



# Interviewing

## Getting Ready

- Do background research at the library. Read whatever you can on the subject of the interview. Also talk to people in the community about the issue. Ask people about the person you are going to interview. Learn as much as you can about the person. Get to know his or her personality and interests.
- Choose a theme or general focus for the interview.
- Prepare a list of questions in advance. Think about how the interviewee might respond, and prepare follow-up questions.
- Dress appropriately. The interviewee will judge your seriousness in part on the basis of your appearance.

## Conducting the Interview

- Start with relaxed conversation to break the ice and make the interviewee feel at ease.
- If you were unable to gather much information on the interviewee before the interview, ask questions about his or her background now.
- Introduce the theme of the interview. Explain what you hope to accomplish.
- Set the stage for discussion of the issue by sharing some of your own ideas or the ideas of others on the subject. If you have heard any stories related to the issue, share them.
- Ask questions you have prepared. Ask follow-up questions to get further information. Be prepared to leave your prepared questions behind to follow the conversation if it leads in a different but interesting direction.
- Be a good listener. Listen for main points and supporting ideas. Also listen for hints of ideas and attitudes. Without judging, evaluate what the interviewee is saying. Continue to ask questions. Use body language to show you are listening: sit up straight, make eye contact, smile, nod, and respond with an understanding "Mmmmm" or "Uh-huh" from time to time.
- Summarize the points covered in the interview. Make a final statement on the issue. Ask the interviewee if he or she has anything to add.
- Get the interviewee's telephone number in case you want to check points covered in the interview or need further information.