

COMMUNICATION

TRAINER GUIDE

Professional
Development for
Child Abuse Hotline Operators



INTRODUCTION

Hotline Operator Training is a contract deliverable for MidSOUTH. This training is designed for new operators. However, there may be experienced operators and supervisors in the training group. If so, adjust the content to tap into their experience and expertise. The audience is likely to know each other well. Training modules do not have to be taken in a specific order. The trainer cannot assume that participants have had any prior content; i.e., training is not sequential or developmental in nature.

This training does not have a Participant Manual. Instead, there are a series of handouts. Three-hole punch these after printing so that students can file them in a binder.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a result of this training, student will be able to:

- Demonstrate a variety of communication techniques.
- Utilize communication techniques to solicit detailed information from reporters.
- Develop and utilize communication strategies to interact with challenging reporters.
- Document accurately and in sufficient detail.

SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION AND HOUSE-KEEPING

- A. Begin the session by introducing yourself to the participants and welcoming them to training. Take a few minutes to discuss the training. Refer participants to **Handout 1, "Agenda."** Discuss training expectations:
- During class time, participants are expected to take part in discussions.
 - Participants are expected to participate in exercises.

MATERIALS LIST

FLIPCHART SET-UP FOR EACH SMALL GROUP (STAND, PAD, MARKERS, TAPE)

HANDOUT 1 – Agenda

HANDOUT 2 – Verbal Barriers

HANDOUT 3 – Active Listening

HANDOUT 4 – Interview Strategies

HANDOUT 5 – Guidelines for Challenging Reporters

HANDOUT 6 – Tips on Documentation

HANDOUT 7 – Scenarios

COMMUNICATION DRAWINGS (ON CARDSTOCK)

BLANK PAPER

PICTURE THAT CAN BE SHOWN ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN FOR DOCUMENTATION EXERCISE

B. Cover a few housekeeping issues. These topics should include but are not limited to:

- Sign-in Sheets - Sign-in sheets must be completed for each Section.
- Cell phones - Turn cell phones to silent during training.
- Attendance – Credit for completing the training will only be awarded if the participant has attended the entire training section.

SECTION 2 ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION

When it comes to communication, the job of the Hotline Operator may be one of the most difficult jobs in child protection. Hotline Operators must possess excellent verbal and written communication skills and be willing to learn and practice new communication skills over time.

When someone interviews another person face-to-face, the interviewer looks at the other person's eyes, watches hand movements, and interprets all the signals given through non-verbal behaviors.

When interviewing a person over the phone, the Hotline Operator is missing out on all of those cues that help to provide information and meaning. The Operator must rely on his/her verbal communication skills in order to get as much information as possible, get accurate information, interpret what the caller is saying, and handle the caller professionally and tactfully.

Hotline Operators need good written communication skills in order to inform the reader of the report accurately, concisely, professionally, and truthfully. The Hotline Operator must reflect **accurately** what was reported during the call and must provide enough **detail** to help the reader understand the situation.

First, we are going to do an exercise that helps to establish the importance of gathering and giving details in the communication process and the role that your perceptions have in the communication process.

TEACHING NOTES

Exercise - How Well Do You Communicate

Purpose

The purpose of the exercise is to emphasize how individual perception and feedback impacts the communication process. Start with a very **BRIEF** description of the role of Sender and Receiver in communication.

Materials

This exercise requires the Communication drawings in the Trainer Resource section at the end of this guide and either a pen, pencil, or other type of marker.

Methodology

1. Have participants pair with another participant.
2. Ask participants to turn their chairs so that they are sitting back-to-back. Spread the pairs out in the room so that distraction from others may be minimized.
3. Instruct one person in the pair to be the **Sender** and tell the other person (**the Receiver**) what to draw. The receiver cannot ask questions from the sender and the sender cannot ask questions of the receiver.
4. Give the sender the drawing after the participants are in place.
5. Give the participants 3-5 minutes to complete the exercise. Drawings are at the end of the Trainer Guide.
6. Allow the group to compare their drawings. Discuss the difficulties in communicating since only the sender could speak and they were not allowed to communicate nonverbally – so there were two barriers to communication.

Next, instruct the groups to do the exercise again. This time, the receiver and sender should change roles. Provide them with a new drawing (you can have groups switch drawings). This time, the receiver can ask for clarification and the sender can provide feedback.

TEACHING NOTES

Processing

- How did the groups do at recreating the drawings without the opportunity for exchange?
- What made this part of the exercise difficult?
- How did the ability to engage one another change the exercise/outcome?
- How can they relate this experience to their work and the communication process? **Given the importance of nonverbal behaviors to the communication process, how does this affect your efforts to communicate over the phone?**
- The learning points to emphasize are:
 - gather specific details when questioning,
 - listen carefully when the caller is talking,
 - ask for clarification and feedback,
 - take many notes and review what has been discussed.

SECTION 3 COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

Direct the participants' attention to **Handout 2, "Verbal Barriers to Communication."** These are verbal behaviors that can shut down the flow of information during an interaction and hinder communication. Cultural variations in acceptable verbal behaviors and responses may impact the communication process. Responses that may be acceptable in one culture may be frowned upon in another.

Trainer Note: The focus of this information should be on the results of responses, i.e., how callers may react when these are used. Some of the verbal barriers to avoid (and the reaction each generates) are outlined below. Time doesn't permit discussing and giving examples of each verbal barrier. Instead, ask for a couple of examples within the large group. Provide 2-3 minutes for individuals to look over the handout.

