

COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

A Checklist for Successful Interviews

Good interviews depend on good communication techniques. The tips below will help you communicate well with persons under investigation and their contacts—or as we'll refer to them here, the interview “respondent.”

- ❑ **Be confident:** Show that you're knowledgeable and prepared. Demonstrate the appropriate level of seriousness. Communicate with empathy and maintain professional boundaries with the interview respondent.
- ❑ **Build trust:** Introduce yourself, be polite and non-judgmental, and help address the respondent's concerns. You are collecting information, not criticizing them or their actions.

One way to build trust is to show empathy (the ability to understand and share the feelings of the person you're talking to). Statements that show empathy might include: “I understand this isn't easy,” and “We're going to work on this together.”

- ❑ **Invite questions:** Throughout the interview, periodically invite the respondent to ask questions. This will help establish a conversational flow and show the respondent that you care about their perspective.
- ❑ **Listen more than you speak:** Pay close attention to what the respondent is saying, and don't interrupt them unnecessarily. Ask follow-up questions when needed.
- ❑ **Use open-ended questions:** Open-ended questions cannot be answered with a “yes” or “no.” Use questions that start with “who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” and “how.” Avoid negative questions, such as “You didn't get her name, did you?”
- ❑ **Communicate in a way that the respondent understands:** Avoid technical terms, jargon, acronyms, or words that might be confusing. When you must use technical terms, make sure to explain them.
- ❑ **Stick to the facts:** Every interview is an opportunity to educate the respondent about COVID-19 so they are better able to protect themselves and others. Provide clear information and correct any misconceptions about COVID-19.
- ❑ **Encourage positive behaviors:** Validate the respondent if they describe actions or express a plan to act in a way that will protect themselves and others from the spread of COVID-19. Show that you're grateful for the information they provide.