

Introducing the ASI

Prior to beginning the administration of the General Section of the ASI, the interviewer should properly introduce the instrument. This gives the client a clear idea of what to expect from the interview and helps to build rapport. The following instructions are on the face page of your ASI. Each of these points should be included in your introduction:

INTRODUCING THE ASI:

1. All clients receive this **same standard interview.**
2. **Seven Potential problem areas** or **Domains**: Medical, Employment/Support Status, Alcohol, Drug, Legal, Family/Social, and Psychiatric.
3. The interview will take about **50-60 minutes.**
4. **Patient Rating Scale**: Patient input is important. For each area, I will ask you to use this scale to let me know how bothered you have been by any problems in each section. I will also ask you how important treatment is for you for the area being discussed.
The scale is:
0 - Not at all
1 - Slightly
2 - Moderately
3 - Considerably
4 - Extremely
5. All information gathered is **confidential**
6. **Accuracy** - You have the right to refuse to answer any question, if you are uncomfortable or feel it is too personal or painful to give an answer, just tell us, "I want to skip that question." We'd rather have no answer than an inaccurate one!
7. There are **two time periods** we will discuss:
 1. The past 30 days
 2. Lifetime

When introducing the ASI to your clients, include and explain each of the above points in detail. Note: It is critical you do more than simply list them in order. A good introduction sets the tone, provides guidelines and helps prepare the client for what to expect during the interview. In addition, an in-depth introduction will assist you later in the interview by helping the client stay focused and understand why you are asking certain questions.

1. Explain that all clients receive the same standard interview – the ASI.

This will be of assistance during the ASI when a client seems surprised by a particular question (e.g. "Have you ever been arrested and charged with prostitution?"). In cases like this refer the client back to

your introduction statement and explain again that you appreciate some of the questions may not apply to them, but we ask everybody the same questions. It is important to convey the concept of standardization to the client so they do not feel singled out or discriminated against.

Interviewer Example:

“In order to treat everyone equally, we give everyone who presents for treatment here the same standard interview. I appreciate your patience and I know some of these may not apply to you.”

2. Seven Potential Problem Areas: Medical, Employment/Support, Alcohol, Drug, Legal, Family/Social, Psychiatric

Reinforce and explain that your agency is interested in helping the client not only with their alcohol and/or drug problems, but also with any other problems they may be experiencing.

Interviewer Example:

“We’re going to discuss seven different topic areas today. I’ll be asking you questions about your medical history, employment situation, alcohol and drug use, legal status, family/social network and mental health status.”

3. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes.

Acknowledge the importance of the client’s time and input during the interview. Ask if they have enough time to complete the interview and explain the ASI may take slightly longer or shorter than one hour. If the intake appointment is scheduled to last longer than the ASI (e.g. you have other information to gather, etc.), be sure the client is aware the ASI will not take up the entire meeting.

Interviewer Example:

“I want to make sure you have enough time to complete this interview. It takes about an hour to complete, which is shorter than the hour and a half we have scheduled for this appointment. Your time is just as important as mine, so please tell me if you have a conflicting commitment.”

4. Your input is important; the Patient Rating Scale

Explain that through out the interview the client will have the opportunity to convey their opinions about the information being discussed. Inform the client their opinion and perceptions are critical to the interview and treatment process.

Interviewer Example:

“Throughout this interview you will have the chance to tell me how you’ve been doing in each of the topic areas we talk about. It’s important for you to know your opinion about these situations is critical to both this interview and the treatment process as a whole. Your responses are part of the material I will consider in developing your treatment plan.”

5. All information gathered is confidential.

Explain exactly what “confidential” means in your facility. Who will have access to the information under what situations and/or procedures? Because confidentiality is defined slightly differently across facilities (e.g. state agencies, healthcare / correctional facilities, etc.), be sure to note the limitations to confidentiality as they pertain to your workplace, the client’s safety and that of others.

Interviewer Example:

“Of course, all the information you give to me today is strictly confidential. That means only myself and the other counselors working on your case will be able to see your responses to this interview.”

