

CHILD-FRIENDLY INTERVIEWING: DOS & DON'T'S

March 14, 2016 @ 3PM EST





Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services

Welcome!

Thank you for participating in this peer exchange and your interest in this very important topic!

- If you need help trouble shooting during this presentation, email info@brycs.org.
- This Webinar will be recorded and archived. An evaluation will be sent after the Webinar is completed.
- As a courtesy, moderators have muted all phone lines.
- During the Q&A session, please use the chat pod on the left to submit your questions. Any unanswered questions will be posted and responded to on BRYCS Blog: <http://brycsblog.blogspot.com/>

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Agenda:

- 1) Webinar Objectives
- 2) Why is this Important?
- 3) Child-friendly interviewing tips and techniques
- 4) Short guide: [Do's and Don'ts of Child-Friendly Interviewing](#)
- 5) Additional resources

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Webinar Objectives:

- To highlight the importance and benefits of interviewing youth in a child-friendly manner
- To share tips, techniques, and resources for conducting child-friendly interviews
- To help foster positive experiences for youth and service providers/interviewers

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What do we mean by child-friendly interview?



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Why is this important?

- Children's Rights
- Do No Harm
- Positive and worthwhile experience for the child and the interviewer

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Convention on the Rights of the Child

**Children have the
right to express
themselves**

**Respect the
Views of the
Child**

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General Considerations for Interviewing Children

Past history of trauma
Developmental stage and age
Cultural circumstances
Linguistic issues
Gender
Social and economic circumstances
Mental and physical challenges



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Preparation, Timing & Location

Timing

- Allocate sufficient time for the interview.
- Be aware of children's limited concentration.



Preparation

- Be prepared for the interview.
- Read all available information in advance (country of origin information, assessments)

Location

- Organize the interview in a quiet place with privacy.
- Choose a location that is child friendly



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Conducting the Interview

Introduce yourself and your organization

Explain the purpose and process of the interview.

Ask the child for permission to conduct the interview.

Explain to the child that he/she does not have to answer questions or can answer "I don't know."

Create an atmosphere of dialogue (speak softly, laugh, smile) and listen carefully

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Use simple language

Ask open-ended questions

Show respect for the child's feelings

Demonstrate empathy and patience

Balance emotionally charged questions and lighter topics so as to not overwhelm

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Observations

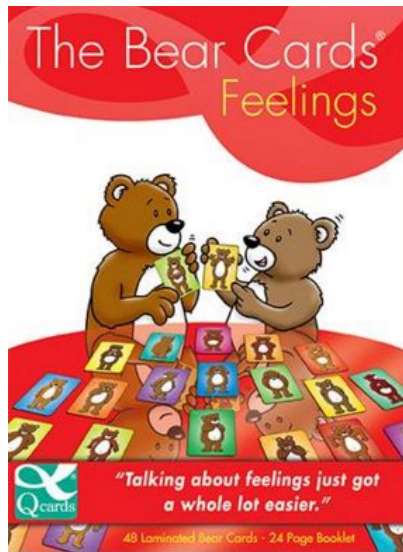
- **Facial expressions**
 - **Gestures**
 - **Body language**
 - **Signs of distress**

Interviewers should also be aware of their own nonverbal communication



Creative Methods

Be creative and **unique** in increasing active participation from children by:



- Drawing
- Storytelling
- Singing
- Game playing
- Risk Mapping





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Ending the Interview

- Explain the **next steps**
- Ask if the child has **questions**
- Discuss possible **solutions**

Finish on a positive note!



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Resources

- [Facilitator's Notes for the implementation of UNHCR BID Guidelines](#)
- www.refworld.org
- [Suggestions for Interviewing Refugee and Immigrant Children and Families](#) - BRYCS Brief, Winter 2009
- [Interviewing Immigrant Children and Families for Suspected Child Maltreatment](#) - by Lisa Aronson Fontes, available on BRYCS website
- **New!** [Do's and Don'ts of Child-Friendly Interviewing](#)

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Do's and Don'ts of Child-Friendly Interviewing

DO'S:

- DO use [child-friendly age-appropriate language](#).
- DO be friendly and welcoming. Smile! Put the child at ease with your body language and demeanor.
- DO arrange seating so that you can face and speak directly to the child. Ensure that you are eye-level with the child (and not standing over her or him).
- DO clearly introduce who you are to both the caregiver and the child. Explain the purpose of the interview and what the child and caregiver can expect.
- DO let the child know that she or he is free to take a break for water, to use the restroom, or to "take a breather" at any point in the interview.
- DO ask easy questions to start off to help build the child's confidence and comfort level.
- DO be creative with the interview. Use child-friendly activities. DO allow children to give [free-narrative responses](#); patiently take notes of any follow-up questions you have without interrupting the child. Start with broad questions, followed by more specific questions.
- DO go off-script. Although you may be using a checklist or form to direct the interview, the conversation will feel less stilted if you follow the flow of the conversation in an informal manner. At the end, look through your checklist to make sure you have not forgotten any important information.
- DO lead the child through the conversation so that she or he can easily follow the conversation. It is best NOT to jump from question to question without introducing new topics.
- DO observe the child carefully during the interview. Look for signs of distress and take appropriate action.
- DO take time in the conversation to summarize what has been discussed. Repeating back to the child what you have understood lets the child feel that her or his voice is being heard, and gives them an opportunity to correct any misunderstandings.
- DO take a deep breath to help handle any strong feelings and decide to process what you are feeling after the interview.

