

COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

A Checklist for Successful Interviews

Good interviews depend on good communication techniques. The tips below are intended to help Case Investigators and Contact Tracers communicate well with cases and their contacts—or as we'll refer to them here, the interview "respondent."

- ❑ **Build trust:** Introduce yourself, be polite and non-judgmental, and help address the respondent's concerns. You are collecting information, not criticizing them or their actions.

One way to build trust is to show empathy through statements like, "I understand this isn't easy," and "We're going to work on this together."

- ❑ **Be confident:** Show that you're knowledgeable and prepared. Demonstrate the appropriate level of seriousness and maintain professional boundaries with the interview respondent.
- ❑ **Invite questions:** Throughout the interview, invite the respondent to ask questions. This helps establish a conversational flow and show the respondent that you care about their perspective.

Prompts to encourage questions might include, "Now let's talk about any questions you might have about how this information will be used" and "Before we move on, what questions do you have about these instructions?"

- ❑ **Listen more than you speak:** Pay close attention to what the respondent is saying, and don't interrupt them unnecessarily. Ask follow-up questions when needed.
- ❑ **Choose your questions thoughtfully:** There are many types of questions that you can use to help guide a conversation and encourage detailed responses from the respondent. Review the section on "Types of Questions" in Unit 3, Lesson 1 for more information.
- ❑ **Communicate in a way that the respondent understands:** Avoid technical terms, jargon, acronyms, or words that might be confusing. When you must use technical terms, make sure to explain them.
- ❑ **Stick to the facts:** Every interview is an opportunity to educate the respondent about COVID-19 so they are better able to protect themselves and others. Provide clear information and correct any misconceptions about COVID-19.

It's important to acknowledge what you don't know. It's better to say "I don't know," or "I can get that information for you," than to make up an answer.

- ❑ **Encourage positive behaviors:** Validate the respondent if they describe actions or express a plan to act in a way that will protect themselves and others from the spread of COVID-19. Show that you're grateful for the information they provide.