# Individual Consultation Guide

## Learning about the family, child, and relationship between parent and child.

You should use individual consultations as an opportunity to learn as much as you can about the family circumstances and challenges. This is important as when a parent begins to change the way that they interact with the children in the household, it will affect everyone else and can sometimes generate conflict.

This conversation will provide you with a greater understanding of some of the challenges that families are experiencing at home. It will also equip you with information that might be useful in helping parents to establish weekly goals and solve issues that arise when parents practice new skills at home.

## Identifying an overall goal for the programme.

It is also important that you help parents to identify ONE positive, specific, and realistic goal for their target child during the programme.

To help parents set a goal, it is important that you ask parents to describe their expectations about the programme. In doing this, help them identify a specific goal about how they would like to change their relationship with their child or their child’s behaviour.

### The goal should be specific

Parents will often give vague goals such as, “I want my child to be good,” or “I want my child to succeed at school.” You may need to guide them to be more specific about what the parent means by “good” or “succeed at school.”

It is your job to help parents describe a behaviour as specifically as possible. You will need to use questions to get them to be more and more specific. We recommend that you ask parents what “being good” or “succeeding at school” means to them. Further, exploring when, where, and why they would like this behaviour to happen will help make their goal more specific.

Making goals specific will help the parents identify behaviours that they can actually help encourage to happen more often as they develop more positive relationships with their child.

A parent who wants her child “to be good” may eventually have a goal such as “I want my child to greet his elders in a respectful way when they enter the house.”

Likewise, you can help a parent who wants his child to “succeed at school” to identify a more specific goal such as, “I want my child to do her homework immediately after coming home from school.”

### The goal should also be stated in a positive way.

For example, instead of saying, “I want my child to stop swearing at me,” a parent should be helped to state the behaviour that s/he wants to see: “I want my child to use friendly words when talking to me.”

When you and the parent are happy with the specific, positive, and realistic goal, you should write it down and send it to them as a text message for safekeeping.

### The goal should also be realistic

Parents will often want to choose goals that are not achievable during the programme or sometimes are impossible for their child’s developmental stage. You can gently guide parents to have more realistic expectations for their children.

For example, if a parent says that she wants her child to pass her school examinations at the end of the year, you might want to ask her what specific behaviours her child needs to do in order to make that possible.

Likewise, if a parent wants his 2-year-old child to be able to get dressed by himself in the morning, you need to explore whether that is a reasonable expectation and why the child cannot get dressed by himself. You then could help the parent identify a more realistic goal that would help his child develop the skills to get dressed by himself such as, “I would like my child to cooperate with me while I help him get dressed in the morning.”

## Discuss logistics and technology for the group sessions

Finally, individual consultations are opportunities to discuss any logistical matters with the parents about the time for the group sessions, access to a cellphone, any data load/airtime needs, and technological questions.

Suggested Structure for Individual Consultations before Group Sessions:

A. Introduce yourselves to the parent and the whole family if present.

B. Provide an overview of programme (This can just be the basics such as how the programme will help them with their own and their child’s behaviour)

C. Ask about the family environment at home:

* What is happening at home?
* Who else lives there? How many children are there? Husband/Wife? Partner? Grandparents?
* Who else provides care for children?
* What kind of support do you already receive from close friends and family members that you can trust nearby?

D. Discuss with the parent about his/her relationship with their child:

* If the programme is being delivered as part of a study:
* Remind the parent that they will be focusing on the target child selected during the assessment.
* If the parent has not selected a specific child to focus on during the programme:
  + Ask the parent to select one child to focus on during the programme. This child should be between the ages of 2 and 17 years old. If the parent has more than one child between this age range, s/he should select the child with whom s/he is having the most difficult relationship or challenges when managing the child’s behaviour.
  + You can also reassure the parent that the skills learned in the programme may be applicable to all of the other children in his/her family, but that s/he should focus on this one child during the group discussions and home practice.
* What is life like at home with your child?
* What is your relationship with your child like?
* What are some challenges that you are facing in terms of managing your child’s behaviour?
* Are there other challenges that make it difficult to be a parent?

E. Parent Goals for the Programme

* What are your goals, expectations, or hopes for you and your child in general and from this programme?
* Help the parent identify ONE the specific, positive, and realistic goal.
* Write the parent’s goal down at the bottom of your participant/parent profile.

F. Discuss practicalities

* Timing of the session
* Platform that will be used for ParentChat (and how to download the app if they do not already have it)
* Other technological questions that are related to participating in the programme. What is the participant’s digital literacy? Do participants know how to open messages? Respond?
* Clarify literacy level of parents – you may need to send audio messages instead of text messages if parents have difficulty reading. You may need to explain how a participant listens to an audio message.

G. Any other questions?