TEACHING NOTES

The **verbal barriers** include:

- Moralizing, sermonizing
- Advising, giving advice
- Persuading, arguing, lecturing
- Judging, criticizing, blaming
- Analyzing, diagnosing
- Sympathizing
- Sarcasm, humor
- Threatening

A. Moralizing and sermonizing by using “shoulds” and “oughts”

Messages that are framed in terms of what a person should or should not do often result in them “shutting down” and becoming defensive. A moral directive will usually generate feelings of guilt or resentment and communicate a lack of trust in the person’s abilities to problem solve.

B. Advising and giving suggestions or solutions prematurely

Early advising is one of the most common mistakes in open communication. In many cases, there is limited time to communicate with people. There is an inherent pressure to find solutions quickly, make the changes necessary, and move on.

C. Persuading or giving logical arguments, lecturing, instructing, arguing

Arguing with people frequently results in that person “digging in” or developing a stronger commitment to their position or viewpoint.

D. Judging, criticizing, or placing blame

This type of verbal response violates one of the basic social work values of maintaining a non-judgmental attitude and accepting the person *where they are at this time*.

TEACHING NOTES

E. Analyzing, diagnosing, making glib or dogmatic interpretations

Ask the group, “How do you feel when someone classifies your behavior in a diagnostic or interpretive way?” For most people, a “diagnostic” explanation of one’s behavior is inappropriate and counterproductive. It is common for people to react by strongly resisting attempts to classify their behavior.

SECTION 4 ACTIVE LISTENING

Hotline Operators will need to master the skill of **active listening**. It has been said that people think four times faster than someone talks. Ask the group, “If people think four times faster than someone talks, what do they do with that excess time?” Answer: They tend to fill in the blanks. This can interfere with accurate listening.

The purpose of active listening is to show that the listener is (1) listening, (2) interested in what is being said, and (3) trying to understand the message. It conveys that the listener thinks that the other person is important enough to listen to. Direct participants to **Handout 3, “Active Listening.”**

Active listening involves listening for the total meaning. It consists of three steps: (1) hearing what is said, (2) picking up the feeling or attitude underlying the words, and (3) communicating understanding of that message back to the speaker. Remember, at times, the verbal content of the message is less important than the feelings being communicated.

Some guidelines for active listening include:

- stopping all other activity
- paying attention to the speaker
- listening for verbal cues that provide additional information beyond the words being said

TEACHING NOTES

- listening and attempting to understand the words and tone of the message

Active listening is necessary to be able to respond with understanding and seek other important information.

SECTION 5 PRACTICE COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES TO ELICIT INFORMATION

Quick Exercise

Ask the participants to get into pairs and generate **ideas that promote obtaining or drawing out information**. Give approximately 5 minutes for the participants to put their ideas on a flip chart. As you review the responses, ask participants to give concrete examples. Discuss with the group the following communication tips:

- Speak loudly enough to be heard
- Use a warm tone of voice, vary tone
- Pace speech patterns to callers
- Absence of distracting behaviors
- Keep cool and don't escalate with the reporter
- Avoid carrying on another conversation while talking with reporter
- Use talk-down strategies when someone is angry
- Use empathy
- Stay calm
- Use reaffirming language

SECTION 6 INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

The following section will provide information on **general interviewing strategies**. Spend a few moments going over each one and ask participants to provide examples of each. Direct participants' attention to **Handout 4, "Interviewing Strategies."** These points include:

TEACHING NOTES

TEACHING NOTES

- **Closed-ended questions or Yes/No Questions**

- To gather factual information regarding a specific content area
- To obtain answers to specific questions

Examples: *Have you seen someone hitting the child? Where does the child live?*

- **Open-ended questions or directives**

- To gather a lot of information about a wide range of topic areas
- To gain insight regarding the person's feelings and perceptions about his/her situation

Examples: *What kind of caregiver is the parent? What happens when the child gets in trouble? Tell me what happened.*

- **Probing questions**

- To continue to gather information about a subject that has been raised
- To examine the information at a deeper level

Example: *What does that mean, that the parent is "violent" ("mean," "bad," "not there")? Violence to one person might not be violence to another.*

- **Supportive responses or Active Listening**

- To communicate and demonstrate the Hotline Operator's interest and concern
- To establish a positive interaction

Example: *Mrs. Johnson, I understand that you are feeling _____(anger, fear, frustration).*

- **Clarification**

- To promote insight into the situation that is being reported to enable a clear understanding
- To enable the Hotline Operator to better understand the dynamics of the problems and behaviors

Example: *You stated the mother's boyfriend is "messaging with" your granddaughter, but your granddaughter has not told you that this has been happening. Can you help me to understand?*

- **Summarization or Redirection**

- To keep the interview focused, on track
- To help the reporter organize his/her information

Example:

Summarization – *We have talked about your neighbor not making childcare arrangements and lack of food in the home. Are there any other concerns you want to report?*

Redirection – *That is an important issue, and I would like to ask you more about it in a minute. Can we go back to Jimmy not attending school?*

- **Giving options, advice, or suggestions**

- To offer possible solutions to his/her problems
- To direct the client into positive action

Example: *Rather than offering options, advice, or suggestions, the Hotline Operators should _____ (use CACD office protocol for this situation when it arises).*

- **Confrontation**

- To push for admission or acknowledgement of problems, feelings, or behaviors, when other less directive interventions have failed to accomplish this.

