

APPENDIX 3. INTERVIEWING TIPS FOR RCA² REVIEWS

The goal of the interview process is to discover information about what happened and why that will lead to the identification of system issues and ultimately to effective and sustainable corrective actions.

From the writings of Sidney Dekker, we find that a fundamental question of this process is not “where did people go wrong?” but “why did their action make sense to them at the time?”⁽²⁶⁾ To answer questions like these and to achieve the goal of the interview process requires effective interviewing skills and close attention to the tips provided below.

- Interviews should be conducted by the RCA² team immediately after they have identified their interview questions. The preferred method is to conduct interviews in person. In some cases it may be necessary to conduct an interview via telephone. This may be acceptable if the individuals involved know and trust each other.
- After an adverse event, staff should be asked not to discuss the event among themselves, in order to promote the integrity and objectivity of the review process.
- If needed, notify the staff member/employee’s immediate supervisor that the employee will be needed for an interview so that coverage can be arranged. Supervisors should not be present during the interview.
- Interview only one individual at a time, which will permit information to be compared and weighed. Expect differences between descriptions given by different staff when they describe what happened, and use additional information gathered by the team to support the final conclusions.
- Have the team’s questions ready so that the required information may be obtained in one session.
- Ask only one or two RCA² team members to conduct the interview. Approaching the interviewee with a large group may be intimidating and potentially add to the stress of recounting the event.
- In some cases staff members/employees may wish to have a representative or attorney present during the interview. The institution should set the ground rules for such participation.
- Patients may have family present during their interview.
- If the staff member/employee was involved in the adverse event, be sensitive to this. Let them know that no one is judging them and that the interview is being conducted to identify and implement systems-level sustainable corrective actions so a similar event does not happen again.
- Express to the patient and/or any family present that you are sorry the event occurred. Explain to them that the review is being conducted to identify system issues and implement sustainable and effective corrective actions, and that the team will not be assigning blame to anyone involved in the event.
- Conduct the interview in the staff member’s/employee’s area or in an area that may help them relax. Avoid the appearance of summoning them to a deposition or administrative review.
- For interviews of patients and/or family members conduct the interview at a location that is acceptable to them.

- If practical, match your attire to that of the interviewee, while maintaining a level of professionalism. The goal is to avoid having them feel intimidated.
- Request permission to take notes and explain what the notes will be used for.
- Explain the purpose of the interview. Stress that the RCA² review team is seeking to identify system issues and not to assign blame to any individuals.
- Effective interview skills help make fact finding easier and the staff involved more comfortable with the process. Start with broad, open-ended questions and then narrow them down; move from general interrogatories, to specific clarifying questions, and then where appropriate, to closed questions to clarify your understanding of what has been shared. The process should not feel like an inquisition, and it is essential that you make the interviewee feel as safe as possible.
- Use active listening and reflect what is being said. Build confidence by restating and summarizing what you have heard. Keep an open body posture, good eye contact, and nod appropriately. Demonstrate empathy and be patient. Do not prejudge, lay blame, or interrupt. Tell them that the information obtained during the RCA² process is protected and confidential and will not be shared outside of the process. Union representatives, if present, should be informed that they are not permitted to talk about what was discussed with anyone other than the employee and RCA² team members.
- If the interviewee is having difficulty remembering the details surrounding the event, ask them to describe what they normally do when completing the task/procedure that was involved. Drawing a sketch of the process or work area may also trigger their memory.
- Thank the interviewee at the conclusion of the process, provide your contact information in case they have additional information that they remember, and if you sense they need emotional support, be aware of what resources are available to them.