

# Effective Questioning

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# Training Note

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# Abstract

- The nuances of interviewing students and investigating behavioral misconduct at the post-secondary level can be challenging. It is imperative to understand the foundations critical to student development through a sound student conduct process. Likewise, in order to provide the best outcome for the education of the student and preserve due process, one must fully comprehend the elements of the student, the incident, and the educational outcomes needed to modify student behavior.
- This 45 minute training is focused for new and returning conduct board members who want to be able to hone their skills in the investigation of conduct cases. If questions are asked accurately, even the simplest case with a minor infraction can offer the conduct board the opportunity to deliver the best developmental and educational sanctions to the student and be able to articulate the reasons why.

# DISCLAIMERS

- **This session has been developed with the new and returning conduct board member in mind.**
- **It is assumed that participants have basic experience with interviewing and questioning.**

# Why do we do what we do?

- **Purpose of the hearing?** To determine whether or not a code violation occurred.
- **How do we determine whether a code violation occurred?** The conduct board reasonably interprets the credible information at the hearing.
- **What is credible information?** Credible means believable. Evidence or Information is the material provided by the parties.

# Why it is important...

*Effective questioning is critical because it determines how much detailed information you will get in order to decide whether a preponderance of evidence exists to support the charges against a student.*

# Preparation

- Read the statement for content
- What is the main theme in the document?
- Identify the main topic of the document/statement.  
What seems to be the person's concern?
- What is talked about?
- Is the topic of the statement different from the incident / significant event?
- Craft your questions...

# Look for

## Written

- Tense
- Use of Pronouns
- Verbs
- Extraneous
- Emotions
- Negation
- Unique spatial details

## Verbal

- Eyes
- Body Movement
- Gestures
- Coughing
- Voice tone

# Time Indicators

- A detailed statement, written or verbal, should be specific with time.
- “a couple of hours” does not suffice in detail.

# Verbal Interview

- Active Listening!!
- Key to analyzing the words you are hearing is listening for the same types of changes that you would look for in a document.
- Gaps in time, different names, lack of detail.

# Equivocation and Negation

- ...about, around, probably, something, sort of, somewhat, I think, maybe, to the best of my knowledge, etc.
- Ending... “that’s about it”..... Means there is more!
- ...no, not or didn’t or wouldn’t. Review here critically. “I don’t know” is very different from “I don’t remember”

# Extraneous & Tense

- Anything that does not belong.
- It can fill space or buy time in discussion or a written statement.
- Look/Listen for a change in tense in the statement.
- Look/listen for social events...
- Passive voice- distance themselves:  
*“The gun was shot”*

# \*\*\*Reminder\*\*\*



- This are highlights of a structured process.
- Just something to help key you into areas that may need more attention, from you, through questioning.

# Credibility

- A high level of detail is generally considered a measure of credibility.
- Are you able to mentally picture what the person is saying or has written?
- Innocent people describe feelings, while people who may have done something generally do not.
- Do NOT confuse emotion with behavior

*~Remember there are exceptions~*

# Why lie?

- Let's go over something fun...

# Top 10 Strongest Human Fears

- 10. Losing your freedom
- 9. The Unknown
- 8. Pain
- 7. Disappointment
- 6. Misery
- 5. Loneliness
- 4. Ridicule
- 3. Rejection
- 2. Death

# No. 1 Human Fear

- **FAILURE**

# QUESTIONING



# The Questioning

- Purpose
- The Conduct Process
- Complainant/possibly alleged victim
- Witness
- Alleged

# End Goal

- Answers to:
  - Who?
  - What?
  - Where?
  - When?
  - How?
  - Why?

# Audience Answers

- What was your most successful interview and why?
- Can anyone remember a poor interview that you conducted and why was it poor?

# Elements for Effective Questioning

- E
  - Environment
- R
  - Rapport
- I
  - Information
- C
  - Competence

# Environment

- \* What two things would you change about your office and/or hearing room for it to be more comfortable?
- \* How do you make an environment outside of your control, comfortable enough for someone to talk to you?

# Rapport

- \* What makes people approachable?
- \* What qualities do you look for in a person if you are going to tell them a deep secret?
- \* What has worked for you? What hasn't?

# Information

- \* What do you already have?
- \* What do you need?
- \* Are you ready to get it?

# Competence

- \* How do you sit or stand when interviewing someone?
- \* What attire is appropriate?
- \* What gives you command presence?

# Favorable Qualities of an Interviewer

- Desire
- Project Empathy
- Flexibility
- Patience and Persistence
- Well Prepared
- Ability to converse on all levels

# Listen For...

- Each story has a
  - Beginning (pre)
  - Middle (event)
  - End (post)

# Note Taking

- Questions for individuals should be *prepared in advance of the meeting* so notations like “Q1” can be used for the question when recording responses.
- Questions developed *during* the interview can be summarized—a good technique to identify questions developed during the interview is to underline them in your notes.

# More Note Taking

- Notes need to be taken following every response.
- Sporadic notes have the effect of
  - causing the person to be guarded and hesitant in offering further information; and
  - alerts the person as to the importance of a particular response thus notifying the person of your main interests.