Rather than being confrontational, Hotline Operators should use other strategies to elicit information.

- **Silence:** Can be a powerful tool to gain more information. [The trainer can role-play an example in class.](#)

TEACHING NOTES

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SECTION 7 STRATEGIES FOR CHALLENGING REPORTERS

How do you respond to a challenging reporter?

Anticipate that some reporters will be very challenging. Preparing in advance will help Hotline Operators to effectively respond when a reporter expresses negative feelings or attitudes. Active listening and responding with empathy are important skills to utilize in dealing with the challenging client.

Direct participants to **Handout 5, “Guidelines for Responding to Challenging Reporters”**:

1. It is necessary that operators respond professionally.
2. Remain composed and calm. Responding to anger with anger will increase the anger. Real communication cannot take place until the caller’s anger is reduced, since anger tends to reduce the reporter’s ability to hear and think.
3. Do not argue with the reporter.
4. Do not respond in an authoritarian or judgmental way. Explain the response based on Hotline Operator’s protocol (CACD office).
5. Behave in a balanced manner. Do not overemphasize authority and do not relate in the manner of a “buddy.”

Resistance is a signal for the Hotline Operator to change strategies!

Dealing with a challenging caller is like working on a puzzle and trying to find the right puzzle piece. Different strategies represent different pieces. One may almost fit, but not quite.

Trainer Note: The trainer may want to provide the participants with additional opportunities to identify and respond to resistant or challenging reporters. THIS MAY BE PARTICULARLY HELPFUL IF YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED OPERATORS IN THE GROUP.

TEACHING NOTES

SECTION 8 WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SKILLS

A. Why is it necessary for Hotline Operators to have good written communication or documentation skills?

- Decisions to take a report of child abuse or to screen it out are based on the facts that the Hotline Operators have documented.
- The Hotline Operator is often the first point of professional contact that results in helping the child(ren) out of an abusive situation.
- The information collected and documented by the Hotline Operator determines if someone needs to respond immediately to ensure the safety of the child(ren).
- The Hotline Operator has the responsibility of finding out the exact location of the child. *An example is getting an address of 1600 West Baseline, but when the worker arrives, it is a 200-unit apartment complex.*
- Accurate information can help ensure the safety of the responding investigator.
- Good documentation from the Hotline Operator's report will help the Family Service Worker Assessor or CACD Investigators to know what to look for when they go out to investigate the case of child abuse.
- The accuracy and conciseness of the report will provide insight into the dynamics of the child abuse case. Others will be reading what you have written.
- Good, clear documentation can reduce the need for Hotline Operators to be called to testify in court.

Give the participants **Handout 6, "Tips on Documentation."** Review the following information with the group. Elements of Documentation include:

- *Who?* – was involved or seen or spoken to
- *When?* – date and time
- *Where?* – types of contact; place it occurred, location on the body
- *What Happened?* – details of the incident
- *Why?* – Use with caution. The reporter may not know why.
- *How?* – Way to reconnect

Rules to Remember in Documentation:

- ◆ Be objective – just the facts please.
- ◆ Summarize all related facts.
- ◆ Eliminate personal opinions from the documentation.
- ◆ Seek clarification on the information you are collecting.
- ◆ Maintain focus of the point, what does your audience need to know from your documentation.
- ◆ Adhere to CHRIS screens. Be sure to answer the questions that CHRIS asks.
- ◆ Avoid value statements (Ex., “This father is a very controlling person.” It would be better to word it as, “The caller describes the father as very controlling.”)
- ◆ Avoid emotionally charged narrative. There are times when contacts with reporters are upsetting. Use quotation marks to note remarks that give insight into what is going on that would otherwise be considered inappropriate. Example: The little girl told me that he “touched my private parts.”
- ◆ Remember that others will be reading your documentation.
- ◆ Work to put your ideas in a concise and logical manner.
- ◆ Use spell check. It is a good rule of thumb to look over your writing twice before saving it.
- ◆ Use good grammar to avoid having your work, knowledge, and expertise questioned. Information may be discounted if it is written poorly.

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- ◆ Be complete.

B. Exercise – Describe the Scene

Conduct this exercise quickly; it should be completed in about 15 minutes.

Purpose

The purpose is to stimulate discussion about the importance of **accurate** documentation of the facts that are given to us, and to bring awareness to how our opinions may creep into what we write.

Materials

For this exercise, you will need a picture of people and some background features (for example, from a magazine or a photograph) and paper for the participants to write on. **This picture should be large enough to see so time is not wasted passing a small picture around.**

Methodology

1. Show the participants the picture. Allow about 1 minute for this.
2. Have the participants individually write a description of what they see in the picture.
3. Allow just a couple of minutes for this to be completed.
4. Ask for a volunteer to read his or her description of the picture. Then ask another volunteer to read theirs.
5. Lead a short discussion about the different answers that the participants wrote.

Processing

- Help participants to identify what are the facts in the picture.
- Help participants to identify the differences in the descriptions based on their opinions.

