

Can You Hear Me Now?

Ensuring all voices are heard



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- Jennifer M. A. Goff

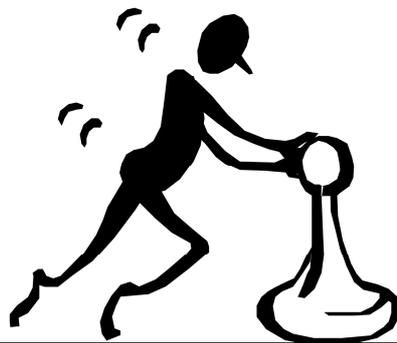
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Strategies to ensure meaningful participation by all parties at the CRB.



Be aware of perspectives and perceptions

- Each of us has had different experiences and backgrounds that impact how we view the case, the caseworker, and the parties.



Understand and respect each person's unique culture, bias, and social values

- You will encounter a wide range of people with varying lifestyles that you may or may not approve of; however, as members of the CRB, you must be respectful and professional in your interactions with all parties.



Understand and respect each person's unique culture, bias, and social values

- Consider how you would see the situation differently if you were sitting on the other side of the table in someone else's shoes.
- Consider what the parties see that you don't.



"You'll miss the best things if you keep your eyes shut." --Dr. Seuss

Create an atmosphere that encourages the participation of the parties

- The demeanor of the board affects the level and quality of the participation.
- Avoid negative body language such as crossing arms, rolling eyes, negative facial expressions, and avoiding eye contact.



One study at UCLA indicated that up to 93 percent of communication effectiveness is determined by nonverbal cues.

Create an atmosphere that encourages the participation of the parties



- Maintain an equal playing field.
- Avoid use of acronyms and legal jargon.
- Avoid allowing one party to dominate the review.

The questions and discussion should focus on gathering the information necessary to make the findings



- Design your questions to be friendly, professional, respectful, and at the same time addressing every issue, even if the issue is emotional or hard to discuss.
- Plan your questions to reveal as much useful information as possible.
- Do not ask questions that are already answered in the case material. Instead, ask questions that clarify data, expand on topics, and fill in the gaps of the material.

The questions and discussion should focus on gathering the information necessary to make the findings



- Ask the correct person the correct questions.
- Let the answers to the questions be a springboard for follow-up or additional questions.
- There is nothing wrong with healthy discussions of various viewpoints.

The questions and discussion should focus on gathering the information necessary to make the findings

- Don't dig for dirt!



- *“Will this question help gather information that is necessary and relevant to making the finding?”*
 - If the answer is no, then don't ask the question.
 - If the questions is yes, ask the question with confidence even if it is a difficult question.

Maintain control of the review

- Ask questions so that the responding party is not put on the defensive, becomes evasive or non-responsive.
- Allow the participant to respond and listen to the answer.
- When a participant goes too long or off track, politely remind them of the focus of your question.



"Many a man would rather you heard his story than granted his request."—
Phillip Stanhope, *Earl of Chesterfield*

Maintain control of the review

- Make sure that each party has a chance to be heard, but don't allow more than one person to speak at any one time.
- Avoid inappropriate and unnecessary comments that would create a hostile atmosphere.



"The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them." — Ralph Nichols

Maintain control of the review



- Do not tell your personal story, counsel, or “preach” to anyone.
- Do not allow personal issues to improperly influence your findings or recommendations.

“Many attempts to communicate are nullified by saying too much.” --Robert Greenleaf

Maintain control of the review

- Stay on task, stay on time, emphasize the critical issues, manage the stress that might be present on all sides of the table, and diffuse potential conflicts.



“I meant what I said and I said what I meant.—Dr. Seuss

Applying the strategies of meaningful participation to the findings

DHS has made diligent efforts to place the child with a relative or a person who has a caregiver relationship.

DHS has ensured that appropriate services are in place to safeguard the child's safety, health and well being.

DHS made reasonable efforts to provide services to make it possible for the child to safely return home.

The parents have made sufficient progress to make it possible for the child to safely return home.

DHS has made sufficient efforts in developing the concurrent permanency plan.

The permanency plan is the most appropriate plan for the child.

Final thoughts, questions, or comments....

- “The measure of who we are is what we do with what we have.”
- “The greatest accomplishment is not in never falling, but in rising again after you fall.”
 - --Vince Lombardi