

SAMPLE ENGAGING QUESTIONS

Asking engaging questions helps a probation officer build trusting relationships with the young person and the important adults in the young person's life. The following engaging questions are offered as examples. There are many others that would be useful, creative and appropriate. Not all of these would be used when working with an individual youth and family. A version of this resource is available online at <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-familyengagedcaseplanning-questions-2022.pdf>.

Refer to pages 14–15 of the practice guide

Checking In

- Thanks for coming. How is your day going so far?
- What name would you like me to use for you?
- If you could change one thing right now, what would it be?
- How long do you have? I want to respect your time.
- How was it finding your way here? Was it difficult? Did you have a ride?
- How was your weekend?



Strengths, Interests and Motivation

- What do you like to do?
- What parts of yourself (who you are) do you wish more people noticed and saw?
- What are some strengths you have that most people don't realize about you?
- What are the things you're good at?
- What are the things or people that are most important to you in life right now?
- What is something nobody can take away from you?
- Tell me what feels good in your life right now?
- What do you do on the weekends or during your free time?
- Give me an example of a time when you worked really hard at something.
What was it and how did you feel after?
- Do you like to read or listen to music? What types of books or music do you like?
- What do you most hope for yourself for five to 10 years (or more) from now?
Where would you like to be and what would you like to be doing?
- Have you set any goals or hopes for yourself for the next few months or year?
Would you be comfortable sharing those with me?
- Do you have a role model? Who is it?
- If you could be anyone in the world, who would you be? Why?
Are there parts of that person that you see in yourself?
- What kind of job would you eventually like to have?
Are there things I can do to help you get closer to that in your future?
- What would you most like to get out of school or education?



Expectations of Probation (after clearly defining the purpose of probation)

- How can I help you be successful?
 - What are your expectations, concerns, fears or questions regarding probation?
 - What questions do you have about the court process and what has happened so far?
 - What do you think you need from me, your family and others to succeed on probation and afterwards?
 - What might make it hard for you to succeed? How can I help you with those challenges?
 - What do you want to get out of this?
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Learning About the Family and Support Systems

- If you had to make a list of everyone you consider family and everyone who supports you in some way, who would be on that list?
- What are the three best things about your family?
- Who can you count on? Who would you call at 2 a.m. if you were in trouble or wanted to share good or bad news?
- Who do you take care of? Who counts on you?
- How do you (or your family) handle tough situations? How has the arrest and time in the justice system affected your family?
- What are your family's strengths?
- What does it feel and look like when things are going well in your family?
- What do you need from each other?
- Do you have a favorite teacher, coach or mentor of some kind? Who is it?

Learning About the Family and Support Systems (continued)

- Do you have money to travel to the places you need and want to go?
- What kind of connections and supports do you have in the community?
- What do you like to do in your community?
- What resources, services or opportunities do you need? Want?
- What types of services or resources have you used in the community?
- Which services or resources have been helpful? Which have not?
- What services or resources have you needed but not been able to access?
- ***To caregivers and youth:***
 - When you think about being part of your family, what is the best part?
What is the hardest part?
 - What are your expectations of each other?
- ***To caregivers:***
 - What are your hopes for your loved one to ensure that they can grow and thrive now and in the future?
 - What obstacles do you see to your loved one being successful on probation and as part of your family?