

Using Active Listening to Build Stronger Two-Parent Households and Improve TANF Participant Outcomes

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The Role of Active Listening in Improving Employability and Relationship Skills

- Active listening has 3 key components:
 1. Focus fully
 2. Reflect back
 3. Avoid interruptions or moving too quickly to solutions
- Active listening means giving your full attention to the speaker, so they feel heard and understood.
- Practicing active listening may help build soft skills like emotional intelligence, problem-solving, and teamwork, improving personal and professional interactions.
- Ultimately, active listening can foster stronger relationships, emotional safety, and more meaningful communication with colleagues and partners.



Benefits of Active Listening

- In personal and professional relationships:
 - May promote empathy and understanding
 - Can reduce conflict
- Can strengthen the **parenting partnership**, where each parent can feel heard and understood (Purpose 4 of TANF)
- Strengthens communication, may prevent conflicts, and improves understanding of tasks and instructions **in the workplace** (Purpose 2 of TANF)
- Models healthy communication skills and emotional safety for **children** in their homes (Purpose 1 of TANF)



Opportunities for Case Managers to Model Active Listening with Families

- Use open-ended questions when possible, encouraging participants to share their experiences and concerns.
- Reflect back what a participant says (“So what I’m hearing is...”), ask open-ended questions, and avoid interrupting.
- Acknowledge emotions directly and remain calm, reflect back concerns, and avoid jumping to solutions too quickly.

“Tell me more about...”

“Please describe...”

“What do you think about...”

“How do you feel about...”



Making Opportunities for Families to Practice Active Listening

- **Model and Encourage Active Listening:** Demonstrate active listening and provide practice opportunities.
- **Support Reflection and Engagement:** Help participants assess the challenges and benefits of using active listening.
- **Strengthen Parent Communication:** Guide parents in acknowledging emotions and fostering thoughtful responses.
- **Apply in Job and Workplace Contexts:** Show how active listening can support career growth, economic independence, and other goals.

Thank you!

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