

Preparation

- **Personal Preparation:** Engage in personal reflection regarding what biases you may hold related to this child/family, what perspectives need to be considered, and what personal preparation you need to do to engage equitably for this child.
 - Resource: [Equity Toolkit](#), CDE
 - Resource: [What's In Your Cultural Backpack](#) (Miley et al., 2001)
- **Record review:** Be familiar with the child's records, culture, etc.
 - Reflect on the purpose of the interview and how you can use the child's strengths and culture to guide questioning
- **Multidisciplinary Team Composition:** Determine which team members should attend the meeting. It may be helpful to have multiple professionals present for multiple perspectives, but too many professionals can be overwhelming. Consider who needs to be at the interview and possible ways to relay information to the team to lessen the stress of the interview. Strive to include people that have knowledge pertaining to potential considerations of culture and language, and those with strong relationships with the family.
- **Policies:** Familiarize yourself with school/district policies regarding home visits or meeting families outside of the school building.
- **Language Considerations:** Familiarize yourself with school/district options for providing interpretation services during the meeting so that you can knowledgeably present options to the family.

Planning the Meeting

- Request the interview: Communicate with the parent/family member about the purpose of the visit. Be sure to discuss the expected length of the meeting or visit.
- Location: Offer a range of options for the setting of the interview. Families may prefer to meet at the school, in their home, or at a community setting such as a public library (many public libraries have private meeting rooms you can book for no cost). Choose a setting that is conducive to the family's sense of belonging as well as their logistical needs.
 - If possible, offer transportation assistance. Consult your school/district for resources, such as providing a bus pass.
 - If an in-person meeting is not possible, a virtual meeting is an option. A virtual meeting is significantly better than *no* meeting, but comes with its own barriers and may reduce the personal connection that is so powerful in interviewing. Consider this as an option if an interview is otherwise unable to occur.
- Scheduling: Offer a range of different times whenever possible. Some families may need to meet before or after school hours or even on weekends. Consider that work schedules and child care may be a potential barrier.
- Attendance: Discuss with the family who will be in attendance, including family members, school staff, and interpreters. It will be helpful to know in advance how many people to expect.
 - Clarify for the parent if you would like their child present for the meeting. If children should not be present in the meeting, consider what childcare options you may be able to offer.
- Language Considerations: Discuss interpretation needs and options with the family. Ensure you communicate to the family that interpretation is their right and that providing interpretation services is not a burden and

may actually be critically important to a clear and informative interview. If interpretation is needed, coordinate with the interpreter. (See Partnering with Interpreters Checklist for more information)

- If in person interpretation is unavailable, explore options for virtual/remote interpretation or translation apps. Explore the 'Partnering with Interpreters' section or more information and best practices.

Day of the Interview

- Confirm participation: Call/text the parent the night before or earlier in the day to re-confirm details of the meeting and attendance. If the interview will take place in the family's home, confirm arrival time and how many staff will be coming (including interpretation, if needed).
- Setup: Set up a warm and welcoming environment for the family. Ensure there is sufficient seating for the expected number of guests. It may be nice to have water, tissues, and other comforts available.

Welcome

- Warmly greet the family: If the family is coming to the school or an off-site location, be present at the entry to greet parents and guide them to the room where the meeting will take place. If interpretation is needed, the interpreter should be present at the entry as well.
- Introductions: Introduce or reintroduce all people present and invite family members to introduce themselves. Thank the family for taking time to meet with you. Establish rapport.
- Set the Purpose: Explain the purpose of the interview. Frame for the family how much you value and need their input as the experts on their child. Let the family know that the interview is about their child - invite them to correct you if you misunderstand them. Let the parent know if you will be

taking notes. Let parents know that notes are private and for your use only in planning for their student.

- Language Considerations: If relevant, discuss interpretation style and logistics for the meeting.

During the Interview

Questioning

- Begin with broad questions
- Use the provided questions as a guiding tool, not as a checklist. Get curious about the student and their family. Allow the conversation to flow naturally. Use questions and prompting language to learn more rather than to force the conversation in a direction.
- Ask one question at a time to avoid overwhelming the family or creating confusion.
- Ask about family values and culture
- Use appropriate and culturally responsive nonverbal cues
- Use reflective listening to show that you are engaged
- Give space: Pay attention to how the family member(s) may be feeling and responding. Do not force a story or particular answer. Be aware the questions may be emotional or triggering. Offer breaks if you think that may be needed.
- Resource: [Mental Health](#), CDE
- Explain that families are encouraged to ask questions and allow space for this as well.
- Stay neutral: Be careful not to imply that any question has a right answer. Avoid posing leading questions or suggesting answers. Avoid “why” questions.

- When families use colloquialisms, repeat these and ask for clarification by saying things like, “What does your child do when she _____?” Don’t assume that you understand.
- Take notes: Capture what the family is saying by taking notes while you listen but work to maintain eye contact and connection. If multiple staff members are participating, it may be helpful to designate one person to take notes. Taking notes can help to safeguard against bias, inference, or misremembering.

PLEASE NOTE: Schools must never inquire about an individual or a family’s immigration status. If the family offers this information, you must keep it confidential and do not document or disclose it for any reason. See [2014 Immigrant Dear Colleague Letter](#).

Ending the Interview

- Summarize: Ask if the family has anything else to share. Provide a cohesive summary focusing on strengths and ask the family if you have missed anything important. Thank the family warmly for their time and for sharing with you about their child, family, and culture.
- Preview Next Steps: Share with the family how this information may be used to plan for their child. Conclude by sharing the next steps in the MTSS or IEP process.
 - Be explicit about when families can expect to hear from you.

Reflection

- Reflect on your experience interviewing the family.
 - Content: What did you hear? What did you learn that was new or surprising?

- Process: What went well? What could have gone better? Are there any questions you wish you would have asked? Are there any questions that were particularly fruitful? Are there any cultural norms you need to learn more about?
- Reflect on how you can incorporate the family's perceptions of their child into planning, both individually and as a multidisciplinary team

Use information

- Construct or adjust an assessment plan based on what you have learned; use the information you learned to inform assessment selection
- Use input to make appropriate instructional shifts and design or rework interventions
- Utilize the child's strengths and preferences to build a personalized plan for positive reinforcement
- Incorporate the family's cultural and linguistic background into services and communication
- Follow up with additional questions if needed
- Consider how your learnings can lead to larger discussions around creating more welcoming schools, cultural appropriateness of curricular materials, etc.

Consider which other professionals will likely benefit from the information gathered immediately and in the future, if appropriate and providing that the family has granted you with permission to share.