



Tool 6.12 Ethical and safe interviewing conduct

Overview

This tool contains recommendations on conducting oneself in an ethical and safe way when dealing with victims and potential victims of trafficking.

Ethical and safety recommendations for interviewing trafficked women

Interviewing a person who has been trafficked raises a number of ethical questions and safety concerns. The World Health Organization (WHO) has developed a set of recommendations intended primarily for use by researchers, members of the media and service providers unfamiliar with the situation of trafficked victims. These recommendations are based on a set of 10 guiding principles for the ethical and safe conduct of interviews with women who have been trafficked. Even though the recommendations are focused on female victims, they apply also to other victims of human trafficking.

1. Do no harm

Treat each woman and the situation as if the potential for harm is extreme until there is evidence to the contrary. Do not undertake any interview that will make a woman's situation worse in the short term or longer term.

2. Know your subject and assess the risks

Learn the risks associated with trafficking and each woman's case before undertaking an interview.

3. Prepare referral information: do not make promises that you cannot fulfil

Be prepared to provide information in a woman's native language and the local language (if different) about appropriate legal, health, shelter, social support and security services and to help with referral, if requested.

4. Adequately select and prepare interpreters and co-workers

Weigh the risks and benefits associated with employing interpreters, co-workers or others and develop adequate methods for screening and training.

5. Ensure anonymity and confidentiality

Protect a respondent's identity and confidentiality throughout the entire interview process—from the moment she is contacted to the time that details of her case are made public.

6. Get informed consent

Make certain that each respondent clearly understands the content and purpose of the interview, the intended use of the information, her right not to answer questions, her right to terminate the interview at any time and her right to put restrictions on how the information is used.

7. Listen to and respect each woman's assessment of her situation and risk to her safety

Recognize that each woman will have different concerns and that the way she views her concerns may be different from how others might assess them.

8. Do not re-traumatize a woman

Do not ask questions intended to provoke an emotionally charged response. Be prepared to respond to a woman's distress and highlight her strengths.

9. Be prepared for emergency intervention

Be prepared to respond if a woman says she is in imminent danger.

10. Put information collected to good use

Use information in a way that benefits an individual woman or that advances the development of good policies and interventions for trafficked women generally.



Source: *WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women* (Geneva, 2003), available at:

www.who.int/gender/documents/en/final%20recommendations%2023%20oct.pdf

Ethical and safety recommendations for interviewing trafficked children

General guidelines for interviewing children who have been trafficked

UNICEF offers general guidelines applicable to all interviews with children who may have been trafficked:

- Interviews should take place as soon as possible after the allegation or suspicion of abuse emerges.
- The child should feel safe and supported during the interview.
- Girls and younger boys should be interviewed by female interviewers. Older boys can be interviewed by male interviewers.
- An adult that the child trusts should generally be present during the interview. This person's responsibility is to look after the child's best interests. It could be a guardian, a legal representative or, if neither has been appointed, a teacher or social worker.
- Interviews should take place in an informal setting and be conducted by interviewers trained to talk with children.
- Interviews should be in the child's own language. If this is impossible to organize, considerable care must be taken in arranging interpretation.
- If possible, interviews should not be too long to avoid tiring the child.
- The child's developmental stage and needs should be considered in planning the interview.

- The characteristics of the child, the child’s family background and the interviewer should be considered in planning the interview.
- The children should be given an opportunity to tell their story in their own way, before they are asked explicit questions.
- The questions should begin with open questions and direct or leading questions should be reserved for the latter part of the interview.
- Props and cues may be used, but only with caution.



Source: These guidelines are available in the UNICEF *Reference Guide on Protecting the Rights of Child Victims of Trafficking in Europe*, available at:

www.unicef.org/ceecis/protection_4440.html

Recommended guidelines when interviewing children of the International Organization for Migration

In *The IOM Handbook on Direct Assistance for Victims of Trafficking* it is recommended that the following guidelines be observed when interviewing minors (defined as anyone under the age of 18 years):

- Only staff trained in the special needs and rights of children should question child victims. Wherever possible, child victims should be questioned by staff of the same sex.
- Find out as much as possible about the child’s case prior to the interview and make clear and friendly introductions (talking about something the child is familiar with helps to establish a rapport).
- Create a space that is safe and comfortable for conversation (include toys, books, games etc., to help build a rapport).
- Establish a rapport by talking about or doing things that are not related to the trafficking experience (e.g. discuss things that the child is familiar with, play games).
- Dedicate adequate time for discussions. Do not rush.
- Keep the atmosphere simple and informational (e.g. do not assume an air of interrogation or press for responses).
- Use appropriate and child-friendly language (adopt terms that the child uses).
- Explain things in a manner the child can easily comprehend (use visual aids where possible and appropriate).
- Questions should be adapted in order to take into consideration the age and mental capacity of the child.
- Begin with open-ended questions, allowing the child to give her/his own account. Avoid leading questions, e.g. “Did the person abuse you?”, and use more open-ended questions, such as “What did the person do?”.

- Do not pursue and press for details when there are signs that the child has told you all he or she knows. However, also bear in mind that children may leave information out if the right question is not asked, and will give the answer they believe the interviewer wants to hear.
- Interviews of minors should take place in the presence of a parent; in cases where this is not possible due to a parent not being present or where there is suspected or known family involvement in the trafficking, in the presence of a trained guardian, psychologist or social worker.
- Close the interview in a way that reassures the child that he or she has done well, and that you will be available whenever he or she needs to talk again.



Source: The IOM Handbook on Direct Assistance for Victims of Trafficking, available at:

www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/cache/offonce/pid/1674?entryId=13452