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# ERICA project

## Module 6: Interventions in child maltreatment



# Interventions in child maltreatment: aims and objectives

## **Aims:**

- Role play different possible interventions for situations of child maltreatment
- Develop communication skills with families

## **Objectives:**

- Be able to recognize where interventions are appropriate and needed
- Feel confident with practicing interventions where necessary



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# *Local Specifications*

*What are the most important legal obligations with respect to safeguarding children in your country that are relevant for the target group of trainees?*

*→ Must be customized by each country/local trainer!*



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# *Local Specifications*

*What are the most important local agencies in the field of child protection?*

*Make clear that trainees are part of a child-protection network and not alone*

*→ Must be customized by each country/local trainer/trainee group!*



# Some General Advice

## Document

**Write down everything you suspect, preferably with date and time.**

**This way, you do not forget things and you are in less danger to start speculating.**

**This is especially important in case of severe accusations**



## Involve the team

**If possible, discuss your suspicion within your team and/or your supervisor.**

**Find out whether other team members also have noticed what attracted your attention.**

**You might ask other team members to systematically observe the child.**



## Contact experts

**If you fear to be charged for defamation when involving official agencies, then first contact a family counseling or according services.**

**Their experts will assess the situation, based on what you observed, and will give you advice how to proceed further.**



**Child protection agencies plead for “rather one phone call too much than one too few”.**

**If you inform an official youth protection agency, expect to answer clarifying questions:**

**Precisely what caused your suspicion? What did you actually observe, and what do you only suppose?**

**Therefore, your written notes are important**



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# Crucial Issues



- **Document the case**
- **Seek the support of other professionals**



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## **What To Do** when a child reports being maltreated?

- Let the child know she/he has done right reporting it
- Tell the child it is not their fault
- Do not confront the abuser
- Explain what you will do



# Talking with Children (1/2)

- Approach the child. Signal that your readiness to talk, whenever he or she wants.
- Encourage the child to talk, without asking for too much.
- Respect the limits and give the child the time she or he needs.
- Use clear and age-adjusted language. Try to put yourself into the child's situation.
- Consciously react to signals. Do not let stay uncommented what has been said.





## Talking with Children (2/2)

- Take care not to transfer your emotions (such as anger, disgust) to the child.
- Provide a feeling of security by believing the child and by assuring him/her that s/he is not guilty or responsible.
- Try to free the child from isolation by showing him/her that others of the same age have experienced similar things
- Tell the child that s/he is courageous when talking to you.
- Make the current situation clear to the child, and what could be the next steps (including help), and try to secure his/her agreement.



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# Summary: Talking with Children

- Be on equal level with the child/adolescent
- Listen actively
- **Let the child speak**
- Summarize
- Stay neutral, do not evaluate



# Useful Types of Questions

## **Open Questions:**

“What did you see?” – “What happened then?”

## **Determination Questions (when, where, who, what...):**

“When on that day was it?” - “Where were you?” - “Who was there?”

## **Choice Questions:**

“Where was it – in your room or in the living room?”

## **Yes-No-Questions:**

“Did your mother say something?”



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# Useful Types of Questions

**“As if“-stories, comparisons:**

“You appear to me as if...”

**“What if“:**

“What would happen if you talked with someone...?”



# Less Useful Types of Questions

## **Questions with Presumptions:**

“Did Daddy say ...[XY]?”

## **Repetition of Questions**

## **Accusations, evaluations, threats, promises:**

“If you honestly tell me what happened, then you need not go there again.”



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## Role play with trainer

- *Trainer demonstrates a brief “good practice” role-play sequence for talking with children with one of the trainees as a volunteer*



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# Talking with Parents/Caregivers (1/4)

- Think about the child's and your own safety first
- Do not confront abusive parents/caregiver during a conflict or an aggressive situation, try to deescalate first, if possible
- In case of emergency, seek support or call police/other authorities



# Talking with Parents/Caregivers (2/4)

- Create a calm and safe environment for the conversation, take time
- Be respectful
- Keep intercultural and sociocultural differences of parenting in mind
  
- Start the conversation to let parent/caregiver talk about his/her/their current situation, concerns, struggles in parenting, their stress-level or well-being in the family
- Ask open questions about parenting and stress-regulation strategies





# Talking with Parents/Caregivers (3/4)

- Share, what you have observed, what raised your concerns of maltreatment
- Be precise and describe concrete behaviour/observation
- Be interested in parents'/caregivers' point of view
- Do not insist, but make sure that he/she/they get your point
- Communicate clearly, what you will do as a next step



# Talking with Parents/Caregivers (4/4)

- Be prepared for a broad range of different reactions (feelings of guilt, shame, anger, excuses, ..)
- Make clear and binding agreements on how to change the situation in the future
- Offer constructive support to find the best solution for the child and the family
- Offer support to connect with professional counselling services
- Seek support of colleagues or other persons, if necessary



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## Role play with trainer

- *Trainer demonstrates a brief “good practice” role-play sequence for talking with parents/caregivers with one of the trainees as a volunteer*



# Talking with other professionals (1/2)

- Make sure that you act within the law (privacy, professional secrecy)
- Remember: child protection before data protection
  
- Share, what you have observed, what raised your concerns of maltreatment
- Be precise and describe concrete behaviour/observation (what, when, etc.)



# Talking with other professionals (2/2)

- In a multiprofessional discussion, very different opinions of the same situation can occur and ways of responding can also differ. Be prepared for this!
- Make agreements about who will do what next. This prevents information from being lost or unclear responsibilities
- Document the discussion for your records



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## Role play with trainer

- *Trainer demonstrates a brief “good practice” role-play sequence for talking with other professionals with one of the trainees as a volunteer*



# Case studies

1. child toddler age (4y) (*maltreatment, physical neglect, some development delays*)
2. child elementary school age (7y) (*sexualized violence, emotional and physical neglect*)
3. young adolescent (12y) (*physical violence, aggressive behaviour*)
4. older adolescent (16y) (*multiple forms of maltreatment, self harm, substance use*)



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# Teamwork in small groups I (3-4 participants)

- Become familiar with one case and discuss appropriate interventions
- Discuss the results in the whole group





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# Teamwork in small groups II (3 participants)

- Role play, based on one of the case reports
- 1 person acts as him/herself, 1 person play acts the child/mother/father/caregiver, 1 person "observes" and provides feedback afterwards



# Coping strategies for challenging situations

- Discuss and find solutions in the group for challenging situations in the roleplays/previous situations at work
- Discuss coping with own negative feelings or thoughts, especially feelings of helplessness and anger, if families refuse to change their behaviour or if other agencies (e.g. police, youth authorities) decisions are not as desired or expected



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# Pandemic situation

- find and practice new ways to stay in contact (phone, messenger, voice message, videochat)
- find "codes" (e.g. a certain emojis) children can send if they need support or are in danger
- creative solutions for safe activities in times of “social distancing”
- provide easy anti-stress coping skills



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