

Solution Focused Strategies for Engaging Families in Child Welfare Proceedings

Open ended questions

- What are 3 main priorities that you plan to begin working on?
- Help me understand your progress or struggles with...
- How can we help you with your conditions for return?
- Are there additional services that you need to assist you with your conditions?
- Have you tried to change this behavior or get sober before? What worked well during that time? What was difficult? What might you do differently this time?

Open ended considerations

- Ask open ended questions
- Expand the dialogue without leading
- Be thoughtful in phrasing the question
- Give families an opportunity to respond beyond a yes or no answer

Exception Finding Questions

- How can we plan so you don't run into that problem again?
- Can you think of a time when you were able to do ... (make your appointments, stay sober, etc)?
- You know what you need to do to change your behavior. How can we help?
- Think about a time you were sober. What was that like? How did you start? How can we get you back there?
- You have made some changes. How can we help so we continue to see progress?

Exception Finding Considerations

- Exceptions are times when problems could have occurred but did not
- Use when someone is stuck and cannot see beyond the problem
- Use instead to show the problem is not always happening
- Stating the positive rather than in the negative

Scaling Questions

- On a scale from 1-10, where are you today with... (condition, service, overall progress, etc.)?
- What's keeping you from going up or down a point?
- How can we help you increase up the scale?
- Your priority was to make your AODA appointments. You started at 0, where are you today?
- Social workers could include the parent's scale number in the permanency plan so the judge can ask about progress at the next hearing. At the last court hearing, you were a 5 and today you're a 8!

Scaling Considerations

- Can be used to assess the level of change that has occurred
- Focus on working towards the goal
- Smaller increments - 1-2 points at a time
- Be realistic about moving up the scale



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Relationship Questions

- What would your mother/father notice about your change?
- What would you want to say to your parent? (Ex: gratitude at a drug court graduation)
- If child is placed with a family member, what do you want to tell your family member that you're working on to have your child returned to the home?
- What will the judge, social worker, and attorney see the next time you're in court?
- What do you want to tell the court about your progress?

Relationship Considerations

- Think about oneself and needs from the perspective of another person
- Frame questions referencing individuals who have influence (parent, child, mentor, etc.)
- Put yourself in someone else's shoes
- Think about a global opinion

Compliments and Affirmation Questions

- You did..... Tell me how that went...
- How were you able to make that happen?
- Summarize what the parent said - What I hear you saying is.....
- Thank you for telling me about your struggles, how can we help?
- Emphasize progress that has been made on the 2-3 main priorities

Compliments and Affirmation Considerations

- Begin with positive affirmations
- Avoid judgment, "lessons", or shaming
- Establish trust and engagement through positivity
- Don't begin the conversation about what the parent hasn't begun or completed

Best Hope / Miracle Questions

- If you could change one thing in your life, what would it be?
- If CPS was no longer involved, what would that look like?
- What do you hope to see happen?
- What do you plan to work on after the court hearing?

Best Hope / Miracle Considerations

- Think towards the future
- Dream about what you want to happen
- Explore hopes and goals
- Look towards a solution