

Key Factors in Interviewing Children

- When possible, obtain information about the child's family situation, abilities, activities and special needs.
- Introduce yourself and describe your role in simple terms.
- Explain the purpose of the interview.
- Sit at the child's physical level.
- Use the child's name.
- Explain that you were not present and need help to understand what happened.
- Give the child permission to tell you when he/she does not know the answer or does not understand a word or question.
- Make no assumptions about the child's knowledge base or abilities.

Key Factors in Interviewing Children continued

- Use simple words and phrases.
- Ask ONE question at a time.
- Ensure the child understands your question (“I need to make sure that you understand my question.” “What do you want to tell me?”)
- Continually clarify your understanding of the child’s response. (“Do you mean_____?”; “Tell me more.”)
- Avoid rushing the child. Wait for him/her to listen to your question, to think about it, and then to respond to it.
- Ask open-ended questions (“ Tell me about_____.” “What happened when_____?”)
- Observe a child’s non-verbal communication.
- Limit the use of questions that require a yes/no answer.