

TOPIC AREAS FOR DEVELOPING THE SOCIAL HISTORY

Write your memo on the interview as soon as possible. It's important that you always include the following information in your memo.

Interviewer's name
Interviewee's name
Others present
Date
Location
Contact Information
Email

****Please note these are not the questions to ask. These are topic areas for you to develop your questions from.**

FAMILY BACKGROUND

FAMILY COMPOSITION

Gather the following information for client, mother, mother figures, father, father figures, grandmothers, grandfathers, great-grandmothers, great-grandfathers, brothers, sisters (full, half, step), and their descendents. Also include client's spouse(s) or co-parent and offspring. Include former family members (i.e., those divorced), household members, adoptees, foster children, and people who are considered members of the family even if there is no biological or legal link.

For each:

Name
Date of birth
Place of birth
Gender
Race / ethnic identification
Religious identification and affiliation
Educational attainment
Occupation
Marital status
Any special conditions (e.g. intellectual impairment, mental illness, addiction)

Complete the family tree as you gather this information

PRE-BIRTH FAMILY

- Circumstances around parents meeting; nature and extent of their relationship
- Circumstance around conception of client (planned?)
- If parents were married, circumstances of marriage
- Parents' relationships with own parents, in-laws, and extended family

- Mother's pre-pregnancy health status (Age? Health conditions? Smoke? Use alcohol or drugs?)
- Mother's health during pregnancy (Health care? Complications? e.g. bleeding, illness, toxemia, prescription drugs during pregnancy or birth process, smoking, alcohol or drug use? Suffer injuries during pregnancy? Stress level?)
- Preparation for childbirth (e.g. Classes? Prepare clothing, place for baby?)
- Major events in the community, the nation, or the world at this time?

CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

BIRTH

- Complications (e.g. full term or premature, respiratory difficulties, jaundice, birth defects, fever)
- Mother's condition immediately after birth (Complications? Fatigue? Depression?)
- Social support at and in weeks after birth
- Breastfeeding
- Health condition and early health care
- Primary caregiver of the child
- Quality of family residence, sources of income
- Quality of parents' relationship
- Birth order; siblings, any miscarriages, stillbirths, or loss of other children

ALL AGES (birth-18)

Note information about these topics will change over the child's lifespan – a thorough history will record all answers at each age or stage

- Household composition
 - Who lived with the child?
 - Primary caregiver of the child; quality of nurture
- Quality of parents' relationship, whether together or not
- Supervision & developmental support
 - Child care arrangements while parents at work or unavailable; quality of care
 - Parents' involvement in child's daily life; routine, e.g. were meals served (how many per day?), bedtime, activities
 - Discipline techniques; Was punishment appropriate to age and offense? Treated similar to siblings?
- Signs of abuse, neglect, or sexual exploitation
- Nutrition
 - Type and amounts of food – adequate nourishment?
 - Eating habits of the family, e.g. congregate meals or independent eating by different family members
 - Any atypical eating patterns, e.g. over-eating or under-eating
- Housing

- Quality of family residence (e.g. plumbing; utilities; leaks; bugs or vermin; in repair)
- Changes in residence
- Personal space: Where did child sleep? Keep clothes?
- Health
 - General condition; illnesses; injuries (head injuries in particular);
 - Health care; medications; dental health care
- Mental health
 - General condition – temperament; signs of emotional or behavioral problems;
 - Treatment history;
 - How do family members perceive that client handled stress?
- Caregivers' sources of income
- Family social networks
 - Mother's family and social networks (positive and negative aspects of each)
 - Father's family and social networks (positive and negative aspects of each)
- Family beliefs –
 - Key family beliefs and principles
 - Faith community involvement
- Leisure
 - Typical leisure activities in the family
 - Family special occasions
 - What were holidays like? Vacations?
- Signs of alcohol or drug use by child or any family member
- Any major losses or trauma (e.g. death of loved one, parental separation, accident, natural disaster)

EARLY DEVELOPMENTAL YEARS (ages 0-5)

- Milestones (smiling, rolling over, crawling, talking, walking, writing)
- Caregivers' perceptions of baby's temperament
- Toilet training (conditions, age)
- Early childhood program (Home based? Center? School-linked?)
- School readiness

CHILDHOOD YEARS (ages 6-11)

- Early education; kindergarten experience
- School enrollment, performance (attendance, academic strengths and weaknesses, age-appropriate progress, behavior problems, parental involvement in school on behalf of the child)
- Special education; other special school support (e.g. free lunch, tutoring)
- Peer relationships (Who? Quality of these relationships?)
- Temperament; typical mood; any signs of depression or suicidality?
- Skills, achievements, extracurricular activities

- Sexual development; onset of puberty; education about sexuality; sexual activity

ADOLESCENCE YEARS (ages 12-17)

