

Listen for a parting request

- Clients may not get to the most important issue until the end of the consultation time.
- A new issue, or important factual information may not be apparent until you think the conversation is almost over.
- Ask the client if you have answered all their questions, or if there is something further they would like to discuss.

Tell the client when you are next available or how to reach you again.

- The relationship between you and the client is important to the client
- The client may have further issues they weren't ready to talk about initially.

Express hope and optimism

- Maintaining hope is important for clients with few resources
- Even if the client's legal situation cannot be addressed, they may have other objectives that are achievable.

Use a qualified interpreter for clients not proficient in English unless the staff is fluent in the client's language.

- Avoid using family members, unless the client is given the option of a qualified translator and prefers to use a family member or friend.
- Never use young children or youth to interpret.
- Use qualified interpreters
- Minimize the use of telephone language lines to situations when it is absolutely necessary.

Legal Aid of Nebraska

ElderAccessLine®
1904 Farnam St. Suite 500
Omaha, NE 68102

1(800) 527-7249 - toll free
(402) 827-5656 - in Omaha



Legal Aid Of Nebraska

TIPS TO INCREASE
YOUR CULTURAL
COMPETENCY
WHEN WORKING
WITH CLIENTS

TREATING OTHERS HOW THEY
WISH TO BE TREATED.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE



Introduce Yourself

- Make eye contact unless the client avoids eye contact
- Offer a handshake first, if the client appears ready to offer a handshake
- Accept there are hidden rules of interaction you don't know.

Avoid power struggles over language

- Clients may speak in indirect and generalized fashion
- Let them know that you hear them with verbal acknowledgments (“mm-hmm, Yeah, I know”, etc)
- Don't force a client to say something the client wishes to avoid.

Make sure you are being understood

- Use a calm, nonjudgmental, adult voice
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Ask client if you are making sense, or they understand
- Repeat important points

Ask why the client is here

- Begin with open-ended questions
- Respect the client's freedom and personality
- Legal issues may be mixed with non-legal issues
- Don't assume you fully understand the client's concerns
- Refer the client for help with issues you can't address.

Listen carefully to the client

- The client decides what is important
- Do not dismiss the client's hopes, goals, expectations, and objectives.
- Listen for words that seem out of place to you
- Develop factual content when you see an issue you can address.
- Repeat back what you heard the client say to make sure you understand.

Watch the client's nonverbal cues

- Does the client understand what you are asking or are they just agreeing to be polite.
- Summarize the client's goals and your advice.
- Does the client share your confidence in the solution you have proposed? If not, continue to explore other options.

Break down the advice into manageable steps

- Give the client only a few action items at a time.
- Watch for signs the client is overwhelmed or frustrated
- Identify choices and their consequences
- Help the client identify cause and effect
- Be a coach

Confirm the plan

- Help the client prioritize and plan
- Ask if the client wants you to write the plan
- Make it clear what you are and what you are not going to do for them.