



De-escalating During Crisis

Interviewing Noncitizen Battered Women

Developed by the
International Institute of New Jersey
And adapted by
Nationalities Services Center - Philadelphia





The National Immigrant Family Violence Institute is dedicated to eliminating domestic violence in immigrant communities. We provide individualized technical assistance and training for providers as well as specialized resource materials on the unique issues faced by immigrant communities in combating domestic violence.

Funded by Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, through Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau.

Partnering agencies include:

- International Institute of the Bay Area
- International Institute of New England
- International Institute of New Jersey
- International Institute of St. Louis
- Jewish Vocational Services Kansas City
- Nationalities Service Center in Philadelphia
- Washington University in St Louis





Crisis Definition

- A short period of social, emotional and/or physical distress that temporarily impairs a person's ability to cope; and places it out of control.

Hint: Trust your instincts. If you are not sure if it's a crisis, then treat it as if it is a crisis.



Our Focus

- Preventing a crisis
- Dealing with persons who are in crisis
 - Identify warning signs
 - Strategies to avoid a crisis
 - Interventions



Risk Factors

- Victim of family violence
- Victim of persecution
- Fear of future persecution
- Torture experiences
- War trauma
- Trauma in refugee camps



Risk Factors

- Linguistic differences
- Ethnic, racial, national, or religious minority
- Poverty
- Fear
- Unrealistic expectations
- Suicide as coping mechanism



Types Of Trauma

- Type I Trauma
 - A single traumatic event such as fire, bombing, school shooting, or single crime episode
- Type II Trauma
 - Repeated, prolonged trauma, such as extensive child physical or sexual abuse, domestic violence, poverty, crime infested environments, war zones



Prior To The Interview

- Phone contact with client
- Address confidentiality concerns
- Inform client about specific security measures in building
- Provide list of required documents
- Arrange interpreter
- Confirm client's comfort with gender of attorney and/or interpreter



Greeting The Client

- Be aware of cultural norms (e.g. hand shaking, eye contact, physical contact)



The Interview

- Confidential setting
- Permission to close the door
- Clarify expectations, explain process and define length of meeting
- Explain will be asking about trauma event
- Ask one question at a time
- Assure client of breaks as needed
- Explain that client can skip questions



During The Interview

- If client is crying, let him or her cry
- Apologize for asking questions that cause so much pain
- Empathize with what they have suffered
- Ask if they want to move on to another topic, take a break or stop for the day
- Be aware that inconsistencies in narrative may be related to effects of the trauma
- If client continues to be emotionally distressed, take a break and/or reschedule
- Suggest speaking with a counselor



At The End Of The Interview

- Acknowledge how difficult it was and how client managed to get through
- Focus on the “here and now”
- Inform them of future process



Identify Warning Signs

- Behavioral Signs
 - Increased anxiety
 - Depression, shame and/or guilt
 - Anger and/or hostility
- Physical Signs
 - Heavy breathing
 - Eyes blinking
 - Redness, sweating
 - Posture, tone of voice, facial expression



Lethality And Safety

- Don't be afraid to ask the person directly, "Are you considering hurting yourself?"
- Use direct and specific questions about suicide: "Are you planning to kill yourself?", "How are you going to kill yourself?"
- Ask about drinking or use of illegal drugs
- If threat appears real and not just threat to obtain services, contact local crisis hotline
- Make sure senior staff is involved



Explore And Assess Past Coping Attempts

- Reinforce adaptive coping strategies
- Investigate avenues for continuing support
- Social support network



De-escalation Techniques

- By-Pass and Broken Record

(attempt to decrease emotional contagion and increase cognitive linkage)

- Deliver message without reactive or reflective emotion, while ignoring any verbal abuse
- Use short words and short sentences
- Use positive language
- Repeat message



De-escalation Techniques (cont'd)

- Interfere with the emotional experience
 - Divert or refocus the person's attention
- Interfere with the cognitive experience
 - Problem solve and clarification/reinterpretation
- Direct appeals
 - To consider personal relationships, uphold social and institutional expectations
- Interfere with environmental stimuli
 - Decrease/increase stimuli, or restructure environment



Additional Tips

- Be aware of your own emotional, physical, and cognitive state
- Know what works to help de-escalate your anxiety
- Know when you need help
- Know when you may be escalating the crisis and need to remove yourself

Debrief

- When the situation is no longer threatening, debrief with client to strengthen his/her ability to think about what happened
- Link the emotional experience to the event to allow the individual to learn new skills and provide opportunity for growth
- Make an organizational commitment to debrief every crisis in order to strengthen agency's ability to address these situations





For more information, personalized training or technical assistance, contact us at:

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