TEACHING NOTES

- Hotline Operators need to be aware that when they are documenting a report, they must try to get as much as they can as quickly as they are able to.
- They do not need to filter out information given by the reporter, but rather bring in as many of the facts as the reporter knows.
- Sometimes even something that appears to be small may be of importance in an abuse report.
- Another way to get Operators to think about documentation is to use the analogy of describing a picture to a blind person. Hotline Operators are asked to describe the “scene” or “event” of child abuse or neglect to someone who is not present, who has not seen what the reporter has seen.

SECTION 9 PRACTICE SCENARIOS

Trainer Note: The trainer may want to use actual scenarios provided by the participants. Remind the class about Confidentiality. **“The information shared in the training for the purpose of discussion should be presented in a general way, is considered confidential, and is not to be shared outside of this setting.”**

If time permits, give the class **Handout 7, “Practice Scenarios.”** Ask each participant to read the following scenarios and make notes of how they would best communicate in the situation. Then discuss the participants’ responses as a large group.

Scenario #1

The reporter states the parents get so strung out on drugs that they are not even aware if the child is in the house or not. This behavior is an everyday occurrence. The child is 7 years old but is left to provide for himself by making his own meals and washing his own clothes.

What questions would you ask to elicit more information?

TEACHING NOTES

Scenario #2

The anonymous reporter states that a first-grade child called the reporter's home three times this week during school hours. The reporter is concerned that the child must not be attending school. The reporter's caller ID showed the child was calling from his home. The reporter has notified the police, but they say they can't do anything about it.

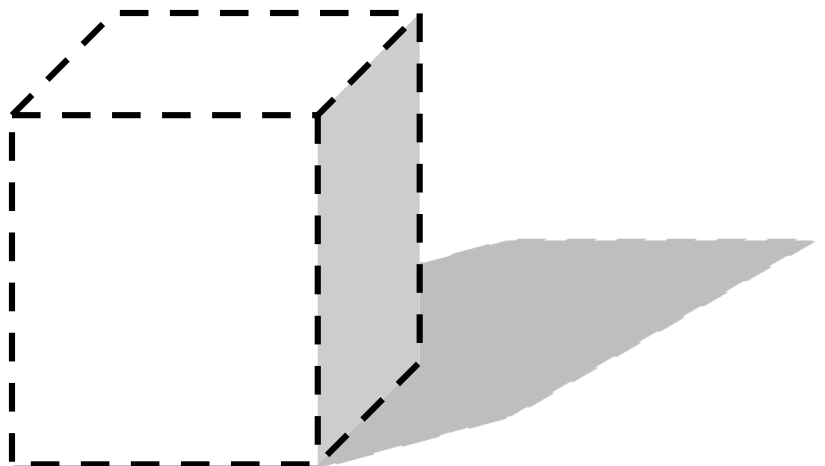
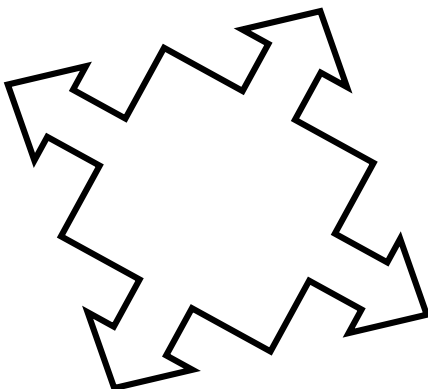
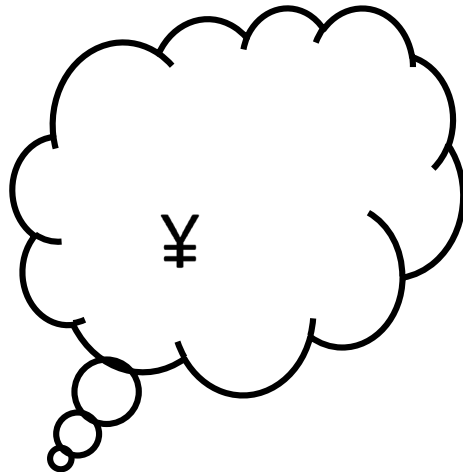
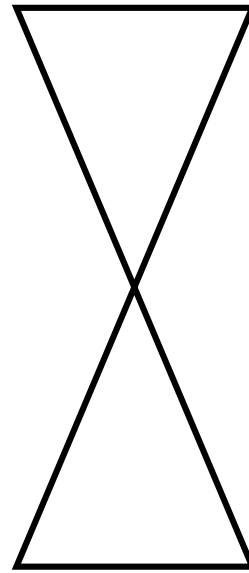
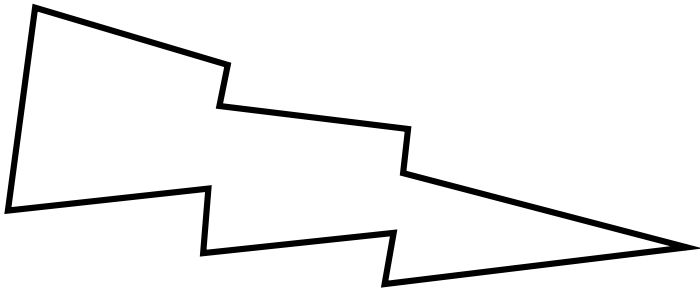
What questions would you ask to elicit more information?

