



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