- Educational participation and performance (attendance, academic strengths and weaknesses, behavior problems, parental involvement in school on behalf of the child)
- Special education; other special school support (e.g. free lunch; tutoring)
- Peer relationships (Who? Quality of these relationships?)
- Mentors; role models - who did the child admire
- After school activities
- Skills, achievements, extracurricular activities
- Child's employment history, sources of income
- Romantic relationships
- Development of sexual identity
- Sexual development and activity; sex education

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE FAMILY OF ORIGIN

HOUSEHOLD

- Members of client's households from the time of his or her birth to the time he or she left the household of origin, including family members and others
- Births of siblings (include parental miscarriages, abortions, or stillbirths)
- Describe reasons for changes in the household composition (i.e., death, separation of intimate partners, divorce, incarceration, deployment for military service, leave for employment reasons)
- Who was the functional head of household?

PARENTS / CAREGIVERS

- Social functioning
- Occupation
- Mental health status
- Alcohol or other drug use
- Involvement in criminal activity
- Educational level of each
- Medical conditions, disabilities, or impairments
- Perpetration of violence or sexual abuse
- Victimization
- Coping styles, particularly with regard to how they responded to what happened to their children outside the home

OTHER KIN

- Family's involvement with extended family; frequency and nature of contact; mother's regard for father's family; father's regard for mother's family

- Describe any of the following conditions that anyone on the family tree might have:
 - Mental health problem
 - Mental retardation
 - Learning problem
 - Alcohol or other drug use
 - Involvement in criminal activity
 - Medical conditions or disabilities
 - Perpetration of violence or sexual abuse
 - Victimization

HOUSING

- List all moves, with dates, that involved relocation of the client
- Physical conditions of the various homes in which the client lived
- Who owned the residence? Rental conditions?
- How did conditions of client's homes compare with conditions of those around it?
- Periods of homelessness or transience (e.g. staying temporarily at others' homes)

FAMILY RESOURCES

- List all jobs that each parent held during the client's childhood
- List other sources of income
- How did the family perceive their economic status relative to others?
- How did each parent perceive his or her occupational status?
- Was the family involved in a church or faith community? Participation patterns?

FAMILY DYNAMICS

- Emotional support and nurture, expressions of affection. How did the client perceive caregivers' feelings for him or her? How do caregivers report feeling?
- How did caregivers express feelings for client's positive accomplishments?
- How did the family communicate? Solve problems?
- What values did parents seem to emphasize with regard to childrearing?
- Describe fully relationship between client and his mother; other mother figures (e.g. grandmother, stepmother,); father; other father figures (e.g. grandfather, stepfather)
- Describe fully the relationship between client and each of his or her siblings, including sexual relations, infliction of physical pain, or manipulation of parents
- Describe fully the relationship between the client and each of the other key household members (e.g. non-parent adults, children who are not kin)
- Authority structure of the family
- Methods of dealing with conflict and anger in the family
- Coalitions among family members

- Family secrets
- Describe fully any harmful dynamics, to include:
 - Excessive discipline and control toward client , toward other children
 - Excessive permissiveness
 - Infliction of physical pain
 - Sexual abuse in any form
 - Emotional abuse
 - Exposure to intimate partner violence

SEXUAL HISTORY

- Describe how the family handled matters related to sexuality
- Describe first sexual knowledge
 - About menstruation, intercourse
- Describe first sexual experience (include masturbation, relations with others including fondling, various forms of intercourse)
- Describe characteristics of the sexual interaction (e.g. consensual, ambivalent, forced)

LEGAL SYSTEM HISTORY

- Client or family members' involvement in
 - Juvenile or criminal justice system
 - Civil justice system (e.g., party to a lawsuit, court ordered commitment to institution)
 - Family court (e.g. divorce, child support, child custody, child protection, termination of parental rights)

TRAUMATIC EVENTS

- Describe any unusual acute or chronic stressors (e.g. perceived or actual threats to life, attempted or actual homicide, attempted or actual suicide, unexpected deaths)
- Describe any significant losses (e.g. beloved family members, pet, friend)
- Major accidents or injuries
- Exposure to natural or technological disaster
- Exposure to community violence
- Exposure to war or civil conflict

SOCIAL NETWORKS

- Describe the composition of each parents' friends and social network and how they relate to them
- Describe the religious affiliation of the family and involvement in religious activities
- Describe the client's social networks
- Describe the mentors and role models for the client

NEIGHBORHOOD / COMMUNITY

- Describe the neighborhoods where the family lived; did they feel like they belonged?
- Describe each school the client attended

ETHNIC / CULTURAL COMMUNITY

- Client's identity in terms of race / ethnicity? How does client feel about this identity? Family's identity?
- Describe the degree of support the client and family perceive from their ethnic / cultural group
- Describe the client's perception of how members of the racial/ethnic group with which he/she identifies related to other groups? Signs of discrimination?
- Family or individual's religious affiliation; How important is it? Conflict about religious practices? How do religious beliefs influence self-esteem, gender roles, individual identity and development?