# Questioning

- Open ended
- Closed ended
- Assumptive questions

# Opinion vs. Behavior

**It is better to elicit behaviors than opinions  
(second Q is better)**

- "Why did you do this?" vs. "What did you do with the money you stole?"
- "Whose idea was it to start the fire?" vs. "Who lit the cigarette lighter used to start the fire?"
- "Did you get this job so you could embezzle stock funds?" vs. "When did you first divert stock funds to your personal account to embezzle stock funds?"

# Assumptive Questioning

- Alcohol in a room with underage guests. RA finds empty Budweiser cans throughout:
- Alleged: I was in the room with Gigi.
- You: so you had a couple Budweisers and then you drove to the pizza place.
- Alleged: oh no. I only had 1 Budweiser. I mostly had shots of vodka. Those beer cans weren't mine.

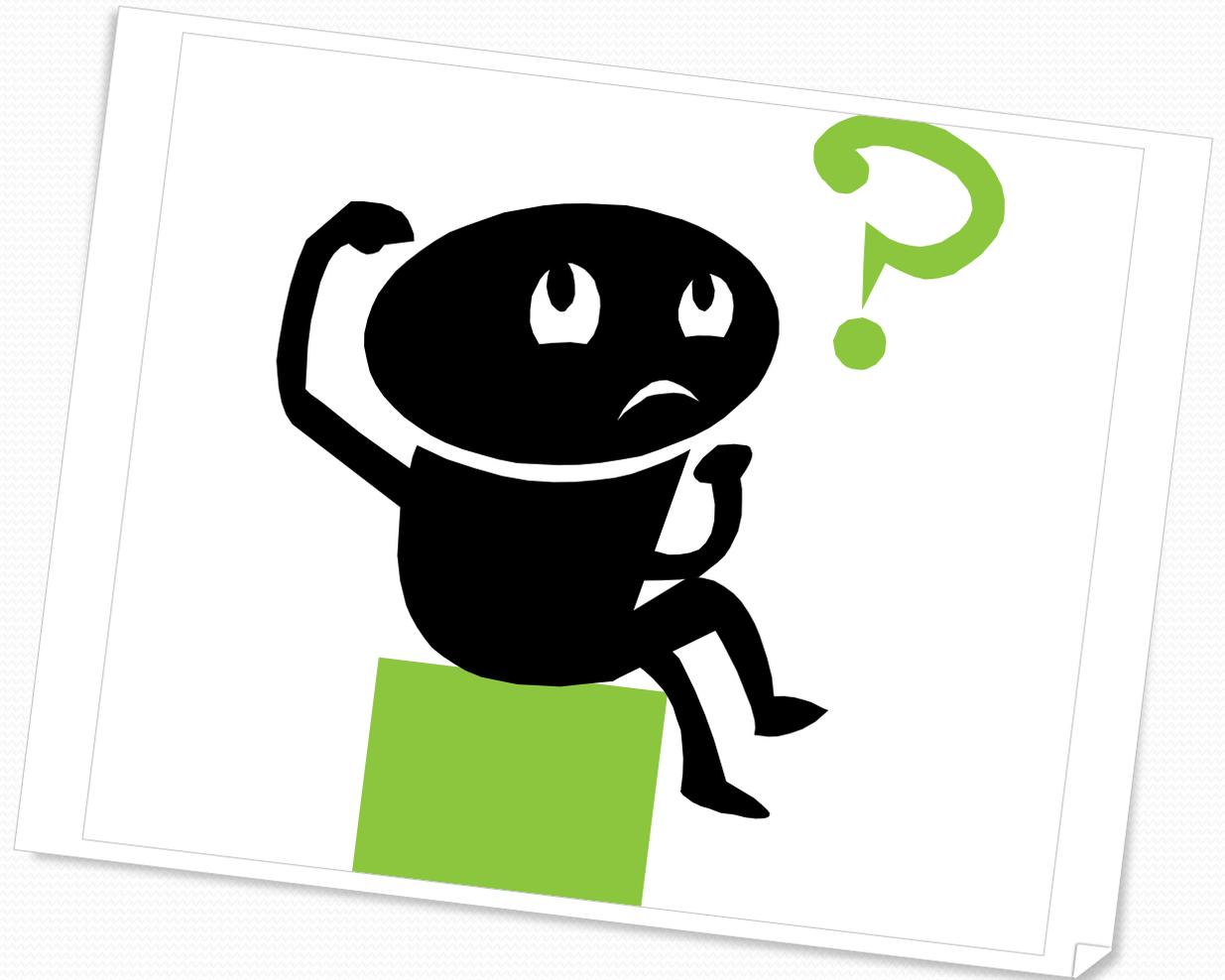
# How do I get good?

- Train
- Yes, train

## Questions

Ask me...

Ask your  
neighbor..





**Thank You  
WARRIORS!!**

# Resources

- Interview and Interrogations
  - Multijurisdictional Counterdrug Task Force Training, 2005
  - Special Agent Bill Irwin, FBI Denver, 2010
- Reid Technique. [www.reid.com](http://www.reid.com)
- Chief Christopher Daniel, USF Police Department, Tampa Campus; FBI National Academy - Class 241