

Gathering good background information

**What is your purpose? What are you trying to accomplish? Academics? Medical history? Insight into behavior or family needs?*

- NEVER asking “what is your status” or “are you documented”
- Instead: Are there things I can help you with?
 - I realize many families have to go to court, can I help connect you with resources? (Transportation, directions, clothing, etc)
 - If yes to court; how do you feel about it? I understand it might be frightening or make you feel nervous...

Information to give insight into experience/context:

- Where are you from? (Where is your family from? Did you live there your entire life?)
- Tell me about it, are you from a big city? (canton, aldea, department, village, municipio, etc)
- How long was your trip to the United States? (14 days seems to be average-ish, longer is a red flag)
 - Longer/shorter: Oh wow! That sounds like a ____ trip.... Where did you spend a lot of time?
 - Where did you arrive? How long where you there?
 - Can you tell me about the different places you before arriving here? *listening for shelter/casa hogar, immigration detention*
 - I know kids and families travel to the United States many different types of ways. Sometimes frightening things happen during the trip, is there anything that was extra hard that you'd like to share?
- How long have you lived in the United States?
- Tell me all the languages you speak. What languages are you most comfortable with? Can you read in ____? Can you write in ____ language?
 - Same questions about language of guardians
- Who did you come to the United States with?
 - Who do you live with now?
 - If joining family members here: did they know you were coming to the United States? **Tell me more about that? That sounds tough!**
 - Had you spoken to/met them before? How long were you separated from them?
 - Where does ____ live (if they do not live with the same people they traveled with)
- Who do you live with in the United States?
 - How many people live in your home?
 - How do you know the people living in your home?
 - If checking for safety/needs: **How many rooms are there? Do you have your own bedroom? Your own bed?..."that must be neat to have your own space! Or wow that sounds crowded! How do you manage?"**
 - If biological mother/father...how long have they lived in the United States? Have they always lived “here” (state/city)? Where else have they lived?
 - If step parent...wow, how long have they been with your mother/father?



- Had you every met them before now? Sometimes it can be hard to meet new people, or live with new people what's that like?
- Who did you live with in your country?
 - How many people lived in your home?
 - Did they work? What kind of work did they do?
 - Did you work?
 - Are you able to speak with/in contact with people from home?
 - How big was your home? (how many rooms)
 - Did you have running water?
 - Did you have animals?
 - Pets?
 - What types?
 - Did you have a garden or grow fruits and vegetables?
 - Did you go to school?
 - How often?
 - How many days or hours?
 - How many years?
- Safety specific:
 - Do you feel safe in your home?
 - Who are you closest to?
 - In the US?
 - In your home country?
 - Who can you talk to if you have a big problem? Who can you call if you feel unsafe?
 - Is there anything I/we can do to help you feel safer?

Possible ways to wrap-up the conversation....

“I know I’ve asked you so many questions! And I know there are so many more things I would love to know. Is there anything else you want to tell me right now? Do you have any questions for me? I am so glad I have had the chance to get to know you a little bit today, thank you for being brave and honest....

...the next thing that is going to happen is...” (explaining clear, concise, next steps to reduce anxiety and increase safety)

For parents & guardians:

- Often arriving in the United States can be a stressful and sometimes bad things happen along the way. Are there important things that you would like to share that would help us better understand your child?
- How are YOU doing?
- Do you have any concerns about your child?
- Separations and family changes can be hard for everyone. Have there been big changes?
- What are they current biggest stressors for you and your family?
- Is there anything else you would like to share or we can help you with?

****This is not meant to be a comprehensive assessment, simply helpful questions and conversation starters to gather meaningful information unique to the unaccompanied minor population.**

*****purple indicates a deeper dive, often a social services or mental health practitioner vs school or medical enrollment**

