



# 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?
  - If yes, what kind? Medicaid? Medicare? Private Insurance?
  - 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