INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

A. Key Purpose of Interviews – to get objective facts regarding:
   1. Who?
   2. What?
   3. Where?
   4. When?
   5. Why?
   6. How?

B. Prepare for Interview
   1. Develop familiarity with rules and procedures applicable to investigations.
   2. Be familiar with the complaint
   3. Create an interview plan
      a. Prepare interview questions
      b. Identify relevant witnesses
      c. Identify relevant evidence

C. Ensure Objectivity and Neutrality
   1. Interview witnesses separately
   2. Try to obtain a commitment to confidentiality
   3. Consider time and location of interviews
   4. Avoid previous conceptions, e.g., respondent is an excellent employee; complainant is a “trouble maker”

D. Initial Interview Protocol
   1. Introduce yourself.
   2. Explain purpose of meeting – what is subject of complaint?
   3. Explain goal of conducting a neutral, unbiased investigation for the purpose of obtaining the facts and evidence relevant to the matter.
   4. Get commitment for assistance.
   5. Establish rapport with subject.
   6. Implement interview plan and clarify information as necessary.

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1 Do not promise confidentiality because of issues like Public Records and Administrative issues, there may be times that information cannot be kept totally secret. However, you can indicate information will be kept as confidential as possible, and encourage participants to refrain from discussing.
7. Provide contact information so the witness can contact you if they later recall additional relevant information.

8. Thank the subject for his/her time after the interview.

E. Conduct of Interviewer
   1. Be calm and friendly
   2. Be interested in subject and information subject has to share
   3. If witness is stressed, reassure them by reminding them of the process and expectation

F. Questioning Techniques
   1. Plan questions in advance, but be prepared to follow up and go off script as necessary based on responses received.
   2. Ask open-ended questions (i.e., Do you recall where you were on August 23, 2008?).
   3. Avoid questions that illicit a “yes” or “no” response (i.e., You were at the PUB on August 23, 2008?).
   4. Avoid leading questions (i.e., Isn’t it true you were at the PUB at 8:00 a.m. on August 23, 2008, and saw Jim throw a plate at Susan?).
   5. Ask simple questions.
   6. Do not ask multi-part questions; in other words, ask one question at a time.
   8. Allow time for answers. Witnesses may take breaks in their answers. Make sure you give them time to fully respond.
   9. Allow silence. If someone becomes silent, you may receive additional information if you give them more time to think and then add to their response.
   10. Ask clarifying questions, if witness has provided inconsistent information.
   11. Keep witness focused on factual information.

G. Document all Information
   1. Listen to all information.
   2. Take accurate and detailed notes. If the interview is significant, you may wish to prepare a summary of the interview notes and then have the witness review and verify the accuracy of the notes.
   3. Note the date, time (both beginning and end) and location of the interview.
   4. Document if other individuals were present during the interview.
   5. Document if interviews were cancelled, rescheduled, or continued.