

Interviewing in Social Case Work

Definition: An interview is a conversation between two or more people (the interviewer and the interviewee) where questions are asked by the interviewer to obtain information from the interviewee. Interviews can be divided into two basic types, interviews for assessment and interviews for information.

Meaning and Purpose of Interviewing

In the common sense, view interview means mere conversation between two persons. In this sense, any idle talk between two without having any purpose behind it may be called interview. But in social work the term “interview” is used in a special sense and it bears special significance. Interview in social work refers to a professional conversation between the social worker and the client. It is always guided by some purpose. The main purpose of interview in the social work is to secure information about client’s behavior, problems, resources etc to establish good relations between the client and the case worker, to explain the agency’s policy to the client to inform him about the services possible to be rendered by the agency and also to help the client release his anxieties and tensions.

Importance of Interviewing

A social worker cannot help the client in his social functioning effectively unless he has a clear understanding about the client’s behavior, problems and strengths to deal with the problem. An important tool by which a social worker can collect direct information about the client’s problem, behavior and resource is interview. It is true that social worker can secure information about the client by writing letters by reading his past records etc. but direct knowledge has special significance. However, direct and first hand knowledge about the client can be had only through interview. Through interview, the social worker can secure information not only by asking questions and hearing answers but also by observing and interpreting the client’s mode of moving, talking etc. It also helps the worker to explain the agency’s policy to the client and establish **RAPPORT** with him by assuring him of all possible help. It enables the client to express his feelings of sorrows, sufferings and frustration to the worker and get a temporary relief from mental anxieties.

Techniques of Interview

Successful interview essentially requires the application of some techniques which are follows.

1) Acceptance

The success of interview depends on how the interviewer approaches the client when he comes in contact first time he may feel anxious and fearful. The interviewer should approach him in such way that he develops feelings of being accepted by the interviewer. But it does not mean that interviewer should accepts his anti-social behavior. What it implies is that the interviewer should accept him in the sense of understanding what is going on in his mind. This acceptance will reduce the anxiety and fear from the mind of client and lead to develop counter acceptance of the

interviewer by the client. This acceptance will establish rapport between him which is an essential factor for successful interview.

2) Observation

Observation is by the most important stage and technique of interview. This is the stage when almost all the relevant information are collected. This is why during observation, the worker (interviewer) should keep his senses alert to observe 'what the client says' and 'what he does not say'. He should also observe when the client remains silent and what is communicated through silence and what is signified by the gesture and postures of the client to quote. It is less obvious to remark that we should not equally observe what he does not say, what significant gaps there are in the story. We should note also such things as bodily tension, excitability because; they supplement the picture given by the client's words.

3) Listening

Listening is an important technique of the interview. An interviewer who listens to the client with patience can know more about the client than one who does not listen with patience. Because a man who is under stress and strain seeks to get some relief from his anxieties and tensions by expressing to others how miserable his life is. If he finds a good listener, he will go on telling what he has not even been asked. But if he is given to understand that he is not being listened to, he may try to conceal many relevant things and get rid of the interviewer as soon as possible. This is why a good interviewer must be a good listener.