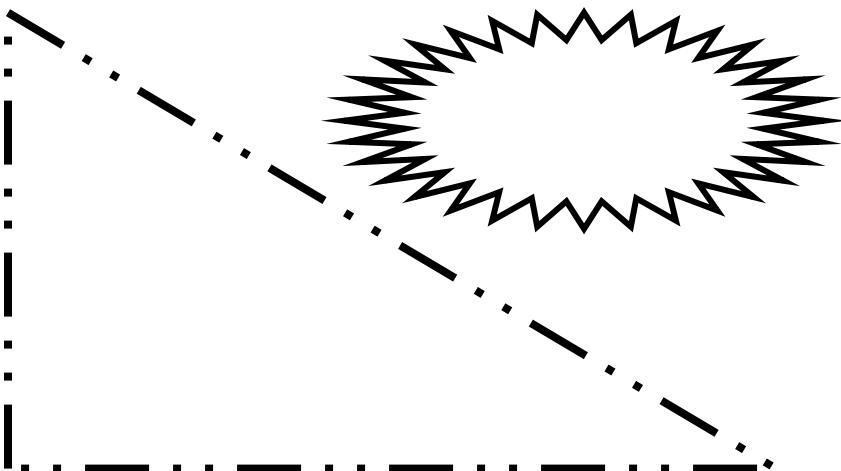
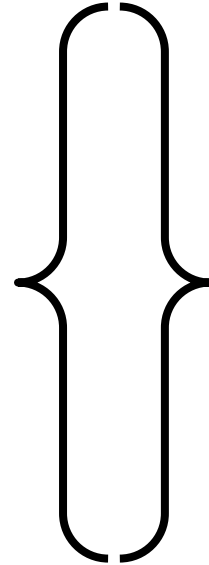
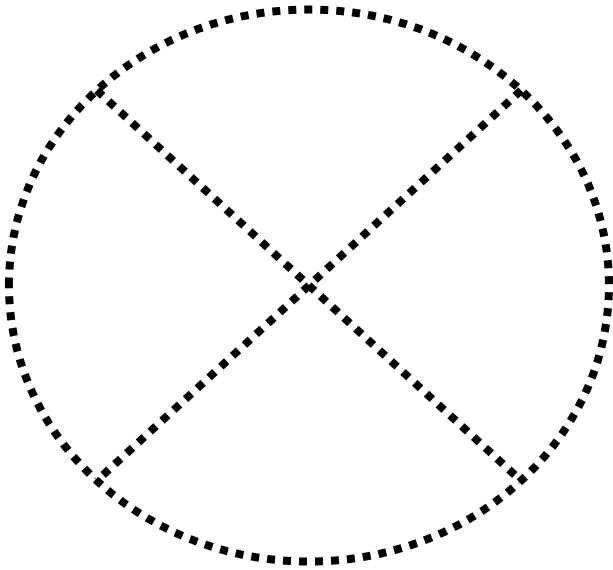
Scenario #3

