They Deserve a Real Chance
Cultivating Connections with Children
Refusing Services

By: Sofia Delgado, Anahi Gonzalez, and Diana Molina
POLL TIME
Agenda

• Barriers of Communication
• The First Meeting with the Child
• The Child with the Journal
• Preventing Generalization
• The 2-way Conversation
• Steps on Preparing to Meet with the child Again
• How to Approach the Conversation During the Second Meeting
• Communication Strategies and Triggers
Communication is the key but what does it really mean?

- Understanding the types of communication
- Understanding the refusal
- Preventing Generalization

**Interpersonal Communication**

Verbal and non-verbal (body language)

**The child does not want to walk into the room or speak to you, what now?**

Understanding the child's refusal of services is the first step towards preparing for the communication process.

**Generalization**

Our thoughts can play a major role in how we perceive the child. Our perception can determine how we approach the conversation and our possibility of success.

**Introduction**
These are some of the most common barriers encountered when trying to cultivate a connection with children in ORR care when providing services.

- The Child's History
- Our Body Language
- Shared Information between Children
- DHS/ ORR Experience
- Culture
- Journey Experience
The First Meeting is Not a Failure

- In certain occasions where the child does not want to talk to you or refuses services when meeting with you it will be best practice to focus on building rapport with the child.

- During the first meeting you can focus on exploring their interests and asking questions not related to the legal services. Some examples include:
  - "What is your favorite color?"
  - "What is your favorite sport."
  - Being aware of visible clues that may indicate a specific interest.

- The child does not want to walk into the office where you are waiting to meet with them, what now?

- If the child is in the waiting area, walk toward the child and introduce yourself in a child-friendly manner. Your tone of voice and body language makes a difference. Briefly explain the purpose of your meeting.
The Child with the Journal

This is an example of how a legal service provider can use visible clues that may allow them to initiate the conversation and lead to effective communication.
How to Prevent Generalizing a Child's Refusal of Services

Understanding the child

We should be aware that everyone is different. Yes, legal services are a priority but building a relationship with the client is a greater priority to successfully provide services.

If the child appears uncooperative

- Identify the child's current mood (upset, sad, etc).
- Try to understand why the child is feeling/acting that way.
- Identify ways to ease into the conversation.
- Focus on getting the child to feel comfortable and be willing to talk to you.

It's not personal

- Be open minded to the information that the child shared during your first meeting instead of generalizing.
- If the child is being confrontational understand that it is not directed towards you.
- Be patient and understanding towards the child.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Steps on Planning a Successful Re-entry when Meeting with the Child Again</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reflect in the observations you made in the first meeting and the accommodations requested by the child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Communicate with ORR/Shelter to obtain information of the child's interests or accommodations needed for the child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Review the conversations you had with the child during the first meeting, if any, and determine if these conversational points can be used as a follow up. Use these points to start the second meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Be compassionate and think ahead of the outcome you would like from the second meeting. Direct conversations may not be the best approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Prepare strategies, such as time counting, to engage the child in the conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Make time in your schedule and plan to invest more time than you may expect. Accommodate time to the child not to yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Give the child an expected time frame before meeting with them again. For example, let them know that you will be returning to speak with them in a week.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even if you disagree with the child's interpretation of the situation, understand that they may have their own fears and beliefs. Your goal is to understand the way that the child perceives you as a legal service provider.

- Make eye contact
- Watch your body language
- Empower the child
- Negotiate
How to Approach the Conversation During the Second Meeting

- Use brief and concise sentences. Be comfortable with silence while you allow the child to process what you have said.

- During the second meeting, compromise with the child during the opening conversation. For example, ask the child "when I come and see you next time do you prefer mornings or afternoons?" or "would you like for me to bring certain toys?"

- Maximize your impact as a listener: There will be plenty of times you need specific information from them, but, when possible, give them an opportunity to steer the conversation.

- By showing genuine interest in a topic that excites them you are building connection and demonstrating that what matters to them matters to you.

- Incorporate the observations you made and analyzed during the first meeting into the second meeting.
Supportive Listening

Use affirmative responses to balance questions that keep the conversation moving forward. When the child feels valued they are more likely to express themselves.

Example of affirmative responses:
- Acknowledging what the child is telling you
- Rephrasing
- Pausing to give the child space to process emotions.
Reactive Listening

- Avoid interrupting and criticizing.
- Be aware that what works and what doesn't work for you is trial and error.

Remember that your intention to improve communication and empower the child has value, and that you don't have to get it right every time.
**Communication Strategies**

**Tender age**

- **Energy might differ from different ages.**
  - The child is very energetic and does not want to engage in the service.
  - Response: "¡Ay que estar calmaditos para poder platicar juntos!" (Translation: "Let's calm down and talk together.

- **Establishing common ground and empathy.**
  - The child shares that he wants to go home and does not want to see anyone.
  - Response: "Porque no me quiere ver?" (It is likely that they will give you a reason why). Then state "estoy aquí para verlo y platicar con usted para ver de que manera le puedo ayudar." If you find an interest, share that interest, "oh a mi también me gusta mucho dibujar y los carritos." (Translation: "I'm here to see you and talk to you to see in what way I can help you. If you find an interest, share that interest, "oh to me also like to draw and the toys.