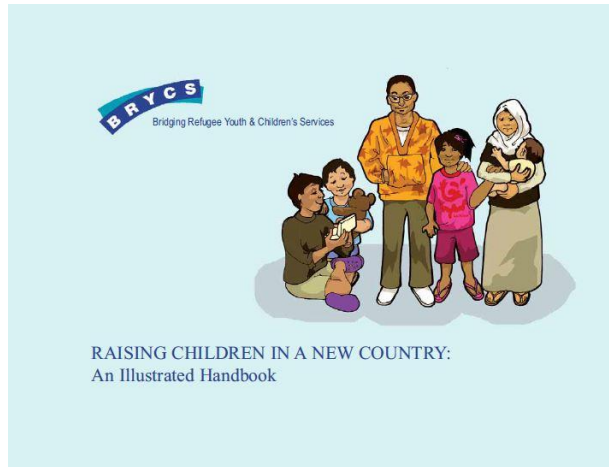
DON'TS:

- DON'T conduct interviews in non-confidential spaces or in places that are uncomfortable.
- DON'T act like a private investigator or intimidate the child with your way of questioning.
- DON'T cross-examine the child or assume the child is lying if the story changes.
- DON'T make assumptions about what children are thinking or feeling.
- DON'T show any frustration or skepticism during the interview.
- DON'T impose ideas or solutions or force a child to give information.
- DON'T interrupt a child who is in free narrative or answering a question, even if the information is not what you were expecting.
- DON'T fill silences which you find uncomfortable. Listen to the child carefully.
- DON'T ignore signs of distress, such as bruises, not talking, or uncontrollable crying. As a [mandated reporter](#), it is your job and obligation under law to report suspected child maltreatment.
- DON'T use closed questions that allow the child only to answer "Yes" or "No." ("Do you play soccer after school?" or "Do you love your aunt?"). Instead ask open-ended questions. ("What sports do you play afterschool?" or "What activities do you and your aunt do together?")
- DON'T ask two questions in one.
- DON'T further distress the child. DON'T leave the child in the middle of telling a traumatic story to go do something else.
- DON'T forget to balance your time and resources, which could force you to have to cut off an interview. DO leave time for children to ask questions or provide additional comments.
- DON'T ignore the questions that children ask you.
- DON'T make false promises.



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Resources (continued)



RAISING CHILDREN IN A NEW COUNTRY:
An Illustrated Handbook

[Raising Children in a New Country](#)



[Keeping Safe!
Bilingual Children's
Guide](#)

[Keeping Safe! A
Teen Bilingual
Guide](#)

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Resources (continued)

BRYCS Webinars:

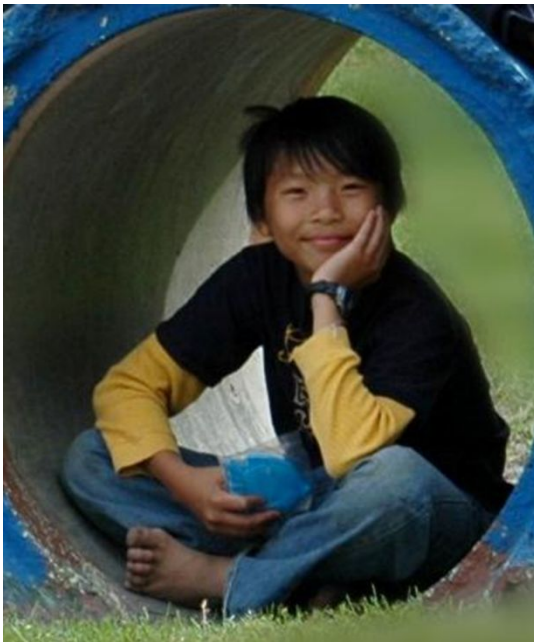
Check out BRYCS Webinars on the topic! <http://www.brycs.org/webinars.cfm>

- **Child Abuse Issues with Refugee Populations (PART I)**- (webinar recording)
[Recognizing Suspected Child Maltreatment in Culturally Diverse Refugee Families](#)
- **Child Abuse Issues with Refugee Populations (PART II)**- (webinar slides)
[Refugee Resettlement and Child Welfare: Working Together for Child Protection](#)
- [Interviews for Suspected Child Maltreatment: Tips for Foreign Language Interpreters](#)

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Questions?

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