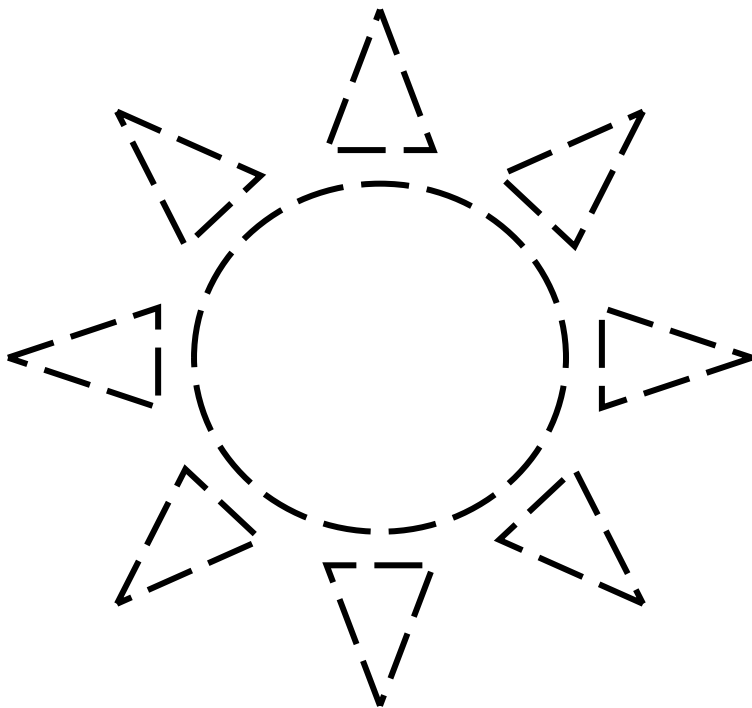
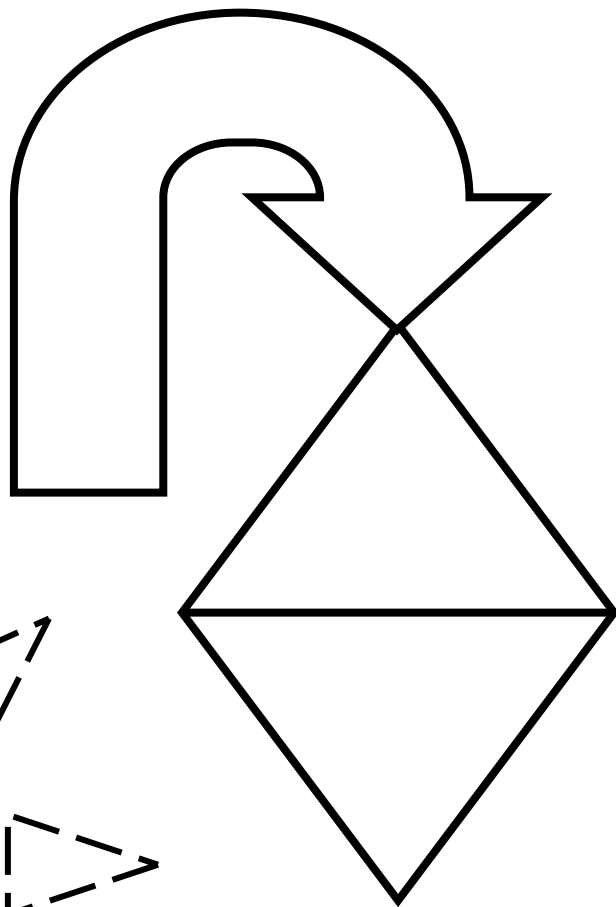
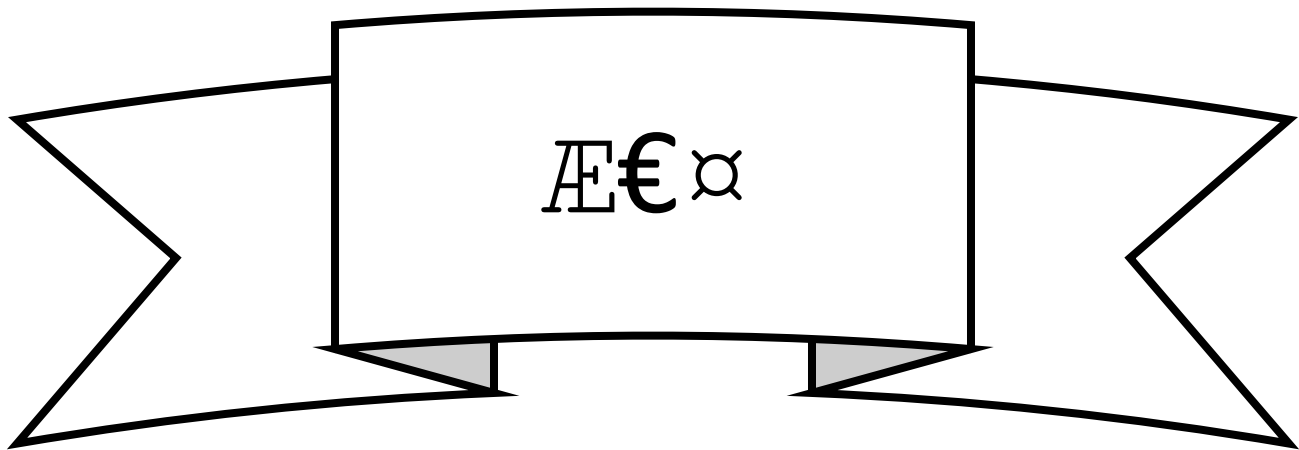
The reporter states that she went to the home today and there was trash (newspapers and magazines) everywhere, to the point that you could not see the floor. The children are 14 and 15 years old. No one in the home cares enough to clean up the mess.

