

COMMUNICATION: FOSTERING FAMILY-CENTERED COMMUNICATION

Effective Behaviors

- Greet each family member and introduce self
- Use names of family members
- Incorporate social talk in the beginning of the interview
- Show interest and attention
- Demonstrate empathy
- Appear patient and unhurried
- Acknowledge concerns, fears, and feelings of child and family
- Use ordinary language, not medical jargon
- Use Bright Futures general and age-appropriate interview questions
- Give information clearly
- Query level of understanding and allow sufficient time for response
- Encourage additional questions
- Discuss family life, community, school

Active Listening Skills: Verbal Behaviors

- Allow child and parents to state concerns without interruption
- Encourage questions and answer them completely
- Clarify statements with follow-up questions
- Ask about feelings
- Acknowledge stress or difficulties
- Allow sufficient time for a response (wait time >3 seconds)
- Offer supportive comments
- Restate in the parent's or child's words
- Offer information or explanations

Active Listening Skills: Nonverbal Behaviors

- Nod in agreement
- Sit down at the level of the child and make eye contact
- Interact with or play with the child
- Show expression, attention, concern, or interest
- Convey understanding and empathy
- Touch child or parent (if appropriate)
- Draw pictures to clarify
- Demonstrate techniques

Source: Reproduced with permission from Green M, Palfrey JS, Clark EM, Anastasi JM, eds. 2002. *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents* (2nd ed., rev.)—Pocket Guide. Arlington, VA: National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health.