The Maternal Interview: Community Voice

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Community Advantage
“Maternal interviews give a voice to the disenfranchised in my community, those without clout or power. FIMR provides a rare opportunity for the ‘providers’ in a community to hear from the ‘consumers.’”
– Patt Young, FIMR Interviewer, Alameda/Contra Costa Counties, CA

Interviewer Should Know How To

• Track, contact, & engage mothers
• Review & explain consent form
• Prepare to conduct interview
• Provide culturally sensitive bereavement support during the interview
• Listen and record, not interpret

Interviewer Should Know How To

• Conduct interview
• Maintain confidentiality
• Comply with public health & safety codes including reporting requirements
• Handle difficult encounters & maintain personal safety

Interviewer Should Know How To

• Screen for mental health concerns
• Avoid implications of mismanagement & liability
• Refer to needed services when appropriate
Purpose of FIMR Maternal Interview

• To learn about mother’s experiences
• To identify community assets & deficits
• To convey mother’s story to FIMR team
• To assess family’s needs & referrals
• To facilitate bereavement process

Building Referral Network

• Perinatal service providers
• Delivery hospitals
• Case management programs
• Community based organizations
• Mortuaries
• Coroners
• Social Services
• Pregnant and parenting teen programs

Qualities of a Successful Interviewer

• Culturally sensitive
• Supportive listener
• Believes in the FIMR methodology
• Comprehends FIMR’s role in changing and improving the community

Interview Preparation

• Maintaining confidentiality
• When interviewing is not recommended
• Reporting child abuse
• Interview consent form
• Locating mothers

The Art of Being Prepared

• Mental preparation
• Professional preparation
• Hints before and after

Why Is It So Hard?

Challenges of the First Call & Home Visit

Mother’s want to talk…. and tell the story of their child’s life and death.
Understanding the Grief Experience

- Factors affecting grief experience
- Expressions of grief
- Health care provider responses at time of death

Tasks for Bereaved

- Understand components of grief
- Grieve
- Commemorate

All Fetal and Infant Deaths Can Be Considered Sudden and Unexpected

- Pregnancies are supposed to be carried to term
- Children are not supposed to die before their parents

Factors Affecting a Families’ Grief Response

- Age of deceased and survivors
- Relationship to survivors
- Prior experience with death
- Faith foundation
- Family traditions and customs

Factors Affecting a Families’ Grief Response

- Historical background of cultural group
- Education
- Economic status
- Geographic region

Normal Grief Response

- Hostility and anger
- Depression
- Guilt
- Anxiety and fear
- Sadness and crying
- Mood swings
Normal Grief Response

- Physical symptoms
- Disorganization, difficulties making decisions
- Anniversary reactions

Cross Cultural Expressions of Grief and Loss

- When an infant dies
  - FIMR Educational Bulletins include information on
    - American Indian
    - Chinese
    - Muslim Families
    - African American
    - Latino

Questions Providers Can Ask to Assist the Bereaved

- I am so sorry for your loss. How can I help you?
- What are your traditions when an infant dies?
- Is there someone I can call for you?

Questions Providers Can Ask to Assist the Bereaved

- Has your family ever had this experience before? How did they handle it?
- Did you have a funeral service? Was it helpful?

Support

- Offer words of comfort and compassion in the family’s own language
  - Translators may be needed
- Refer parents to support systems, such as faith community
Support
• Maintain clear communication with all family members, respect family communication pattern
• Reassure parents that their expressions of grief and the intense feelings are accepted

Words From Compassionate Friends
• The do's and don'ts of working with bereaved families
  - Don't try to find magic words that will take away the pain
  - There aren't any

Words From Compassionate Friends
• The do's and don'ts of working with bereaved families
  - A hug, a touch, and a simple “I'm so sorry” offer real comfort and support
  - The easy/hard job of listening to the bereaved

Phrases to Avoid
• Avoid saying, “I know how you feel.”
  - Appropriate only if you also have had a child die
• Avoid saying “It was God's will” and using other clichés that attempt to minimize or explain the death

Phrases to Avoid
• Don't try to find something positive in the child's death, such as, "At least you have other children."
  - There are no words that make it all right that a child has died

Words From Compassionate Friends
• The do's and don'ts in working with bereaved families
  - Parents with religious convictions may struggle with God's role in this event
Words From Compassionate Friends

- The do’s and don’ts in working with bereaved families
  - Listen! Let mom express the anger, questions, pain, disbelief, and guilt they may be experiencing
  - There is no standard timetable for recovery

Summarizing the Home Interview

- Methods are specific to your program
- Remember this is the voice of the mother, a community member and a consumer

Take Care of Yourself

- Support each other as FIMR home interviewers
- Know your strengths and limitations
- Be aware of your reactions
- Take responsibility for your own needs
- Learn to receive as well as give

“May you be strengthened by yesterday’s rain, walk straight in tomorrow’s wind and cherish each moment of the sun today.”

–Ojibiwa Prayer