



## **INCREMENTAL APPROACH TO TOPICS**

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## **INCREMENTAL APPROACH TO TOPICS**

### **RANGE OF FOCUSED QUESTIONS**

- People-Focused
- Environment-Focused
- Activity-Focused
- Abuse-Focused
- Neglect-Focused
- Emotional Abuse-Focused
- Technology-Focused
- Criminal Activity-Focused

### **SUGGESTED GUIDELINES**

1. Use prompts that are as open-ended as feasible.
2. Use initial prompts that ask for positive, as well as negative information.
3. Move from open to direct questions in incremental steps.
4. Listen to child's responses. Follow up with additional questions to ensure understanding & gather details.
5. Avoid prematurely focusing child's attention too narrowly.
6. Approach the concerning topic from different directions.

### **PROMPTS TO INITIATE CONVERSATIONS**

Groups of questions (prompts) are being presented by topic area. These prompts are not intended to be used as a survey nor will all questions be used in any one conversation. An attempt has been made to rank order the questions from more open to more direct in each topic area. These questions are only to initiate a conversation or exploration of a topic. The child's response to any of the questions should guide the interviewer's comments & further questions.

Remember the sequence of questions. Each question can be asked in each of the question formats.

1. Focused narrative questions **(FN)**
2. Detail questions **(D)**
3. Multiple choice questions **(MC)**
4. Yes/no questions **(Y/N)**

For example when questioning the child about family:

1. Tell me about your family **(FN)**
2. Who is in your family? **(D)**
3. Do you live with your mom, your dad, or someone else? **(MC)**
4. Do you have a brother? Do you have a sister? **(Y/N)**

More direct questions can be followed up with a request to "tell me about..."

## QUESTIONS BY TOPIC AREA

### **PEOPLE-FOCUSED QUESTIONS**

*Group-focused questions* (family, school, church, neighborhood, etc.)

- Who is in your family? Tell me about your family
- What kinds of things do you do with your family?
- How does everyone get along?
- What do you like about your family?
- Are there things that you don't like or would change about your family?

*Individual-focused questions*

- Tell me about \_\_\_\_\_.
- What is \_\_\_\_\_ like?
- Are there things that you & \_\_\_\_\_ do together?
- Do you do things alone with \_\_\_\_\_?
- Are there things you like about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Are there any things you don't like about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Are there any things \_\_\_\_\_ does to you that you don't like?

*Friendship-focused questions*

- Do you have some friends in you neighborhood/school?
- Do you have as many friends as you would like?
- Is there someone who is a special or best friend?
- What do you do with your friends?
- Do you go over to their house?

*Mental Illness-focused questions*

- Does \_\_\_\_\_ ever act strange/crazy?
- What does \_\_\_\_\_ do?
- Can she/he take care of you when she's acting strange?
- What do you do when \_\_\_\_\_ is like that?
- Did \_\_\_\_\_ ever have to go to the hospital for that?
- Does \_\_\_\_\_ take medicine?
- What happens then?

### **ENVIRONMENT-FOCUSED QUESTIONS**

- Who lives at your house?
- Tell me what your house is like.
- Do you like it there?
- Where do you sleep?
- Where do others sleep?
- Do you have a bed?

- Who cleans?
- Who does the laundry?
- Do you have animals at your house?
- Sounds like there have been some changes. How's that been for you?
- How did that get decided? Who decided?
- What changes would you like?
- What is it like where you are living now?
- What happens when you have a problem?

### ***Care-focused questions***

- Who takes care of you?
- Who puts you to bed?
- Who cooks?
- What meals do you eat?
- What do you eat?
- Are there times when there's no food?
- When \_\_\_\_ isn't there, who takes care of you?
- Are there times you baby-sit/take care of yourself?
- Are there any younger kids you look out for?
- Who helps you get dressed?
- Who sees that you get to school?
- Who takes care of you when you are sick?

### ***Discipline-focused questions***

- Who makes the rules at your house?
- Are the rules fair or unfair?
- What happens when someone breaks a rule?
- Are the rules the same at Mom/Dad's House?
- Which rules would you like to change?
- What rules do you think there should be?
- Who gives the punishment at your house?
- How does your \_\_\_\_\_ punish you?
- When \_\_\_\_ "spanks", do they use a hand or something else?
- Where do you get "spanked?"
- What does it feel like?
- Does it ever leave a mark?
- How long does it hurt?
- Do your parents ever disagree about how you get punished?
- Did you ever have to go to the doctor because of a punishment?

