211 L A County Presents: A Hitchhiker’s Guide Through The Universe of I&R and QA

Travel Brochure
AIRS Conference May 23, 2016

Your 211 L A County Tour Guides:

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A Hitchhiker’s Guide Through The Universe of I&R and QA

NAVIGATION

• Purpose of Quality Assurance (QA)

Pg 3. Rapport

Pg 4-9. Active Listening
The Drawing Game
Test Your Knowledge Activity

Pg 10-11. Assessment
Open Ended
Closed Ended
Role Play (Tour Instructors)

Pg 12-13. Tone
Tone Comes First

Pg 14. Validation/Empathy
Acknowledge & Be Sensitive
Teddy Bear Story
Rapport

Building a positive connection between the I&R Specialist and the client.

Building rapport encompasses the full flow of the call:

- Assessment
- Active Listening
- Validation/Empathy
- Tone
- Greeting/Closing

Let’s explore this list in further detail.
Active listening requires the use of a series of skills, or ‘virtual tools’ that you can keep and use as you need them.

**Paraphrase**

**Validation**

**Probing**

Active Listening includes ‘Paying Attention’, and paying attention is ‘Processing’ what the speaker is telling you. Processing what is actually being said. And… getting it right!
How Q A Listens for ‘Active Listening’

2 elements for Active Listening:

**The Stated Need** - The problems, concerns, or needs a caller has presented as the reason for contacting the I&R Service.

**The Unstated Need** - The problems, concerns, or needs that the caller *has not specifically stated* but which are obvious, critical, and or LOGICALLY CONNECTED to the stated need.

- Has the caller provided and clues?
- Were there any key words said within the call?

These can be hints that additional services may be beneficial to the caller.
Paraphrasing Not Parroting

**Paraphrasing/Reflecting:** Is the process of restating both the feelings and words of the customer.

**Paraphrasing** is a tool used by active listeners to enable them to demonstrate understanding and encourage an inquirer to talk openly.

**Reflecting** is closely repeating what the inquirer has said in order to show comprehension. This is a powerful skill that can reinforce the message of the inquirer and demonstrate understanding. Reflecting is the process of paraphrasing and restating both the feelings and words of the inquirer.

**Can be reflection of feelings or words.**

- **Focus on Feelings:** Restate one’s perception of the clients/callers feelings

- **Paraphrasing:** Paraphrasing is restating the essence of what the caller said using different word to summarize and reflect back to the caller that you hear and understand the situation and feelings s/he is expressing.

Differentiate between “Paraphrasing” and “Parroting”

- **Paraphrase:**
  Paraphrasing is restating the essence of what the caller said using different word to summarize and reflect back to the caller that you hear and understand the situation and feelings s/he is expressing.

- **Parroting:** Parroting is the action of repeating, word for word without thought or understanding, imitating the words or actions of another.

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**Guidelines for Paraphrasing**

- Be natural.
- Listen for the basic message - consider the feeling and meaning expressed by the customer.
- Restate what you have been told in simple terms.
- When restating, look for non-verbal as well as verbal cues that confirm or deny the accuracy of your paraphrasing. (Note: Some customers may pretend you have got it right because they feel unable to assert themselves and disagree with you.)
- Always be non-directive and non-judgmental; don’t blame the customer.
Validation

The use of Positive Word Choices are essential to affirm that what the customer has said was heard.

The use of encouragement and positive reinforcement can:

- Encourage our customers to participate with trust
- Signify interest in what the customer has to say
- Help to ‘pave the way’ for building rapport
- Gives the customer reassurance
- Shows warmth and openness
- Reduces the resistance to open up

Examples of validation statements:

- “I’m really glad that you called today, let me see how I can help you.”
- “That sounds like a difficult situation, but I am glad you called.”
- “I’m happy to hear that you were able to get that document.”

Write your own Validation Statement:

- ____________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________
- ____________________________________________________________
Probing

Assessing is fundamental to successful communication and to better understand the request of our customers.

Probing is the use of asking closed or open ended questions. Closed ended questions when the inquirer is vague and not enough details have been provided. Open ended question to explore the customer’s situation.

Probing questions can also include questions that require ‘more information’ and not just a Yes or No response, such as: “What happened that you feel this way?”

So, Why Ask Questions?
- To Obtain Information
- To Maintain Control of the Conversation
- Express an interest in the inquirer
- To clarify a point
- To explore the situation further

Write your own Probing Questions:

■ ______________________________________
  ______________________________________
  ______________________________________

■ ______________________________________
  ______________________________________
  ______________________________________

You can use these skills and keep them as a ‘virtual assistant tool box’
Active listening is a simple technique that ensures people feel heard and is an essential component of good communication. Here are a few tips to remember as you practice actively listening:

• Spend more time listening than you do talking.

• Do not answer questions with questions.

• Avoid finishing other people’s sentences.

• Focus more on the other person than you do on yourself.

• Focus on what people are saying right now, not on what their interests are.

• Paraphrase what the other person has said to make sure you understand him or her correctly (“...what I heard you say is_______, is that right?”).

• Think about what you’re going to say after someone has finished speaking, not while he or she is speaking.

• Ask appropriate questions.

• Interrupt politely, if needed.

• Maintain eye contact when face to face.
To explore the stated reason for the call
Figuring out the underlying factors of the inquirer’s situation

**AIRS Standards** suggests that we: Assess and Probe beyond the presenting need

**Probing Includes using:**
- Open Ended Questions
- Closed Ended Questions

**Open Ended Questions** allow the client to speak freely and provide more details about their situation.

**Closed Ended Questions** allow for more direct answers, Yes or No. This will help the I&R Specialist to probe further and elicit shorter responses.

**Draw out more details... probe beyond the presenting need**
Sample Language for Open Ended Questions:
“Please share with me a little bit more of what’s going on?”
“What happened that you are now homeless?”
“I heard you say that you are upset and need some referrals...what’s going on, what type of referrals do you need?”

**Write your own Open Questions:**

- __________________________________________________________
- __________________________________________________________

Sample Language for Closed Ended Questions:
“Do you have a place to stay tonight?”
“What is your current source of income?”
“Are there any children with you?”

**Write your own Closed Questions:**

- __________________________________________________________
- __________________________________________________________
- __________________________________________________________
Tone of Voice

TONE COMES FIRST - Before we do any of the things we just talked about, before we assess, before we validate, before we even say “Hello”...your tone is already in play. It starts with your inner self.

How do you feel today?

SADNESS  JOY  FEAR  DISGUST  ANGER

Make a list of what you think may affect your tone:

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
The Quality Assurance Specialist listens for tone throughout the entire interaction... not only the I&R Specialists’ tone, but the caller’s tone as well.

The I&R Specialists’ tone must match that of the caller.

Listening for tone to help identify:

- Is the caller; sad, overly excited, non-responsive, happy?
- Is the I&R Specialist responding according to the tone of the caller?
- Is the I&R Specialist alright?

The overall tone must be appropriate and cause no discomfort to the caller.
Quality Assurance is listening for your responses to what the caller is telling you. Are you expressing, acknowledging, and validating the caller?

How are you going to respond?

- **Validation**: Acknowledging the feelings, thoughts, or experiences. Responding positively.

- **Empathy**: To be sensitive toward someone else's feelings, thoughts, or experiences.
The Drawing Game