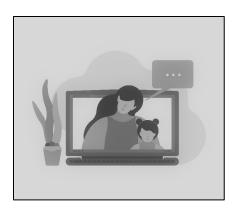


# **Observing in the Virtual Environment Tip Sheet**



#### **Listening and Observing in the Virtual Environment**

- Virtual view: Viewing and hearing another environment through a screen or audio device while managing your own environment for the purpose of gaining perspective, much like looking through a window
- Dual-perspective: The ability to absorb what one sees and hears, while simultaneously absorbing another's description of what he or she sees and hears
- Smizing: Hearing a smile in someone's voice

## Aspects of Observing in the Virtual Environment

#### Observe by:

- Asking open-ended questions and observe while listening
  - o What is it like for you, when?
  - o What make this change difficult?
  - o What have you tried?
  - o What might be ...?
- Prompting parent to move the device so you can see the environment and parentchild interaction
- Commenting on and giving cues to parents to enhance and increase the interactions and conversation
- Reflecting to the parent on what they just said
- Summarizing statements made by parent

#### Aspects of Listening in the Virtual Environment

- Listen for parent's tone of voice when they share about how they are doing and when they are speaking with their children.
- Listen for their speech pacing and pauses to inform our understanding of their mood, energy, and comfort level in the conversation.
- Listen for the background noises to inform who else may be in the home, to help understanding of what distractions and barriers may exist that could influence a parent-child interaction.
- Listen for children's chatter and conversation
- Listen for those non-verbal smiles—"smizing"—from parent and child that we can hear through a phone call that indicate happiness, contentment, and joy in a conversation or interaction.



# Prepare the Parent for the Visit

- How might you check in briefly via text or phone call to remind them of the home visit?
- Discuss and determine a space where the visit might occur in their home.
- Prepare the parent for what you have planned for the visit, such as, "We will be completing the ASQ today."
- Confirm video/internet access with families, or provide it when needed and when possible.
- Allow the parent to drive the session.
- If technology is not connecting, agree on a backup plan and strategies.
- Support tech setup with video for families, set clear expectations, and communicate thoroughly and frequently.

#### **Self-Awareness**

In the virtual environment, our pace of listening and sharing is different.

- Be aware of our own breathing and our tone.
- Pay attention to our body language, and monitor our facial expressions, state of mind and physical energy.
- Tone is everything here: We want to ask parents questions that are not leading to an answer and that don't include an assumption.
- Use pauses to allow your verbal message to be delivered.
- At the end of the visit, generally summarize the conversation, schedule the next visit, and set a follow-up plan.

### **Interpreting Observations**

Intentionally allow yourself to replay the visit that just happened, to organize your thoughts and feelings, and think about your next visit.

- 1. What did you see or hear in the home and how do you interpret it? Is this unusual for the specific family?
- 2. How did the parent respond?
  - a. What was their mood?
  - b. Did they share any new concern related to family well-being or child development?
  - c. What has been going well or better than expected for the family during this time?
- 3. What might be contributing to the stress levels at home?
  - a. Older siblings needs
  - b. Their own learning needs?
  - c. Unemployment: Is rent coming up soon?
- 4. How did you respond? Or, how would you like to have responded?

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