




Strategies to Gain Insight: Strengths and Weaknesses

Strategy	Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses
QUESTIONNAIRES			
Quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Participants complete answers to questions with closed, fixed responses ♣ Standardised answers to each question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Responses can be directly and easily compared ♣ May take less time ♣ Enable anonymity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Forces participants to fit their experiences into categories, distorts what they really mean ♣ Involves reading, issues with literacy ♣ Distrust in filling out forms
Qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Participants complete answers to open-ended questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Answers can be flexible to participants' experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Involves much reading and writing ♣ Distrust in filling out forms ♣ May cause anxiety over disclosure
INTERVIEWS			
Closed, fixed response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Questions and response categories determined in advance ♣ Responses are fixed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Responses can be directly and easily compared ♣ Many questions can be asked in a short time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Forces participants to fit their experiences into categories, distorts what they really mean ♣ No flexibility to individuals-- can be impersonal or irrelevant
Standardised open-ended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Exact wording and sequence of questions determined in advance ♣ Questions worded in a completely open-ended format 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Same questions used for all participants ♣ Data collection is systematic and comprehensive ♣ Able to review instrumentation used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Little flexibility to individuals ♣ Standardising can constrain naturalness and relevance
Interview guide*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Topics determined in advance, in outline form ♣ Sequence and wording of topics decided during interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ More casual and flexible ♣ Topics are relevant to individuals ♣ Responses may be followed up ♣ Elicits more in-depth responses ♣ Empowers parents by giving them a voice when reflecting on their experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Different information may be collected from each participant
Informal conversational*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Topics emerge from context and asked in natural course of things ♣ No predetermination of topics or wording 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Easy to establish/maintain rapport ♣ More casual and flexible, less intimidating ♣ Matched to individuals and circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Different information collected from each participant ♣ Less comprehensive if important topics do not arise



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ Respect participants right to choose issues they wish to discuss ♣ Less anxiety created when disclosing sensitive information 	
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Main source: Patton, M. (1990).

* Indicates strategies successfully used in evaluating family outcomes in the SDN Parent Resource Program evaluation.