

SUGGESTIONS FOR ADVOCATES FACILITATING CONVERSATIONS WITH FAMILIES

1. Begin by establishing rapport. Show respect and concern for every member of the family.
2. Maintain your role as facilitator of the discussion.
3. Support the adult's role as parent, and support everyone's right to be heard.
4. Respect the family's values. Ask about cultural or religious beliefs or practices that you may not understand.
5. Don't judge, blame or take sides.
6. Use active listening skills.
7. Identify strengths in individual family members and in the family as a whole.
8. Try to elicit feelings which are not being expressed directly and encourage alternative views of the family's circumstances.
9. Expect expressions of anger or other distress, but don't allow threats or abusive behavior.
10. If anger or silence create an impasse, try taking a break and having a separate conversation with one or more family members.
11. Regroup and try again. Eventually, the family members should talk to each other rather than to the advocate.
12. If appropriate, use a crisis counseling format:
 - a) Explore the problem.
 - b) Explore options for solving the problem.
 - c) Resolve the immediate situation.
 - d) End with hope.

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