

ASYLUM MEDICINE TRAINING INITIATIVE

Preparation for The Forensic Medical Evaluation Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to provide evaluators with considerations to review prior to and during the forensic medical evaluation. Please ensure that you have completed Modules 1 through 5 on how to conduct a forensic medical evaluation. Several helpful tools on how to prepare, collaborate with an attorney and write an affidavit are available within those modules.

Logistical Considerations Days to Weeks Prior to Evaluation

- Request a copy of the asylum seeker's declaration.
- Request documentation on current country conditions if available.
- If the asylum seeker has a history of medical and/or psychiatric care, obtain clinical records if available.
- If the asylum seeker is detained, obtain clinical records from detention if possible.
- If a prior evaluation was conducted, consider the pros and cons of reading that evaluation.
- Confirm arrangement for a qualified interpreter (through audio, video or in-person).
- Review logistics for the day of the evaluation (i.e. date, time and location of evaluation, transportation for the asylum seeker, and expected duration of session).
- Encourage the attorney to prepare the asylum seeker by discussing nature and purpose of the evaluation, importance of honest and accurate reporting, role of the evaluator, and the expectation that the evaluator will address difficult topics.
- Review the Istanbul Protocol and other resources as pertinent.
- Define roles and responsibilities for trainee(s) involved.

Logistical Considerations A Day Prior to Evaluation

- Print, bookmark, or download note templates, standardized assessment tools, and/or anatomical diagrams, in language(s) relevant to the asylum seeker if available.
- Acquire educational brochures, fact sheets or materials that might be appropriate for the asylum seeker.
- Fully charge your computer, phone, and/or other electronic devices.
- Turn on and test pertinent medical equipment.

Equipment and Supplies During Day of Evaluation

- Bring a copy of the declaration, note template, computer or paper, pens or pencils, and additional paper (for the asylum seeker to write or draw).
- Bring standardized assessment tools and/or anatomical diagrams, in language(s) relevant to the asylum seeker if available.
- Provide educational brochures, fact sheets or materials appropriate for the asylum seeker.
- Bring any administrative reports that must be completed during the evaluation.
- Bring clean examination equipment, including a stethoscope, otoscope, ophthalmoscope, flashlight, pen light, eye chart, reflex hammer and/or vaginal speculum as needed.
- Bring gloves for examination as well as a gown and draping sheet for the asylum seeker.
- Ensure adequate lighting and an examination table if possible.
- Bring a camera or camera-enabled device for photographs.
- Bring a forensic ruler, tape measure, or other items to show the scale of photographs.

Trauma-Informed Principles Safety

ASYLUM MEDICINE TRAINING INITIATIVE

- Ensure comfortable temperature and soft, ambient lighting.
- Ensure comfortable seating arrangements.
- Provide easy access to the door, drinking water, restroom, and tissues.
- Dress in civilian clothes.
- Have a relaxed, calm body language.
- Use soft, slow voice modulation.
- Maintain appropriate eye contact, if culturally appropriate, and remain at the same eye level as the asylum seeker.
- Turn off or place on silent phones and other notifications.
- Listen actively and pause or remain silent when appropriate.
- Observe the asylum seeker's body language and respond empathetically.
- If the asylum seeker appears distressed, say so, retreat, and change the subject to a less traumatizing topic.
- Even if no distress is apparent, check in with the asylum seeker periodically.
- Offer child-friendly items, such as puzzles, games, and/or drawing materials, if relevant.

Choice

- If at all possible, honor the asylum seeker's gender, cultural and/or dialect-specific preferences for the interpreter, evaluator and/or involved trainees.
- Offer the asylum seeker the first choice of where and how to sit in the room.
- Offer the asylum seeker the choice to take frequent breaks, to interrupt the evaluation and leave the room at any time, and to suspend the evaluation, with the option of a follow-up evaluation.
- You should ask for permission when appropriate and obtain informed consent repeatedly throughout the evaluation.

Collaboration

- Assess the asylum seeker's values and preferences.
- Help the asylum seeker explore and compare the benefits and risks of available options to reach informed decisions.

Trustworthiness

- Provide introductions and role clarity for everyone in the room.
- Explain in detail to the asylum seeker the purpose of the evaluation, what will happen during the evaluation, and how long it will take.
- Discuss with the asylum seeker confidentiality and its limitations.

Empowerment

- Demonstrate genuine compassion with oral phrases in response to the asylum seeker sharing their past trauma with you.
- Highlight the asylum seeker's strength and courage with verbal statements.

Closing Encounter Using Trauma-Informed Approach

- Educate the asylum seeker about any findings or diagnoses made.
- Elicit and answer any remaining questions.
- Thank the asylum seeker for sharing their story.
- Outline the next steps for the asylum seeker (and yourself).
- Provide the asylum seeker with your or your organization's contact information.
- Offer any referrals to primary care, mental health providers and/or other specialized care.