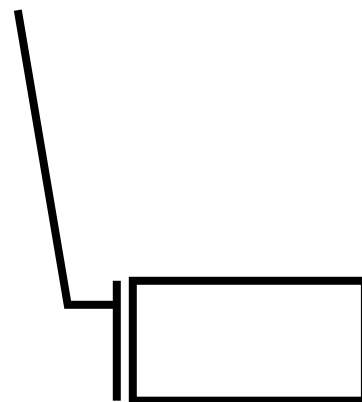
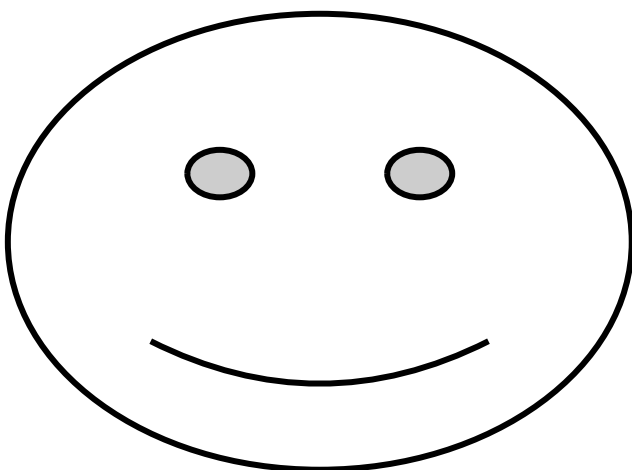
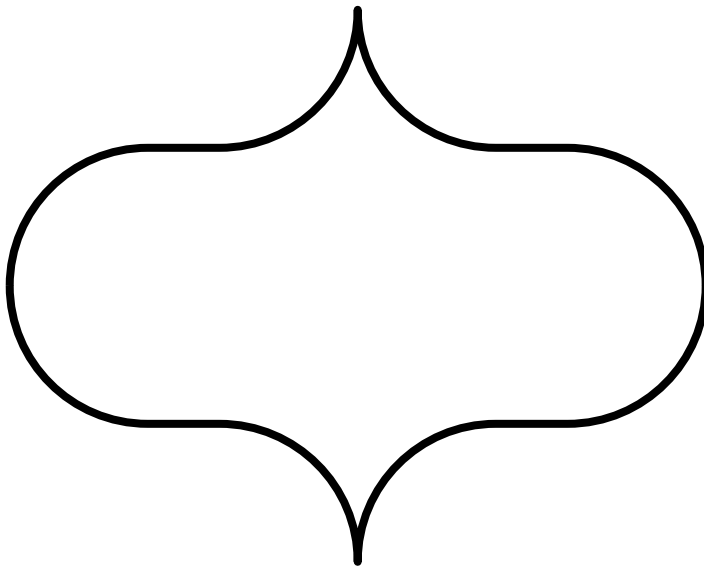
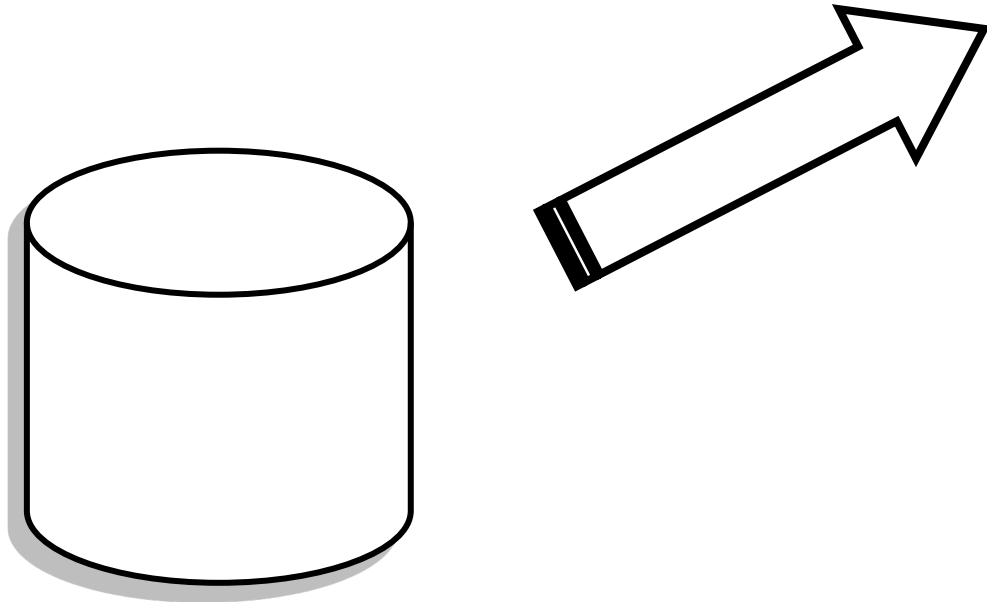
What questions would you ask to elicit more information?

TEACHING NOTES









HANDOUT 1**HOTLINE OPERATOR TRAINING COMMUNICATION
AGENDA**

- I.** Introductions and Housekeeping
- II.** Elements of Communication
- III.** Communication Barriers
- IV.** Active Listening
- V.** Practice Communication Techniques Designed to Elicit Information
- VI.** Interviewing Strategies
- VII.** Strategies for Challenging Reporters
- VIII.** Written Communication
- IX.** Practice Scenarios

HANDOUT 2

VERBAL BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

Verbal Barriers *

- Moralizing
- Advising, giving advice
- Persuading, arguing, lecturing
- Judging, criticizing, blaming
- Analyzing, diagnosing
- Sympathizing
- Sarcasm, humor
- Threatening

Moralizing and sermonizing by using “shoulds” and “oughts”

Messages that are framed in terms of what a person should or should not do often result in the person shutting down and becoming defensive. A moral directive will usually generate feelings of guilt or resentment and communicate a lack of trust in the person’s ability to problem solve.

Advising and giving suggestions or solutions prematurely

Early advising is one of the most common mistakes in open communication. In many cases, there is a limited time to communicate with people, so there is an inherent tendency/pressure to find solutions quickly, make the changes necessary, and move on.

Persuading or giving logical arguments, lecturing, instructing

Arguing with people frequently results in the person “digging in” or developing a stronger commitment to his/her position or viewpoint.

Judging, criticizing, or placing blame

This type of verbal response violates one of the basic social work values of maintaining a non-judgmental attitude and accepting people *where they are at the time*. While Hotline operators may not be social workers, they need to be aware that this type of response tends to cut off the communication and shut people down.

Analyzing, diagnosing, making glib or dogmatic interpretations

For most people, a diagnostic explanation of their behavior is inappropriate and counterproductive. It is common for people to react by strongly resisting attempts to classify their behaviors.

Reassuring, sympathizing, consoling, excusing

There is a time and a place for offering reassurance and communicating support. Inappropriate reassurance or consoling may reveal a lack of understanding of the complexity of the problem and may result in a missed opportunity to communicate effectively.

Using sarcasm, or employing distracting humor that makes light of the reporter's problems or concerns

Be careful that humor is not used to maintain a superficial or meaningless interaction with the person you are talking with. Even if it was not your intention, humor may be perceived as discounting, or poking fun at the caller.

Threatening, warning, or counterattacking

The use of threats and warnings most often generates active opposition and is to be avoided whenever possible. These responses may be the result of strong negative feelings toward the person or may be the result of inexperience in interacting with hostile, angry or abusive people.

HANDOUT 3

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening requires that the listener pay attention to the words, the feelings and attitudes underlying the words, and the nonverbal aspects of the communication. Active listening also requires that the listener accurately feed this information back to the speaker.

