

Gathering the Data to Analyze

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we'll discuss the best methods for an intervener to use when collecting information for the conflict analysis and mapping process. In particular, we'll focus on:

1. Direct Communication
2. Facts and Perception of Facts
3. Active Listening Skills
4. Maintaining Confidentiality

1. Direct Communication

When an intervener sets out to do a conflict analysis and mapping process, they are going to have to collect substantial information before ever bringing the parties together.

The intervener can collect this information through recorded and archival material, which can sometimes be helpful if there is a need to gather historical information that has been documented in various sources.

However, the ideal way to get information is through direct communication. The intervener would do this through an **interview**, or direct inquiry with a party on the facts as the party sees them, along with the party's feelings about those facts.

Whenever possible, the intervener will conduct an interview with each of the parties as the primary method of gathering information.



TERM TO KNOW

Interview

Direct inquiry with a party about the facts (as the party sees them) and feelings associated with a conflict.

2. Facts and Perception of Facts

In the interview, the intervener will focus on the **facts and the perception of facts** in the conflict. While these two concepts sound similar, there is actually a big difference between them.

Facts are anything definable, actual, and verifiable, such as a statement in a newspaper that an event

occurred on a particular date.

Conversely, a perception of facts is how a party feels about different aspects of a conflict, such as the motivations or intentions.

The intervener will want to collect information on both the facts and perception of facts, and there are a variety of sequential questions that they can use to do this.

Concept	Question	Examples in Conflict
Fact	Who	Who is involved in the conflict?
	What	What happened to initiate and/or escalate the conflict?
	Where	Where did this happen?
	When	When did this happen?
Perception of Facts	Why	Why do you think this happened?
	How	How do you think the conflict reached this point?

First, who, what, where, and when are four basic question words that can provide factual information about an event.

Next, using the question words why and how can allow you to get at the party's perception of the facts you learned in the first step.



BIG IDEA

Gathering information primarily from direct communication, and asking questions to get at both the factual statements as well as the feelings/interests/perceptions of each party, is critical during this stage of conflict analysis.



TERM TO KNOW

Facts vs. Perception of Facts

The difference between actual, verifiable occurrences within a conflict and the motivations, intentions, or feelings that one or more parties ascribe to those events.

3. Active Listening Skills

When you as an intervener are discussing perceptions, interests, and feelings, it's important to use your active listening skills in order to help the person speak comfortably about those topics.

This is because the conversation is going to involve more than yes/no or short answers to your questions, and active listening requires that you listen not only for factual statements but for underlying emotion as well.

As you learned in a previous lesson, there are three main active listening skills:

- *Summarizing:* When you hear someone say something, you can summarize what they said to make sure that you've understood it correctly. This can help you get a clear picture of not only the facts but the perceptions or interests as well.
- *Reflecting:* When someone tells you about a perception or emotional response, you want to reflect back the emotion that you heard to make sure, once again, that you interpreted it correctly. Allowing the other

person to hear what you reflected back can allow that person to make adjustments or corrections to the statement.

- *Paraphrasing*: Paraphrasing, or putting in your own words, what someone said is another way of allowing the person to hear your interpretation of what they told you. This allows you to check in again to ensure that you are understanding the perceptions and facts about the disagreement correctly.



BIG IDEA

Using the active listening skills of summarizing, reflecting, and paraphrasing to ask the right kinds of questions at the right time is enormously useful in the conflict analysis process.

4. Maintaining Confidentiality

As you know, this process is confidential; when you conduct interviews separately with the various parties, you want to make it clear that what you learn from each party will not be shared with the other parties.

The only time sharing would happen is if there was an agreement up front about it, such as an understanding that some of this information was going to be released publicly for a report.

In some instances, that type of agreement might be in place, and the confidentiality would be waived. Confidentiality also applies to any people who are not directly involved in the conflict but who you might be directed to speak to. Maybe they are not parties in the conflict, but they have information about the context, and some other factors that you need to uncover in the conflict analysis process. Maintaining confidentiality with those parties as well is critical to the whole process.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that when gathering information during the conflict analysis process, **direct communication** with each party is the most ideal method. This communication will occur through an interview, during which you want to ask the party questions in order to understand both the **facts and perception of facts**.

You now understand that because perceptions often involve emotion, using **active listening skills** is key when discussing these perceptions or interests with the party. **Summarizing** what you hear, **reflecting** back the emotion, and **paraphrasing** what the party tells you are great ways to show that you are listening actively. It's also important to remember that **maintaining confidentiality** is essential to the process. Unless there is an initial agreement stating otherwise, you want to ensure that the parties understand that what they tell you in private interviews will not be shared. Good luck!

Source: Adapted from Sophia tutorial by Marlene Johnson.



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