- **Giving positive feedback and affirmations.**
  - The child shared they have been feeling stressed/irritated.
  - Response: On the first attempt continue with the introduction to distract the child from their feelings. If that does not work, on the second attempt you can state, "I can see you feel _______ but we can talk about something that makes you feel happy. What do you like to do?"
The child shared they have been feeling stressed.

Energy might differ from different ages.

Establishing common ground and empathy.

Giving positive feedback and affirmations.

Response: "Thank you for being brave and sharing how you’re feeling right now." OR "It can be hard to tell someone when we are feeling stressed, I’m so glad you shared that with me."

Response: "Le voy a prestar este cubito (rubik’s cube) para que no se aburra de mí."

Response: "Porque no quiere ver a nadie? Yo vengo a platicar y ver si le podemos ayudar." If you find an interest, share it like in shelters sometimes music is playing you can state, "¿a poco esa es una canción?"
Avoiding Direct Conversation

Persuading the Child:
- Trying to make the child understand that completing the service being provided is more important. This may trigger the child and may cause them to want to cease the conversation with you.

Respect the Refusal:
- How do I respect the refusal?
  - Do not confront the child's behavior directly.
  - In situations like this, you may have to apologize in order to shift the conversation forward.
    - Example: "Perdon que tenga que cambiar la platica pero le tengo que hacer esta preguntita. Mas adelante me puede platicar de eso."
  - Noticing a trigger gives you a cue to start changing your approach.
Identifying Triggers

**Inappropriate physical behavior**
Sometimes children may start throwing items or hitting themselves because they want to establish control and avoid the legal service provider.

**The child starts yelling**
When the child is scared or when they see the legal service provider discussing items in another language with the care provider it often triggers this response.

**Facial expressions**
Sometimes children start rolling their eyes, move their lips to show anger, clenching their teeth, or they start spitting because they are uncomfortable with the conversation or the question being asked.

**The child is impatient**
Sometimes children start moving their legs/feet impatiently, moving their hands/fingers, biting their nails because they want the conversation to end so they can return to their regular activities such as playing outside.

**The child continuously interrupts**
Sometimes children will interrupt the conversation by saying "are we done" continuously that makes the conversation difficult to proceed because they want to leave the room and stop services.
1. **THE CHILD STARTS YELLING**

Give the child a moment to release their frustration and use strategies such as a breathing technique. Do not panic.

2. **INAPPROPRIATE PHYSICAL BEHAVIOR**

As a legal service provider, the child's safety is a priority. We want to make sure to redirect the child not to throw things or hurt themselves. We can redirect by having a simple conversation that interests the child, this may help de-escalate the situation. If they continue doing it, call ORR/shelter staff to assist you.

3. **FACIAL EXPRESSIONS**

Surprise the child by giving them a compliment. This could change their perspective towards the uncomfortable situation. Also, if you ask the child the same question/topic a couple of times, move on to the next question, and you can try coming back to the question at a later time.

4. **THE CHILD IS IMPATIENT**

Accommodate to the child's need by negotiating. If the child wants to go play you can negotiate and state that they can play for 10 minutes and then return to the meeting.

5. **THE CHILD CONTINUOUSLY INTERRUPTS**

Redirect the child by making comments such as "Sofia, how can I proceed with the conversation if I can't talk? Would you like me to see you another day?" By calling their name, it brings their focus towards you and shows that you are trying to regain control over the situation.

Positive Reinforcement
Handout

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

REMINDERS
- Maintain Self-Control
- Be open-minded
- Be aware of your body language
- Give Space
- Give breaks
- Empower the child
- Utilize open-ended questions
- Acknowledge what the child is telling you.

DE-ESCALATION
- Answer the child's questions but do not respond to the child's behavior.
- Try to redirect the conversation by distracting the child using positive statements and reinforcement.
- Acknowledge that the child can refuse to answer questions. Do not force the conversation.
- Return to the question when the child is ready.
- Use strategies to reduce the child's frustration.

Counting Exercise

1. FIVE Things You SEE
   - Counting items in the room, shapes, colors, or objects.

2. FOUR Things You FEEL
   - Feet on the ground, is it a rough/smooth surface? Is it hard/soft?

3. THREE Things You HEAR
   - People talking, clock ticking, keyboard, computer mouse

4. TWO Things You SMELL
   - Detergent on clothes, soap, food

5. One Thing You TASTE
   - Food, toothpaste, snack

Deep stretch exercises with the child when they appear tired.

Inhale for 3
Hold for 3
Breathe out for 3
Resources List

- https://www.unicef.org/chile/media/1601/file/como_me_siento.pdf
“Y ES DURO CUANDO TE DICEN QUE BIEN VA TU CASO Y A LOS POCOS DÍAS QUE A HABÍDO UN FRACASO. PERO NO TE SIENTAS DEPRIMIDO Y SE CONSEJÉNTE PUES AQUI NO TE QUEDAS PARA SIEMPRE.

Y CON ESTA FRASE YO ME DESPIERTO. RECUERDA JÓVEN INMIGRANTE NUNCA PIENSES NEGATIVO MIRA HACIA ADELANTE Y SIEMPRE SE POSITIVO”

- EDWIN
(16-year-old, Guatemala)
Thank you for attending CILA’s 5th Annual Champions for Immigrant Youth Symposium!

May 18 & 19, 2023

Please complete our survey to provide feedback on the training: [Day 1](#) and [Day 2](#)

Please complete our survey to request CLE credit for attending the training.

Learn more about CILA by visiting our [website](#)!