

### ***Tips for a Successful Interview Experience***

- Face to face interviews are usually the most effective but telephone or live video interviews are an alternative.
- Design a list of questions beforehand focusing on your goals.
- Make an appointment and be on time.
- Carry proper ID; consider using business cards with your affiliation clearly stated.
- Prior to the interview make a check list of things to bring/do i.e., list of questions, functional recording equipment, notebook, pens or pencils, camera, a pedigree chart, release form, personal identification, etc.
- Some people are shy of microphones, consider recording equipment that doesn't have to be hand held.
- Establish a rapport, thank the individual for their time and chat while setting up your equipment and supplies.
- Accurately and fully explain what you plan to do with the information and review your release form with them.
- Try to avoid questions requiring only a yes or no answer – instead of asking, “Did you like your mother’s cooking?” you might ask, “What were some of the things your mother cooked that you liked?”
- Recognize that you may not get to all your questions in the allotted time and be willing to come back again.
- Realize what may be significant to you may not be the most significant to your subject and allow them to simply share their life experiences with you – you may be surprised at the information flow.
- Be patient with the elderly, an oft repeated story many times was very significant to them and can sometimes lead to long buried details you may be able to retrieve with patient questioning.
- Encourage your subject throughout the interview, especially if their memory doesn't reveal what you are looking for – make this a positive experience for both of you.
- Silences can be golden – let your subject take their time quietly searching their memory
- **LISTEN**, really **LISTEN** to your subject's answers; smile, nod, show your interest.
- Don't be afraid to ask follow-up questions ... then ask some more.
- Get clarification of terms with which you are unfamiliar.
- Start your interview with easier, fun questions and save the more difficult or sensitive questions for later; try to finish on a lighter note, leaving your subject with a relaxed and enjoyable experience.
- Consider limiting your interview to no more than two hours, shorter for those more senior.
- Encourage your subject to jot down notes after you leave whenever something more comes to mind on a topic you have discussed, you can explore it further during your next communication or visit.
- Follow up on your interview by sending a written thank you note. It goes a long way in leaving a positive impression and word spreads throughout the family that speaking with you is really not such a scary, bad thing after all!