### ***Domestic violence-focused questions***

- Do your mom & dad (i.e. caregivers) have arguments?
- Do they ever have fights?
- What do they fight about?
- How do they fight?
- Do they just yell or do they ever hit?
- Does anyone get hurt?
- How often does this happen?
- Where are you when your mom & dad fight?
- Does anyone ever go to the doctor or hospital?
- Do the police ever come to your house because of fights?
- Do any kids ever get hurt when they are fighting?
- Does anyone in your family have a gun or knife?

### ***Substance abuse-focused questions***

- Does anyone at your house ever drink alcohol (or use drugs)?
- How many times a week?
- How does \_\_\_\_\_ act when....?
- Does \_\_\_\_\_ ever fall when down....?
- Does \_\_\_\_\_ get mad when.....?
- Does \_\_\_\_\_ ever go to the bar?
- Does \_\_\_\_\_ ever hurt anyone when....?
- Does \_\_\_\_\_ ever drive a car when.....?
- Are there any drugs in your house?
- Where does the money for them come from?
- Did \_\_\_\_\_ ever get sick from drugs?

## **ACTIVITY-FOCUSED QUESTIONS**

### ***Adult/child interactions-focused questions***

- What rules do you have at school/home?
- What are some rules that kids have?
- What are some rules that grown-ups have?
- Does anyone break those rules?
- What happens when someone breaks a rule?
- Do you have any secrets?
- What kinds of secrets are good secrets? What kinds are bad secrets?
- Do you have any secrets with \_\_\_\_\_?
- What happens if you don't keep your secret with \_\_\_\_\_?
- There are lots of kinds of problems. Some we can fix ourselves & some kids need help to fix/solve. Who helps you?
- As you have been growing up, have some things happened that you liked?
- Have some things happened that you didn't like?
- Do you think someone in your family/school/neighborhood has a problem?
- What kind of problem is it?

## **ABUSE-FOCUSED QUESTIONS**

### ***Sexual abuse-focused questions***

Touch inquiry may be one way to ask about sexual abuse

- Are there places on a little girl/boy's body that nobody should touch or bother?
- What are the rules about touching?
- Has someone touched or bothered those places on your body?
- What would you do if someone touched you on one of those places?
- Who would you tell?
- Do you know someone that has happened to?

### ***Physical abuse-focused questions***

If bruises, injuries, or marks are evident, the interviewer should ask the child about it.

- How did you get hurt?
- What did \_\_\_\_ do when you got hurt?
- Did someone take you to the doctor when you got hurt?
- What did the doctor do?
- What did \_\_\_\_ say about it?

### ***Neglect-Focused Questions***

Many of the questions about people, environment, & activities are appropriate to explore neglect

- Who takes care of you?
- How do they do it?
- What do you like about how they do that?
- Are there things that you do not like about how they do that?
- Who puts you to bed? What time?
- Who cooks? What meals do you eat? What do you eat?
- Are there times when there is no food?
- When \_\_\_\_ isn't there who takes care of you?
- Are there times you baby-sit for/take care of yourself?
- Is there someone you can call?
- How long are you alone?
- Are there younger kids you look out for?
- Who helps you get dressed?
- Who sees you get to school?
- Who takes care of you when you are sick?

### ***Emotional Abuse-Focused Questions***

- How are you treated?
- When you have problems, who can you talk to?
- Does anyone ever praise you?
- Do you think you are treated the same as other kids in the family or are you treated differently?
- Does anyone ever yell at you or call you names?
- Does anyone make you feel sad? What do they do?
- Are there ever times when grown-ups tell you to break the law?

### **TECHNOLOGY-FOCUSED QUESTIONS**

- How do you stay in touch with your friends?
- Do you have a cell phone?
- Tell me about your cell phone? (calls, text or picture capability)
- Are there computers in your house?
- How many? Where are they? Who uses them?
- Do you have an email account?
- Do you visit any chat rooms?
- Do you have a Facebook or My Space page or something else?
- Do you ever receive pictures or information through the computer or phone?

### **CRIMINAL ACTIVITY-FOCUSED QUESTIONS**

- Does\_\_\_ever get in trouble with the police? What for?
- Did the police ever come to your house? What for?
- Did\_\_\_ever get arrested?
- Did\_\_\_ever have to go to jail?
- Did\_\_\_ever have to go to court?
- Did anybody in your house ever steal anything? What happened?
- Does\_\_\_ever get in fights? When? Where? Who with?