

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

The Value of the Maternal Interview

**Maternal and Child Health Bureau
Prevention and Health Promotion Administration**

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The Value of a Maternal Interview

- Provides a broader picture of the case
 - Captures information not documented in medical records
 - Introduces a personal perspective of the mother's experience
- Provides support for the mother
 - Interviewer serves as a non-judgmental listener
 - Provides validation for mother's feelings of loss and grief
 - Opportunity to provide mother with follow-up grief counseling and/or resources

Preparing for Maternal Interviews

- FIMR committees may review all fetal and infant mortality cases for the county or focus on priority reviews
- If not conducting case reviews for all fetal and infant mortality cases, determine type of cases that your FIMR team wants to review
 - VLBW Deaths in non-tertiary medical facilities, Congenital Syphilis, Multiple birth deaths...

Preparing for Maternal Interviews

- Investigate individual hospital procedures for discharging mothers with bereavement packages
 - What type of bereavement services has the mother already received?
 - What type of bereavement services might she need?
 - Has the mother received information regarding the possibility of being contacted for an interview?

Requesting a Maternal Interview

- Identify cases from Vital Statistics birth and death certificates or through other source
- Contact mother requesting an interview
 - Within six months after loss to provide mother enough time to resolve immediate grieving without forgetting the details of her experience
 - Sending letter requesting interview enables mother to choose to participate
- Allow mother to choose location for interview to maximize her level of comfort

Tips on Conducting a Maternal Interview

- Most important tip is to **show empathy** when talking to the mother
- Respond quickly when interview is granted
- If using informed consent make sure it is signed at the beginning of the interview
- Prepare carefully
- Conduct interview in private when possible
- Avoid leading questions, allow mother to answer in her own time, respond in her own way.
- Use your discretion in asking certain questions – may not be appropriate to the situation

Beginning the Interview

- If applicable, read the consent form to the mother and have her sign it
- Before beginning remind the mother that some questions may be emotional and/or uncomfortable and that she can choose to answer or not answer
- Let the mother know about the important role that her perspective will play in promoting health care systems improvement
- Begin the interview with general questions about her background
 - Makes mother comfortable with talking about her experiences
 - Provides a picture of the environment in which the mother was pregnant

Maternal Interview Topic Areas

- Socio-economic background – Provides info about pregnancy environment and creates initial rapport with mother
 - E.g. In the year before you got pregnant tell me about your life
 - Probes
 - Where were you living?
 - How did you afford this living arrangement?
 - Were you working?

Maternal Interview Topic Areas

- Health and Pregnancy History
 - E.g. Can you tell me about your experiences during this and previous pregnancies.
 - Probes
 - Have you ever been pregnant before?
 - Can you tell me about your experiences?
 - Did you have someone in your life to provide you with emotional support during the pregnancies?
 - What type of things did they do to make you feel supported?

Maternal Interview Topic Areas

- Socio-economic factors during pregnancy
 - E.g. Can you tell me how you felt when you realized that you were pregnant?
 - Probes
 - How many weeks were you when you realized you were pregnant?
 - What did the father of the baby, family and friends say when they learned you were pregnant?
 - Did you feel you had someone to go to for information or questions?

Maternal Interview Topic Areas

- Health Insurance / Benefits
 - E.g. What was your experience with medical insurance during your pregnancy?
 - Probes
 - Did you have medical insurance during your pregnancy?
 - If yes, what kind? Medicaid? Medicare? Private Insurance?
 - Did you encounter problems with the insurance? What type of problems? Were they resolved?

Maternal Interview Topic Areas

- Relationship with baby's father during pregnancy
 - Tell me about your relationship with your baby's father.
 - Probes
 - What were the best things about your relationship?
 - What were some of the problems you two experienced?
 - Did his behavior change as your pregnancy progressed? How
 - What were things he did to help you?

Maternal Interview Topic Areas

- Social / Health Services
 - E.g. What were your experiences with health care services like during your pregnancy?
 - Probes
 - Did you receive PNC? Where?
 - When did you start? Did you get PNC as early as you wanted? What influenced the start of your PNC visits?
 - Did you miss any visits? If yes, why?

Maternal Interview Topic Areas

- Labor and Delivery
 - E.g. Tell me about your experience with your delivery
 - Probes
 - How did you feel about the medical staff's communication with you about what was happening during the delivery?
 - Did the medical staff or anyone else (Who?) provide you with emotional support during the delivery? How?
 - What else could have been done to make the experience easier?

Maternal Interview Topic Areas

- Loss and Post–Loss
 - E.g. Tell me about your experiences with post-loss services
 - Probes
 - Did you go for a post-partum visit?
 - If yes, what type of things were discussed during the visit?
 - If no, why not?
 - What else could have been done to encourage a visit?

Interview Guides

- Four different guides for different reviews
 - Fetal Loss
 - Infant Loss (Infant went home)
 - Infant Loss (Infant never went home from the hospital)
 - Congenital Syphilis birth
- Adapt the guide to address the needs of the case being reviewed
- Use probes to guide the interview, but do not limit the discussion to topics addressed in the guides

Interview Tips

- Try to have the interview in a private setting
 - Other people at the interview can either inhibit and/or bias the mother's answers or they can provide comfort that will encourage her answers
- Use open-ended questions to allow the mother to describe the experience in her own words
- Observe the environment, especially if the interview is at the mother's house
- Observe the mother's body language to gauge the mother's comfort with the discussion

Interview Cautions

- Be prepared for an emotional discussion
 - Bringing tissues to the interview is a good idea
- The interviewer's job is to ask questions and listen
 - Be careful of casting judgment regarding a case
 - Be careful of providing case management services
- If the mother requests services or answers to questions regarding her loss, refer her to her physician or to the resource list

Incorporating the Interview into the FIMR Case History

- Interviewers record their impressions of the interview
- Excerpt key information / quotes to augment the substance of the case history form or
- Provide verbatim excerpts from the interview at the end or the beginning of the case history form to preserve the voice of the mother