PERSONAL COPING WITHIN THIS SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

- As a child and adolescent, how did the client perceive self within the family?
- What does the client like about him- or herself as a child? Dislike?
- As a child and adolescent, how did the client perceive each parent? As a child and adolescent, how did the client perceive roles of siblings?
- As a child and adolescent, how did the client perceive parents' regard for him or her?
- Ask the client to give three adjectives for each family member that describes how he/she saw that person while he/she was growing up.
- To what did client attribute academic success or failure?
- Did you ever imagine you were someone else? Somewhere else?
- What made you angry as a child? Frightened?
- Who could you go to for advice?
- What was your deepest secret?
- Were you ever embarrassed by anyone in your family? Describe.

FORMAL SYSTEMS INVOLVEMENT

Describe when and what type services any member of the family received from these organizations:

- Public assistance (AFDC, TANF, Food Stamps)
- Emergency assistance (e.g. from private agency for food, shelter, clothing, payment of utility bill)
- Child welfare (protective services, foster care, adoption)
- Mental health clinic or provider
- Health care provider, hospital, or public health department
- Disabilities or special needs program
- Victim services program
- Family Court for reasons other than delinquency (e.g. child support, adoption)

- Youth development program (e.g., Girls/Boys Clubs, sports club, summer camp)
- Law enforcement (list dates and type of incident, disposition)
- Juvenile justice agency
- Criminal justice system
- Military
- Drug or alcohol treatment program

ADULTHOOD

SOCIAL RELATIONS

- Client's residences since age 18, including location, type dwelling, and who lived in the household
- Key friends and co-workers
- Describe any caregiving done by the client (e.g. babysitting, care of elderly relative)
- Affiliations such as leagues, clubs, on-line networks

INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

- List intimate partners and for each: nature of relationship; what was it about the partner that was attractive for the client; if separated or terminated relationship, reason
- If married or in a committed relationship, describe the history of the relationship and current dynamics
- What is the client's sexual identity?
- History of sexual behavior
- History of pregnancies, miscarriages, abortions

FAMILY RELATIONS

- List the names and ages of the client's children, parents of each
- Describe dynamics of parent-child relations (client as parent), including children with whom the parent lives, those who are in the custody of someone else, and adult children
- Describe the client's relationships with extended family

EMPLOYMENT / EDUCATION

- Client's vocational aspirations
- Highest job certification or educational level attained (g.e.d.?)
- List all jobs held by employer, type job, dates of employment, reason for leaving, salary level
- Describe work habits
- Quality of relations at work
- If there are periods of unemployment, why?
- How does the client perceive his or her job?
- If retired, how does the client feel about not working?

MILITARY SERVICE

- Reasons for enlisting; reasons for leaving
- Summary of assignments, any unusual circumstances
- Client's regard for jobs done in the service

CONTRIBUTIONS TO COMMUNITY

- Community service
- Creative expression through music, art, drama, other
- Political involvement

DAILY LIVING

- Routine
- Health habits, hygiene
- Diet, exercise
- Sexual activity
- Recreation
- Hobbies
- Religious activity
- Civic participation

SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

- Describe the client's religious practices
- Describe the role spirituality plays in the client's life

ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUG ABUSE

- Type alcohol or drug use and age of onset
- Extent (e.g. amount, frequency of use)
- Symptoms of use (e.g. blackouts, withdrawal)
- Treatment (give type, dates, location)

MENTAL HEALTH

- Worries, anxiety, depression
- Any perceptual problems (e.g. hallucinations, seeing things become larger or smaller or with an aura)
- Unexplained feelings (e.g. persecution, déjà vu, delusions)
- Describe any mental health treatment received
- Helpseeking behavior

HEALTH

- Health condition; illnesses; injuries (head injuries in particular); health care; medications
- Wellness practices, e.g. nutrition, exercise, rest

CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

- Arrests, convictions, sentences, probationary activities

SELF PERCEPTIONS

- How does the client regard self?
- How does the client reflect on his or her life?
- Overall, what does the client regard as high point? Low points?
- What have been the most important social relationships in the client's life?
- Vision of the future

CLOSURE

- Encourage the client to offer any information about topics that may have been left out
- Discuss the client's feeling about the interview process

OBSERVATIONS

For each person interviewed, note:

- Consistency in disclosure of information
- Appearance
- Behavior, e.g. movement, eye contact, activity, facial expressions
- Orientation in time and place
- Attention span
- Perception
- Memory
- Affect and mood
- Judgment
- Speech
- Indications of delusions, hallucinations, or suicidal ideation