

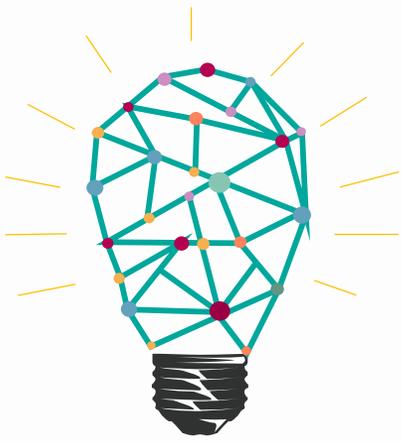
Module



Interviewing a Child from the UN Police Perspective



Department of
Peacekeeping Operations



Learning Outcomes

Know the UN guidance and approach to interviewing children, to inform your advising and mentoring role to the host state police.



Be able to apply child friendly interviewing techniques if and when interacting with children as UN police.

Why is interviewing children different from interviewing adults?

1

Children have different development stages according to their age.

2

Children think and communicate differently from adults.

Children can be afraid or intimidated by figures of authority or by new environments

3

Children risk being further distressed and traumatized when having to relate what has happened to them.

4

Core Guidelines for Interviewing Children

1. Do no harm to any child
2. Do not discriminate
3. No staging
4. Ensure that the child knows he/she is interviewed
5. Obtain permission from the child for all interviews or video recording
6. Pay attention to where and how the child is interviewed for confidentiality

Six Rules of a Good Interview with a Child

In preparation for the interview:

1. **Create trust**: establish a good relationship with the child and use non-verbal language appropriately.
2. **Create a child-friendly atmosphere**: the environment in which the child is being interviewed should be child-friendly and the child's basic needs must be addressed before proceeding to an interview.
3. **Keep an open mind and remain objective**: view the child objectively without stereotypes and prejudice.



Six Rules of a Good Interview with a Child

During the interview:

- 4. Remain professional:** allow a parent/social worker to be present, show empathy and respect for the child, remain patient and give the child time to answer questions, show interest in the child's story.
- 5. Know how to listen:** use active listening techniques and engage in the conversation with the child. On the other hand, it is important to leave time for the child to be silent and not to force the conversation.
- 6. Know how to conclude:** inquire if the child wants to add something or has questions; inform the child of the next steps and refer to other child protection actors as needed and thank the child.



Six Rules of a Good Interview with a Child

These rules also apply to all categories of children, whether they are:

- Child victim of abuses or a criminal act
- Child witness of abuses or a criminal act
- Child accused or convicted of a criminal act





Interview Techniques

Verbal communication

Good Practice	To Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use short and simple sentences (one idea per sentence)• Use positive sentences• Use neutral, non-subjective sentences• Use open questions as much as possible• Practice active listening: create an environment in which the child feels free to explain his or her situation• Repeat the same question twice using different words to ensure that the child understands properly the question	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid long and complicated sentences, with several ideas• Avoid complex words and abbreviations• Avoid negative sentences and double-negatives• Avoid sentences with double meaning and suggestive sentences• Do not judge or appear to judge• Avoid confrontational tone• Do not insist that a child answer a question if he/she is not ready to do so• Avoid intrusive and questions bearing on the privacy of the child and that do not have a direct link to the case• Avoid raising your voice or shouting at the child



Interview Techniques

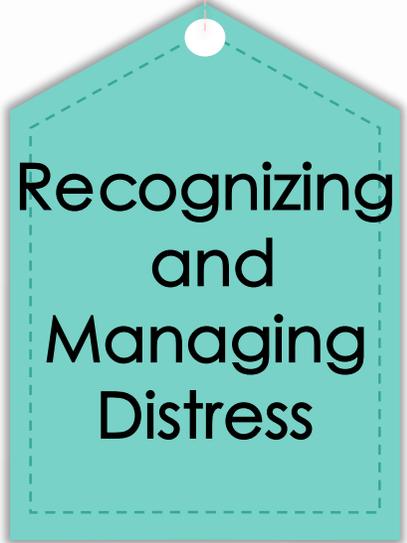
Non-verbal communication

Good Practice	To Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sit at the same level as the child to avoid intimidation• Maintain a calm demeanor• Pay attention to the child's non-verbal communication and respond appropriately• Use translator as needed and explain the role of translator• Girls should preferably be interviewed by a person from the same gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid being too close to the child and touching the child• Avoid physical behavior that shows judgment, annoyance and impatience (frowning, looking at watch, raising eyebrows, etc.)• Avoid any behavior that gives the child the impression that you don't pay attention or don't take him/her seriously• Avoid adopting a dominating behavior, for example by standing above the child



Symptoms of psychosocial distress include:

- Shock, denial, or disbelief
- Anger, irritability, mood swings
- Guilt, shame, self-blame
- Feelings of sadness or hopelessness
- Confusion, difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety and fear
- Withdrawing from others
- Memory loss
- Apathy
- Feeling disconnected or numb
- Insomnia or nightmares
- Being startled easily
- Racing heartbeat
- Aches and pains
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Edginess and agitation
- Muscle tension



Recognizing
and
Managing
Distress

If using an interpreter, it is important to explain to the child why the interpreter is there and to ensure that the translation is accurate; the interpreter should be briefed on child-friendly interview techniques

Other Considerations

Female police officers should interview girls whenever possible

ONE

THREE

TWO

The child being interviewed should be informed of the next steps and his/her questions should be answered

FOUR

It should be recommended to have parents present during the interview when possible.



Questions?



What are the key messages
of this module?



Key messages

1

In some rare occasions, a mission's mandate will include operational support to assist and even conduct interviews with children, while the majority will focus on supporting reforms, restructuring and capacity building efforts of host State police in interviewing techniques.

2

Key messages

Key international standards exist to guide UN police personnel's mentoring role to the host State police with regard to interviewing children (the UN Model strategy and the UN Guidelines on Child Victims and Witness of a Crime).

Key messages

3

Interviewing a child requires special techniques, as the approach should be adapted to the different stages of development of the child and their vulnerabilities, particularly the risk of intimidation and re-victimisation.

4

Key messages

Children should be interviewed by people who are trained to do so. UN Police should generally not interview children but refer to civilian child protection staff. When UN police interact with children, the following guidance applies.

Key messages

5

Always and promptly seek the support and guidance of the child protection adviser and the police child protection focal points when you are dealing with a situation that requires the interviewing of a child.

6

Key messages

Six ground rules of a good interview:

- Create trust
- Create a child-friendly atmosphere
- Keep an open mind and remain objective
- Remain professional
- Know how to listen
- Know how to conclude