

Section 24: What interview skills are there for Household visits?

Household visits are the best way to listen to the masses, hear their opinions face to face, solve their problems heart to heart, get first-hand real information, and thoroughly understand the village situation and the popular sentiment. It is also the best method to gain the masses' trust and to close the distance. To carry out household visits, you should master the following skills.

Firstly, prepare yourself before the household visits. Before the visits, you have to prepare well by consulting the village cadres about the basic situation of each family. For example, the number of family members, whether there are Party members, whether there are children studying or working in other places, the family's economic situation, whether there are special circumstances, etc. You also need to explore one or two "shining points" of each family, that is, one or two examples of "glorious history" that the family cares about the most, such as the children's academic achievement or financial success, harmony between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, filial sons and daughters, humble and pure family ethos, friendly manner, etc. Only by knowing the family well in advance can you achieve your goals during your visits.

Secondly, avoid ambiguous questions. The purpose of household visits is to understand the situation, acquire information, and help the villagers to solve problems, not just to chat about daily life. Targeted questions must be raised during the conversation. When asking questions, the following principles should be considered: clarity of purpose, knowing what needs to be addressed overall, the sequence of questions, and having a clear plan in mind; relevance to reality, focusing on the main tasks and concerns of the household; adapting to individuals, being direct and straightforward with those who are frank in character, employing a more indirect approach with those who are stubborn, and ensuring that questions are easily understandable and accessible to individuals with lower levels of education.

Thirdly, reliably explain policies. During visits, villagers will inquire about policies, ask questions about the procedures, and expect timely responses. If village cadres cannot provide accurate and comprehensive answers they may be looked down upon by the interviewees, who may perceive their competence to be lacking. In more serious cases, doubts may arise, suspecting hidden motives behind the lack of clear answers. Thus, it is necessary for village cadres to study relevant policies and familiarize themselves with regulations based on the specific circumstances of their village, preparing themselves should questions suddenly arise. Frequently asked questions generally concern the following matters: applications for subsistence

allowances, disability assistance, the New Rural Co-operative Medical Scheme, pension insurance, agricultural subsidies, financial disclosures, rural land contracts, household registration transferral, student tuition fees, family planning, and policies that benefit farmers, etc.

Fourthly, be cautious when responding to requests. During household visits, villagers may request that problems be solved right away, such as applying for subsistence allowances to address life difficulties, leveraging connections to get through administrative red tape, or repairing village roads and building bridges to meet the needs of villagers, and so on. Such questions must be answered cautiously and in a polite tone. Avoid making hasty promises or commitments, intentionally evading or stalling, or outright refusal. The most appropriate approach is to explain policies and reasoning face-to-face. If faced with unfamiliar situations, we should make detailed notes, and promptly gather information from village cadres and neighbors to provide an informed response.

Fifthly, leave room for future visits. It is impossible to clarify everything in a single discussion with villagers, especially key personnel such as old Party members, old cadres, households in need, and petitioner households. So, you should leave room for future visits. In practice, experienced village cadres often express it in this way: “I apologize for taking up so much of your time today. Let's continue our conversation next time.” “You have raised some interesting points, and I will seek your guidance in the future.” “I feel that fate has brought us together, so let's find time to chat again.” Such statements not only show how seriously you take these household visits with the masses, but also leave room for future visits.

Sixthly, take clear notes after the visits. Many village cadres bring their Public Sentiment Diary” to the visits to take notes during their conversations. Villagers are most afraid when they see cadres ask questions and take notes at the same time. This approach may make some villagers hesitant to speak openly and honestly, fearing that their words will be recorded and could potentially have consequences if seen by village cadres or others. Therefore, it is best to chat casually in a relaxed atmosphere, which is easier to be accepted by the villagers. When you get back to the office, the details of the conversation should be carefully recorded in the diary.

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