

C3. Field Staff Q&A – Engaging Teens

The question references the lack of teenagers at reviews and also ways to engage a teen that attends a review.

1. The CRB mails teens a pamphlet with notice of the review that includes teen participation options and question prompts.
2. Attendance is not statutorily mandated and philosophically the teen may benefit from being in school or participating in a service, sport or extra-curricular activity. The teen may not feel safe due to past trauma, or who he/she feels will attend, or fear of reprisal for saying something negative about the caregiver, caseworker or another case participant.
3. In specific cases it is acceptable to make a recommendation that a child is personally invited to the next review by his/her caseworker, CASA, attorney, etc.
4. If a teen is present:
 - ... Make sure the teen has an opportunity to speak without being put on the spot.
 - ... If a teen refuses to speak possibly ask again later but do not force the issue.
 - ... Avoid sensitive issues like mental health diagnosis and birth control questions.
 - ... Avoid rehashing negative traumatic events – you already have the information.
 - ... Focus on current needs and recommendations for appropriate services.
 - ... Perhaps ask how the teen received notice of the review.
 - ... Avoid asking questions that induce trauma or that are not within the teen's ability to control – if both of your parents get off of drugs, would you rather live with your mother or your father?
 - ... Possibly ask the teen about representation – do you get to talk to your lawyer regularly?
 - ... Demonstrate excellent eye contact and body language, talk to the teen not at the teen. Be a good listener and never scold, counsel, or preach. For the most part avoid personal stories.
 - ... Do not promise something that is not achievable – cosmetic braces – but seek creative potential solutions.
 - ... If you have to ask a tough question, then ask it.
 - ... Be engaging: Adolescence is like gravity, it is much easier to work with it than against it.
 - ... Fact level questions like “How are you doing” are fine, but then be ready to ask a guiding question or a higher cognitive question based upon the response.
 - ... Make the discussion about that teen, how an event is personal to or affects him/her.
 - ... Let a teen teach you – let the teen brag or show off a skill.
 - ... Perhaps include pop culture questions – movies, music, sports, school activities, etc.
 - ... Phrase directional questions in the form of a choice with several options – teens respond to internal decisions as opposed to a challenge by an adult.
 - ... Always be yourself, an adult, not an old person trying to be trendy.
 - ... If you feel a teen needs/wants to speak to the Board alone ask the teen.