Active Listening involves listening for:

Content + Feelings = Total Message

AND

Conveying understanding of the total message back to the sender

Some guidelines for Hotline Operators to use in active listening include:

- Stopping all other activity.
- Paying attention to the speaker.
- Listening for subtle cues that provide additional information beyond the words being said.
- Listening and attempting to understand the words and tone of the message.

HANDOUT 4

INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

Closed-ended questions or yes/no questions

- To gather factual information regarding a specific content area
- To obtain answers to specific questions

Example: Have you seen someone hitting the child? Where does the child live?

Open-ended questions

- To gather a lot of information about a wide range of topic areas
- To gain insight regarding the person's feelings and perceptions about his/her situation

Example: What kind of caregiver is the parent? What happens when the child gets in trouble?

Probing questions

- To continue to gather information about a subject that has been raised
- To examine the information at a deeper level

Example: What does that mean, that the parent is "violent" ("mean," "bad," "not there")?

Supportive responses or active listening

- To communicate and demonstrate the Hotline Operator's interest and concern
- To establish a positive interaction

Example: Mrs. Johnson, I understand that you are feeling _____ (anger, fear, frustration).

Clarification

- To promote insight into the situation that is being reported to enable a clear understanding
- To enable the Hotline Operator to better understand the dynamics of the problems and behaviors

Example: You stated the mother's boyfriend is "messing with" your granddaughter, but your granddaughter has not told you that this has been happening. Can you help me to understand?

Summarization or Redirection

- To keep the interview focused, on track
- To help the reporter organize his/her information

Example:

Summarization – We have talked about your neighbor not making childcare arrangements and lack of food in the home. Are there any other concerns you want to report?

Redirection – That is an important issue and I would like to ask you more about it in a minute. Can we go back to Jimmy not attending school?

Giving options, advice, or suggestions

- To offer possible solutions to his/her problems
- To direct the client into positive action

Example: Rather than offering options, advice, or suggestions, the Hotline Operators should _____ (use CACD office protocol for this situation when it arises).

Confrontation

- To push for admission or acknowledgement of problems, feelings, or behaviors, when other less directive interventions have failed to accomplish this

Rather than being confrontational, Hotline Operators should use other strategies to elicit information.

Silence

- Can be a powerful tool to gain more information

HANDOUT 5**GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO CHALLENGING REPORTERS**

1. It is essential that operators respond professionally.
2. Try to remain composed and calm. Responding to anger with anger will increase the anger. Real communication cannot take place until the caller's anger is reduced, since anger tends to reduce the reporter's ability to hear and think.
3. Do not argue with the reporter.
4. Do not respond in an authoritarian or judgmental way. Explain the response based on Hotline Operator's protocol (CACD office).
5. Behave in a balanced manner. Do not overemphasize authority and do not relate in the manner of a "buddy."

Resistance is a signal for the Hotline Operator to change strategies!

- Dealing with a challenging reporter is like working on a puzzle and trying to find the right puzzle piece.
- Different strategies represent different pieces. One may almost fit, but not quite.

HANDOUT 6

TIP SHEET ON DOCUMENTATION

Elements of Documentation include:

<i>Who?</i>	Who was involved or seen or spoken to
<i>When?</i>	When - date and time
<i>Where?</i>	Where did incidents occur
<i>What happened?</i>	Tell the details of the incident; type of contact; duration of contact
<i>Why?</i>	Does the reporter know why or for what reason the contact occurred
<i>How?</i>	Way to reconnect

Rules to Remember in Documentation:

- ◆ Be objective – just the facts please.
- ◆ Summarize all related facts.
- ◆ Eliminate personal opinions from the documentation.
- ◆ Seek clarification on the information you are collecting.
- ◆ Maintain focus of the point, what does your audience need to know from your documentation.
- ◆ Adhere to CHRIS screens. Be sure to answer the questions that CHRIS asks.
- ◆ Avoid value statements (Ex., “This father is a very controlling person.” It would be better to word it as, “The caller describes the father as very controlling.”).
- ◆ Avoid emotionally charged narrative. There are times when contacts with reporters are upsetting. Use quotation marks to note remarks that give insight into what is going on that would otherwise be considered inappropriate. Example: The little girl told me that he “touched my private parts.”
- ◆ Remember that others will be reading your documentation.
- ◆ Work to put your ideas in a concise and logical manner.
- ◆ Use spell check. It is a good rule of thumb to look over your writing twice before saving it.
- ◆ Use good grammar to avoid having your work, knowledge, and expertise questioned. Information may be discounted if it is written poorly.
- ◆ Be complete.

HANDOUT 7**PRACTICE SCENARIOS****Scenario #1**

The reporter states the parents get so strung out on drugs that they are not even aware if the child is in the house or not. This behavior is an everyday occurrence. The child is 7 years old but is left to provide for himself by making his own meals and washing his own clothes.

What questions would you ask to elicit more information?

Scenario #2

The anonymous reporter states that a first-grade child called the reporter's home three times this week during school hours. The reporter is concerned that the child must not be attending school. The reporter's caller ID showed the child was calling from his home. The reporter has notified the police, but they say they can't do anything about it.

What questions would you ask to elicit more information?

Scenario #3

The reporter states that she went to the home today and there was trash (newspapers and magazines) everywhere, to the point that you could not see the floor. The children are 14 and 15 years old. No one in the home cares enough to clean up the mess.

What questions would you ask to elicit more information?