



Finnish Institute for
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Interview supporting the interaction between parents and their child

The interview template has been modified based on the European Early Promotion project template and is intended for use in Finland.

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I. PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW

The purpose of the interview is to discuss the baby's care, the family's situation and parents' thoughts, feelings and concerns. The aim is to consider the family's need for support, how to implement this and to help the family get assistance if necessary.

Formulate the questions according to the relationship type of the parent who gave birth to the child. You can ask whether she has a relationship with the baby's father, the other parent or some other person. Is she in a relationship in the first place? During the interview, are you meeting both parents or just the pregnant person?

In the interview, please take into account diversity in gender, sexual orientation as well as family types. Ask the clients which terms they wish to be used in referring to them and use the terms they want to use.

It is desirable that the baby is present so that you can observe the interaction between the baby and the parent. See table on the last page. During the interview, support and encourage the parents to hold the baby in their arms, show tenderness and communicate with the baby by talking, smiling and observing and responding to the baby's cues.

Note: If the parent says they are tired or depressed, first arrange help or support for the family at home and then find out what other help or support the family needs. Does the family need mental health or social services?

If you see the parent(s) treating their baby insensitively, roughly or with hostility, you should bring it up immediately with the parent(s) and arrange urgent help for the family. For example, it seemed to me you were annoyed with something with your baby, what do you think? How did you feel about the situation?

If necessary, submit a child welfare notification!

II. LABOUR AND CHILDBIRTH

What was the labour and childbirth like?

- Encourage the parent(s) to talk about childbirth, how it felt and whether it was difficult.
- If you have already met the parent(s) after giving birth, you may ask
- Last time we talked a little bit about childbirth, how do you feel about the experience of giving birth now?

III. MENTAL HEALTH

How are you feeling now that the baby is born?

- Positive emotions: strengthen positive emotions and encourage the parent(s) to share their emotions with each other or with others close to them.
- Negative emotions (uncertainty, anxiety, perceiving the baby as unfamiliar or difficult, tiredness): listen to the parent(s) and encourage them to talk about their emotions with each other or their loved ones. If the parent feels unable to talk about the subject and that talking does not help, first offer your support and, if necessary, assist the parent in getting help from mental health services.

Have you discussed your feelings with each other?

- If there is some problem with the communication between the parents, ask them to talk to you about their feelings with the following question:

Could you tell me more about how you are feeling?

- Encounter any negative feelings of the parents without criticism and judgement. Just take in their feelings. The following are the most common negative or ambiguous feelings:
 - Fears and feelings of guilt concerning the child's mental or physical health and development
 - Feelings of inadequacy in the parent
 - Feelings of being neglected or abandoned experienced by the parents



- Experiences of extreme tenseness, irritation, hopelessness, despair or emptiness (these are symptoms of depressed mood). Treatment types are described further below.
- It is important to try to understand the content of the parent's negative feelings and what their feelings concern.
 - Negative feelings directed at oneself (e.g. feelings of inferiority in the role of a parent, uncertainty, confusion, feelings of emptiness, etc.)
 - Negative feelings towards the child (e.g. "the child is difficult or difficult to care for")
 - Negative feelings towards the environment (e.g. related to the family, relatives, neighbours, services for families with children)
- You can use the following treatment types to address the difficulties described above:
 - Support the parent(s) in considering their child's development and childcare practices, provide information and positive feedback about the practices that work if necessary, and support the parents in finding solutions for problematic situations.
 - Encourage the parents to share their feelings with each other and others close to them, and therefore receive the support they need.
 - If necessary, help the parent who gave birth with getting help from mental health services. Particular attention should be paid to depressed (desperate, hopeless, indifferent, feeling empty) and very anxious parents who have given birth.

IV. THE ATTITUDE OF THE FAMILY AND OTHER LOVED ONES AND THE SUPPORT THEY OFFER

How has the birth of the baby affected other members of your family?

How are they feeling and what kinds of attitudes they have toward the child?

- When the reactions or changes are positive, reinforce the positive attitude.
- If the reactions or changes are negative, encourage the parent(s) to talk about the issue and look for a solution (e.g. baby care, domestic work, time for the relationship).

How does the baby's sibling(s) feel about the baby?

- If necessary, expand the discussion to include jealousy, injury to the baby, or fear of harm.

How have the baby's grandparents felt about the birth of the baby?

How have your friends and other loved ones felt about the birth of the baby?

- Which of them could provide you with support?
- Could you find new friends in family training or activities for families with babies and receive peer support from them?

V. CONCERNS OF THE PARENT(S) RELATED TO THE BABY

How has the baby developed?

How is the baby doing?

- Positive view – reinforce the positive experience of the parent(s).
- Negative view – express your willingness to further explore the topic by asking:

Would you mind telling me more about your concern?

- Where appropriate, provide information about the baby's development, which may on its own alleviate anxiety.
- If the parent who gave birth is present alone, encourage her to address any concerns with the baby's father, other parent or other loved one, for example as follows:



Have you already talked about this with the other parent, your spouse or other person close to you? How do they feel about it?

- Support the person in finding a solution.

How does the parent feel she can improve her child's welfare?

- If the parent has a suggestion for a solution, support it.
- If the parent who gave birth does not feel that they receive support from the other adults in the family, encourage her to talk about the matter with you and, if necessary, seek help from a suitable third party.

VI. THE PARENTS' VIEW OF THEIR CHILD

What is your child like?

- A positive view of the child: support it.
- A negative view: find out what difficulties the parent(s) have with the child.

