- Open ended questions.
- Discuss one allegation at a time – ask directly.
- Make sure that your questions are answered and not deflected.

### Examples
- “We received a report about some concerns regarding your Mom’s health (safety, finances).”
- “I was hoping you could tell me more about...”
- “I would really like to hear from you and get your perspective on what has been happening.”
- “Help me understand how your dad got that bruise?”
- “Perhaps my question was not clear,” then repeat the question that was not answered.
- “Thank you for that information. Can you tell me...?” and repeat the question that was not answered.

⚠️ Safety must be considered during intake, when first initiating interview and throughout the entire interview.
### Clarifying Questions

Only after getting the explanation of events, go back to ask clarifying questions. By topic or events. Existence of collaterals or information/evidence supporting the account. Explore justifications and defenses.

| “Do I correctly understand that (repeat what you have been told)?” |
| “If I heard you correctly, you said that he called you a name, and you became angry. What is the next thing that you did?” |
| “Do you have a copy of the POA/contract/form you described?” |
| “Have you shared what happened with anyone else?” |

### Educate if Appropriate

Describe relevant laws or rules/regulations.

| “What appears to have occurred/what you have told me may be considered elder abuse/neglect, exploitation.” |
| “When you left your dad alone overnight instead of staying with him, that may be considered neglect.” |
| “How else could you have responded to this situation?” |

| Remain objective and neutral as you educate-- do not label the person. |

| “How could we prevent (bed sores, being delinquent in the rent payment, etc.)?” |
| “Would you be interested in getting additional support caring for your mother?” |
| “How would you feel about getting support for yourself around your substance use/gambling/mental health challenges?” |
| “What are you comfortable doing?” |

### Engage in Problem Solving as Appropriate

Resources for A/P

| “What else would you like to tell me that we didn’t cover?” |
| “Is there anything else you want me to know?” |
| “Is there anything I did not know to ask you?” |
| “Thank you for speaking with me today. I really value your perspective in helping me understand the situation better.” |
| “Do you have any questions for me?” |
| “If you remember anything else or have questions, please call me.” |

If asked, provide a brief summary of what happens next. “I’m going to go back to my office and mail you the resources we talked about.”

### Wrapping Up the Interview

Ask if there is anything else the person wants to tell you. Thank the person for their time and for being willing to speak with you.

- If you know what happens next, inform them if appropriate and safe to do so.
- Keep the door to further interaction open—consider if you may want to invite the person to contact you if additional information comes to mind.
- Attempt to end on a conversational note.

### Post Interview

Document the interview.

As close in time to interview as possible so memory is clear and fresh.

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For more information about APSWI and/or this tip sheet, contact us at apstraining@sdsu.edu

Or visit our website at: theacademy.sdsu.edu/apswi