

The Art of the Interview

SkillBrief

- Be relaxed and take your time. Control your feelings so you can concentrate on listening. Write down the important facts, including who, what, when, where, how, why, and the names of any witnesses.
- Show the worker you're interested. Look him or her in the eye. Encourage the worker to 'get it all out' (both the facts and the feelings). Then facts and feelings can be put in perspective.
- Ask questions when you don't understand something or when you need to clear something up. Ask "open-ended" questions that can't be answered yes-or-no.

Some good questions to ask:

1. *"Why do you think this happened?"*
 2. *"What's an example of that?"*
 3. *"What do you think should be done now?"*
 4. *"When has this happened before?"*
 5. *"When did you first notice this?"*
- Now and then, repeat back to the worker what you've understood so far. This checks your accuracy and often brings out previously overlooked facts.
 - Avoid making judgments during the interview. You'll form your opinion later after you've gathered all the facts and analyzed them.
 - Avoid making promises about future action. If it's a discipline problem, you might say, *"I agree the supervisor handled it badly. But I don't want to promise that we will grieve this until we investigate the whole thing completely."* If working conditions are involved, say, *"I'm really glad you told us about this. We're going to give it our full attention."* Assure the worker that the problem will be investigated fully.
 - If you don't know the answer to a question, don't guess. No one expects you to know everything. Promise the worker you'll find out and get back to him or her. Then do it.
 - Interview all the witnesses to the problem in the same manner. Never depend on a single version of what happened if you can avoid it.