You may ask: **Which issues related to your child do you struggle with the most?**

- The parent may perceive a 0–3-month-old baby as difficult because the baby has not yet developed a basic daily rhythm for sleeping, eating and waking up, and the communication between the parent and the baby is not yet clear. These issues should be discussed in connection with the above question.
- **You should pay special attention to the parent(s)**, with a particularly negative view of their baby. Organise help for the family from mental health services. Discuss the family in work guidance, for example.

VII. INTERACTION BETWEEN THE PARENT WHO GAVE BIRTH AND THE BABY

How are you feeding your baby? How is breastfeeding or feeding the baby going?

Support the bond between the parent and the baby during breastfeeding/feeding, guide the parent to keep the baby close to her body, guide the parent to maintain eye contact with the baby and pay attention to the parent's and the baby's behaviour during breastfeeding breaks.

How often do you breastfeed or feed your baby?

- Breastfeeding/feeding according to the baby's needs, varying feeding intervals
- Preparing a feeding schedule.

How do you feel about breastfeeding or feeding the baby? What do you think it feels like for the other parent?

- If the parent has difficulties related to feeding the baby, ask, which solutions the parent(s) have been thinking about.

How is the baby sleeping?

- How long and how often does the baby sleep? What is the baby's sleep like?
- If there are difficulties related to sleeping, encourage the parent(s) to talk about their expectations and, if necessary, consider possible solutions.

What could you do to make the baby sleep better?

Have you already tried something?

- Support the parents in finding solutions.



Can you recognise when your baby is hungry based on his/her crying? What is this hunger cry like?

- If necessary, encourage the parent(s) to pay more attention to the different meanings of the baby's crying (e.g. at night). Tell the parent that, by responding to the baby's cry, she can communicate to the baby that she has understood what the baby is trying to say.

You must have noticed that the baby's crying means many different things. By responding to the baby's crying, you show your baby that you understand him/her.

Do you talk to your baby?

Could you tell me about it? (when, where, how?)

How important do you think it is?

VIII. INTERACTION BETWEEN THE FATHER OR ANOTHER PARENT AND THE BABY

How do you feel about the breastfeeding or feeding of the baby? What do you think it feels like for the other parent?

- If there are difficulties with feeding, consider solutions.

How do you think the baby sleeps?

- The other parent may have a different understanding of matters related to sleeping, such as the duration of sleep and where the baby should sleep etc.

What have you thought about doing to make the baby sleep better? Have you already tried something?

- Support the other parent to find solutions.

Can you recognise when the baby is hungry based on his/her crying? What is this hunger cry like?

- If necessary, encourage the other parent to pay more attention to the different meanings of the baby's crying (e.g. crying at night) e.g. by asking.

You must have noticed that the baby's crying means many different things: by responding to the baby's crying, you show your baby that you understand him/her.

Do you talk to your baby?

Could you tell me about it? (When, where, how?)

How important do you think it is?

IX. PARENTS' RESOURCES TO MEET THEIR BABY'S NEEDS

Does your baby ever cry in such a way that it is difficult for you to comfort the baby or make him/her calm down? (Pay attention to parents who have had a child alone).

- Try to get a detailed description of the events, for example, by asking.

Tell me about the last time. What happened then? What did you do when that happened?

- The aim of the questions is to find out whether the parents are able to cope when their baby is feeling bad and make the baby feel better or whether they find it too difficult (e.g. the parent has reacted to the child crying by getting confused, panicking or ignoring the baby).
- Explore and discuss behaviours used to calm down the baby with the parents. Here, it is important that the parents are not left with a feeling that they have failed: some babies cry a lot and it is difficult to calm them down.
- Arrange help for the parents from mental health services if they report that they are indifferent or totally dismissive of their baby's crying (e.g. saying "I hate the baby when he/she is crying").



- If the parent(s) find it difficult to cope when their baby is feeling bad, encourage the parent(s) to support each other or ask other close adults for help, for example by asking:

Is there anyone who could help you in that situation?

X. THE FAMILY'S FINANCIAL SITUATION AND HOUSING

Having a child has an impact on the family's financial situation. Are you worried about how you will be able to manage financially? When we met earlier, you were worried about your financial situation. What about now? Do you have worries related to your housing? If necessary, guide the family to contact social services.

XI. LIFE EVENTS

Has anything happened in your life that could affect you, your family or the baby? Last time you told me..... (a life event that came up), how are you feeling now?

XII. CONCLUSION

Is there anything else you would like to say?

- It is important to end the interview in a positive and warm manner, where you identify any difficulties and concerns that have come up but also pay attention to support and possible solutions.
- A brief summary is useful. You can conclude the summary with a comment that genuinely increases the parent(s)' resources.
- Finally, express your willingness to talk again with the parent(s) about the issues that were discussed and to consider the timing of the next discussion together with the parent(s).

During the interview, pay attention to the interaction between the parent(s) and the baby.

Pay attention to the following factors:

Holding the baby	Far from the parent	Close to the parent
Mother or the parent who gave birth		
Father or the other parent		
Eye contact	Yes	Missing
Mother or the parent who gave birth		
Father or the other parent		
Talking to the baby	Yes	Missing
Mother or the parent who gave birth		
Father or the other parent		
Enjoying the baby	Yes	Missing
Mother or the parent who gave birth		
Father or the other parent		



Enduring when the child feels bad	Yes	Missing
Mother or the parent who gave birth		
Father or the other parent		
Understanding and responding to the baby's cues	Yes	Missing
Mother or the parent who gave birth		
Father or the other parent		