The Value of the Maternal Interview

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
The Value of a Maternal Interview

- Provides a broader picture of the case
  - Captures information not documented in medical records
  - Introduces a personal perspective of the mother’s experience
- Provides support for the mother
  - Interviewer serves as a non-judgmental listener
  - Provides validation for mother’s feelings of loss and grief
  - Opportunity to provide mother with follow-up grief counseling and/or resources
Preparing for Maternal Interviews

- FIMR committees may review all fetal and infant mortality cases for the county or focus on priority reviews.
- If not conducting case reviews for all fetal and infant mortality cases, determine type of cases that your FIMR team wants to review.
  - VLBW Deaths in non-tertiary medical facilities, Congenital Syphilis, Multiple birth deaths...
Preparing for Maternal Interviews

Investigate individual hospital procedures for discharging mothers with bereavement packages

- What type of bereavement services has the mother already received?
- What type of bereavement services might she need?
- Has the mother received information regarding the possibility of being contacted for an interview?
Requesting a Maternal Interview

- Identify cases from Vital Statistics birth and death certificates or through other source
- Contact mother requesting an interview
  - Within six months after loss to provide mother enough time to resolve immediate grieving without forgetting the details of her experience
  - Sending letter requesting interview enables mother to choose to participate
- Allow mother to choose location for interview to maximize her level of comfort
Tips on Conducting a Maternal Interview

- Most important tip is to show empathy when talking to the mother.
- Respond quickly when interview is granted.
- If using informed consent make sure it is signed at the beginning of the interview.
- Prepare carefully.
- Conduct interview in private when possible.
- Avoid leading questions, allow mother to answer in her own time, respond in her own way.
- Use your discretion in asking certain questions – may not be appropriate to the situation.
Beginning the Interview

- If applicable, read the consent form to the mother and have her sign it.
- Before beginning remind the mother that some questions may be emotional and/or uncomfortable and that she can choose to answer or not answer.
- Let the mother know about the important role that her perspective will play in promoting health care systems improvement.
- Begin the interview with general questions about her background.
  - Makes mother comfortable with talking about her experiences.
  - Provides a picture of the environment in which the mother was pregnant.
Maternal Interview Topic Areas

Socio-economic background – Provides info about pregnancy environment and creates initial rapport with mother

E.g. In the year before you got pregnant tell me about your life

Probes

- Where were you living?
- How did you afford this living arrangement?
- Were you working?
Maternal Interview Topic Areas

Health and Pregnancy History

- E.g. Can you tell me about your experiences during this and previous pregnancies.

- Probes
  - Have you ever been pregnant before?
  - Can you tell me about your experiences?
  - Did you have someone in your life to provide you with emotional support during the pregnancies?
  - What type of things did they do to make you feel supported?
Maternal Interview Topic Areas

Socio-economic factors during pregnancy

- E.g. Can you tell me how you felt when you realized that you were pregnant?

Probes

- How many weeks were you when you realized you were pregnant?
- What did the father of the baby, family and friends say when they learned you were pregnant?
- Did you feel you had someone to go to for information or questions?
Maternal Interview Topic Areas

Health Insurance / Benefits

E.g. What was your experience with medical insurance during your pregnancy?

Probes

- Did you have medical insurance during your pregnancy?
- Did you encounter problems with the insurance? What type of problems? Were they resolved?
Maternal Interview Topic Areas

Relationship with baby’s father during pregnancy

- Tell me about your relationship with your baby’s father.
- Probes
  - What were the best things about your relationship?
  - What were some of the problems you two experienced?
  - Did his behavior change as your pregnancy progressed?
  - How
  - What were things he did to help you?
Maternal Interview Topic Areas

Social / Health Services

E.g. What were your experiences with health care services like during your pregnancy?

Probes

- Did you receive PNC? Where?
- When did you start? Did you get PNC as early as you wanted? What influenced the start of your PNC visits?
- Did you miss any visits? If yes, why?
Maternal Interview Topic Areas

Labor and Delivery

E.g. Tell me about your experience with your delivery

Probes

- How did you feel about the medical staff’s communication with you about what was happening during the delivery?
- Did the medical staff or anyone else (Who?) provide you with emotional support during the delivery? How?
- What else could have been done to make the experience easier?
Maternal Interview Topic Areas

Loss and Post-Loss

E.g. Tell me about your experiences with post-loss services

Probes

- Did you go for a post-partum visit?
- If yes, what type of things were discussed during the visit?
- If no, why not?
- What else could have been done to encourage a visit?
Interview Guides

Four different guides for different reviews
- Fetal Loss
- Infant Loss (Infant went home)
- Infant Loss (Infant never went home from the hospital)
- Congenital Syphilis birth

Adapt the guide to address the needs of the case being reviewed

Use probes to guide the interview, but do not limit the discussion to topics addressed in the guides
Interview Tips

- Try to have the interview in a private setting.
  - Other people at the interview can either inhibit and/or bias the mother’s answers or they can provide comfort that will encourage her answers.

- Use open-ended questions to allow the mother to describe the experience in her own words.

- Observe the environment, especially if the interview is at the mother’s house.

- Observe the mother’s body language to gauge the mother’s comfort with the discussion.
Interview Cautions

- Be prepared for an emotional discussion
  - Bringing tissues to the interview is a good idea

- The interviewer’s job is to ask questions and listen
  - Be careful of casting judgment regarding a case
  - Be careful of providing case management services

- If the mother requests services or answers to questions regarding her loss, refer her to her physician or to the resource list
Incorporating the Interview into the FIMR Case History

- Interviewers record their impressions of the interview
- Excerpt key information / quotes to augment the substance of the case history form or
- Provide verbatim excerpts from the interview at the end or the beginning of the case history form to preserve the voice of the mother