

## Examples of Proper and Improper Interviewing Techniques

(Taken from APPENDIX J, INTERVIEWER'S GUIDE  
For KPC Rapid Survey Interviewing<sup>1</sup>)

### Examples of Proper Interviewing Techniques

The following list describes techniques that should be practiced in all surveys:

- a. Before asking questions, introduce yourself or have your guide introduce you, state the name of the organization you are working with and the general purpose of the survey.
- b. Maintain the confidentiality of the survey. If there are people around the mother being interviewed, ask them politely to leave. (Local protocol, however, must be followed). Explain to the mother that she does not have to take part in the survey, that health services will not be withheld if she does not participate and that all identifiers will be destroyed following the survey. Gain the mother's consent to be interviewed before asking questions.
- c. To begin with, ask each question exactly as it is written (or with any minor wording changes that were agreed upon during training).
- d. Ask questions in a respectful manner; do not imply that some answers are "better" than others.
- e. When an answer is unclear, ask the question again or ask it in a slightly different way, but be careful not to change the meaning—or "lead" the respondent into a particular response.

For example, suppose a mother mentions that she gave her child "a special drink" during diarrhea. Do not ask a leading follow-up question

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Weiss. [Aug, 1996]. *KPC Training of Survey Trainer's Course*. Baltimore, MD: Child Survival Support Project.

such as "Do you mean that you used ORS?" Instead ask an open question like "What kind of special drink?" or "What was in the drink?"

- f. If an answer seems inconsistent with previous information given by the mother, or if there is some reason to disbelieve an answer, try to discover the truth by asking the mother another question or asking a question slightly differently. However, do not be overly persistent; a mother may change her answer just because persistent questioning suggests that the interviewer is dissatisfied with that answer.
- g. Ensure that translations of questions are not leading, as some translations can prompt a particular answer.

### **Examples of Improper Interviewing Techniques**

**The following list describes several techniques that should never be practiced during a survey:**

- a. Not making sure that the respondent fits into the group that you are wanting to interview (e.g., mothers of children under 24 months of age).
- b. Asking leading questions. For example, "Do you think diarrhea is a serious disease?" instead of an open question such as "How serious a disease is diarrhea?"
- c. Not asking a question for the first time exactly as it is written on the questionnaire.
- d. Explaining a question before a respondent indicates that s/he did not understand the question the first time it was asked.
- e. Assuming an answer without asking the relevant question. Interviewers must follow the directions on the questionnaire and ask all questions unless instructed differently.
- f. When asking a question about a mother's children, not including the child's name when asking a question, as directed on the written questionnaire.

- g. Leading the respondent to a particular answer during follow-up questions clarifying a response.
- h. Commenting positively or negatively about the respondent's answer. This includes facial expressions or other actions that also can imply positive or negative feelings.