

# Tips for Effective Client Interviews

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## Trust yourself and your support

- You have all the tools you need
- Have a conversation with your client
- If necessary, pause and step away to talk with Lydia

## Human-centered language

- Address to the whole person, rather than labeling or objectifying
- Practice “person with a record” or “person with a prior conviction”
- Practice “person without status”

## Build trust through conversation

- Share why you are here, your role as a volunteer attorney at the clinic
- Ask why the client is here
- Let the client know they can ask questions

## Be body-language aware

- Communicate trust, presence, non-judgement through your body language
- Use eye contact, uncrossed arms, put phone away, control facial expressions
- Note client body language for comfort and understanding

## Explain yourself and your questions

- Explain why you are asking difficult questions: *to identify any immigration options or barriers and any impact of prior convictions*
- Name the problems with the system
- Avoid reproducing confusing and marginalizing legal experiences

## Slow down to decrease bias

- Meet your own physical and mental needs to avoid relying on mental shortcuts
- Give the client the same benefit – time to explain & breaks when necessary

## Consider the impact of trauma

- Trauma can impact memory. Give the client language to help avoid guessing:
  - ➔ *Some things I remember clearly*
  - ➔ *Some things are fuzzy*
  - ➔ *Some things I don't remember*
- Let the client choose where he or she wants to sit

## Speak to the client, not the interpreter

- Sit across from the client with interpreter next to the client
- Direct questions at the client and maintain eye contact
- Explain that the interpreter is a conduit
- Ask interpreter to break up questions and answers, pause to allow interpretation
- Limit acronyms or idioms