

Cultural Sensitivity Checklist

For Volunteer Guardians ad Litem (VGALs)

Purpose

To ensure every interview is conducted with respect, neutrality, and awareness of cultural differences in family interactions, communication, and hospitality.

Before the Interview

Checklist

Notes

- ☐ Research known cultural background(s) of the child/family.
 - ☐ Ask your coordinator if an interpreter or cultural liaison is needed.
 - ☐ Prepare alternative phrases if eye contact, greetings, or personal space may differ.
 - ☐ Bring awareness of your own cultural lens — what feels “normal” to you may not be universal.
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During the Interview

Checklist

Notes

- ☐ Greetings: Use the family's preferred form of address; avoid first names unless invited.
 - ☐ Eye Contact: Adjust if direct eye contact is disrespectful or uncomfortable.
 - ☐ Food & Drink: If offered food, politely explain boundaries (e.g., "Thank you so much — I can't eat while I'm working, but I appreciate your kindness.").
 - ☐ Body Language: Respect personal space; avoid gestures that may be misinterpreted.
 - ☐ Listening: Show attentiveness without judgment; nodding and pausing often communicates respect.
 - ☐ Children's Voice: Ensure child feels safe to speak without caregiver interruption (when developmentally appropriate).
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After the Interview

Checklist

Notes

- ☐ Reflect: Did I impose my own norms unintentionally?
 - ☐ Record notes factually — avoid cultural stereotypes or assumptions.
 - ☐ Flag for supervisor if cultural dynamics significantly affect how information is shared.
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Safeguards

Checklist

Notes

- ☐ Do not make assumptions based on clothing, accent, or household customs.
 - ☐ Avoid imposing your own traditions as “correct.”
 - ☐ Confidentiality applies equally across cultures — don’t share private details with community members.
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Pro Tips

Checklist

Notes

- ☐ Curiosity is respectful: “Can you help me understand what this means for your family?”
- ☐ Silence is safer than assumption.
- ☐ Cultural humility = approaching every family with openness, not expertise.

