

# Important Case History Information to Obtain

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Effective case history for bilingual individuals should include the following:

## 1. FAMILY HISTORY

- a. Circumstances of immigration
- b. Length of time in U.S.
- c. Language status of various family members
- d. Parent(s) educational level



## 2. EDUCATIONAL AND/OR WORK HISTORY

- a. Differences in educational setting and curricula in native country

*Sample questions:*

- What grade was your child in last in the native country?
  - Were the other students in that class in the same grade or approximately at the same level?
  - To the best of your recollection, what was your child learning last in math class in the native country? Reading class? Writing class? (Curriculum may not match the traditional American curriculum.)
  - Did the school your child attend provide cumulative school records? Are those available?
  - Does anyone read to your child at home? Who and in what language(s)?
- b. Length and extent of education received in U.S., including any special services received
  - c. Client's profession and job responsibilities

## 3. DEVELOPMENTAL AND LANGUAGE HISTORY

- a. Age at which client exposed to each language
- b. Conditions under which each language was acquired
- c. Course of development in each language, age at which developmental milestones were achieved, and/or nature of communicative difficulties in each language

*Sample questions for toddlers:*

- Is your child babbling? When and how often?
- What kind of vocalizations do you hear? Vocalizations with vowels only (ooh, aah) or with consonants (ma, boo, da-da) too?
- What words does your child use in each language?
- What words does your child understand in each language?
- Does your child attempt to get your attention or the attention of others? How?
- Does your child direct another's attention to something he or she is doing? How?

- Does your child appear to understand what others are saying?
- Does your child understand age-appropriate commands (e.g. sit down, don't touch, come here, give me a hug)? In what language?
- When your child is playing, does he/she use toys appropriately (e.g. making a car go, touching or brushing hair with a comb or brush)? Does he/she use objects/toys to make-believe or to represent other things (e.g. using a toy banana as a phone, a towel as a blanket, a block as a piece of food)?

*Sample questions for children in general:*

- Which language did your child first learn to speak?
- In comparison to other children of the same age (especially siblings), do you think your child has problems understanding or expressing himself/herself in either language?
- Is s/he difficult to understand? Does s/he have difficulty pronouncing words correctly in either language? Explain.
- Is s/he intelligible to other listeners of the native language?
- For your child's age, do you think s/he has difficulty saying correct phrases in either language (using correct words such as nouns, pronouns, verbs)?
- Does your child say very short phrases for his/her age in either language?
- Does your child use many general and nondescriptive words such as this, thing, that? In both languages?
- Does your child have difficulty explaining or describing things in either language?
- Does your child have low vocabulary in either language?
- Is this child like your other children (siblings), or different in some way?
- Do you feel your child is learning the same as his/her siblings at this age?
- What do you think is the communication problem?
- When was the problem first noticed? Did anything in particular trigger the problem?

*Sample questions for adults:*

- How has her/his ability to speak changed in each language?
  - How has her/his ability to understand changed in each language? Does s/he make sense?
  - Is s/he difficult to understand? Does s/he have difficulty pronouncing words correctly in either language? Explain.
- d. Perceived or current level of proficiency in each language (speaking, understanding, reading, writing)

*Sample questions:*

- Which language does client seem to speak best?
- Which language does client seem to understand best?
- What language does client speak/prefer when playing? Watching TV? Listening to the radio? Reading books? Writing?
- Which language does client speak the most?
- What does client spend most of his/her time doing and in what language (probe for reading, meaningful playing/activities)?

- e. Current language-use patterns (when, where, with whom, how often does client use each language)

*Sample questions:*

- Does s/he speak the native language? How much? With whom?
- Does s/he hear the native language? How much? With whom?

- f. Language use and communicative skills before onset of disorder (if dealing with language deficiency post trauma or acquired disorder)

**4. CLIENT AND FAMILY ATTITUDES TOWARD DISABILITY AND REHABILITATION, LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION, AND DOMINANT CULTURE**

*Sample questions:*

- Do you have any concerns about needing and receiving therapy?
- How do you feel about therapy being provided in English (or whatever language)?
- How do you feel about living in the United States and how you have adapted to its culture?