6. You may choose to not answer certain questions. Accurate information better equips us to help the client.

Give clients permission to not answer questions that may be too personal or difficult to answer. Explain in those cases you will simply place an “X” in the box and move on. Nonetheless, reinforce with the client the importance of obtaining as much honest information as possible to assist you in developing a more accurate and comprehensive treatment plan.

Interviewer Example:

“I would appreciate it if you would try to answer all of the questions honestly. However, if a topic makes you feel uncomfortable or you do not want to answer any of the questions, just let me know and we’ll move on to the next item. I would rather skip a question than have you feel like you have to provide a response in order to move on with the ASI.”

7. Two timeframes: Past 30 Days and Lifetime.

Inform the client you will be asking about two distinct time periods; the Past 30 Days, and Lifetime. Note the Lifetime period includes the client’s entire life up until 30 days ago. Due to these two timeframes being completely separate, it is possible throughout the ASI for a client to have engaged in a behavior (overdosing on drug) during the past 30 days but NOT in his/her lifetime, and visa versa.

Interviewer Example:

“I will be asking you about two separate time frames. The first is the “Past 30 Days”. For most of these questions I will be asking how many days in the past 30 you have done something. I will also be asking about your “Lifetime”. This time period is completely separate from the past 30 days, and we typically say “Lifetime begins on the 31st day” meaning that when I ask about your Lifetime you should not include any information about your activity in the past 30 days. If you have any questions about what times to include in your responses to any ASI question, feel free to ask during the course of the interview.”

12. Transitioning from ASI Sections

As the focus of the interview proceeds from one area to the next, it is very important for the interviewer to introduce each new section and to change the patient’s focus from the previous area. For example:

“Well I’ve talked with you about your medical problems, now I’m going to ask you some questions about any employment or support problems you may have.”

Thereby the patient will be prepared to concentrate on each of the areas independently. In this regard it is important that the patient not confuse problems in a particular area with difficulties

experienced in another area, such as confusing psychiatric problems with those due directly to the physiological effects of alcohol or drug intoxication.

13. General Instructions

The following set of interviewer instructions are on the face-page of your ASI and are explained more fully here.

INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Leave no blanks.
2. Make plenty of Comments (if another person reads this ASI, they should have a relatively complete picture of the client's perceptions of his/her problems). When noting comments, please write the question number.
3. X = Question not answered.
4. N = Question not applicable.
5. Terminate interview if client misrepresents two or more sections.
6. Half Time Rule!
If a question asks the number of months, round up periods of 14 days or more to 1 month. Round up 6 months or more to 1 year.
7. Hints and clarification notes in the ASI are bulleted "•".

Probe, cross-check and make plenty of comments!

1. Leave No **Blanks!** Code all boxes, for example, if the item asks about number of months and the answer is 1 month; code "01" in the two available boxes.
2. Make plenty of **comments** (another person reading the ASI should have a clear understanding of the client's situation and perceptions of his/her problems). Make sure the intent of each question is clear to the client. Each question need not be asked exactly as written, use paraphrasing and synonyms appropriate to the particular client and record a brief explanation in the "Comments" sections. Remember to include the item number when noting information in the "Comments" sections. Probing and writing comments when you have an unusual or counter-intuitive answer is considered essential for a valid interview.
3. Code an "X" for items that are **not answered** (client can not answer or declines to answer). For example, if a client does not want to answer questions about their relationship with their children; code "X" for those items.
4. Code an "N" for items that are **not applicable**. For example, if a client reports they have not been in a controlled environment in the past 30 days, then the appropriate code for G20: "How many days have you been in a controlled environment?" would be "NN".

5. **End interview** if client misrepresents or cannot comprehend two or more sections.
6. **Half time rule**: If an item asks the number of months, round up periods of 14 days (2 weeks) or more to 1 month. If an item asks about years, round up 6 months or more to 1 year.
7. Hints and clarification notes in the ASI are bulleted "•".

We hope the information provided in this Preface and in the Q by Q itself will be helpful in the use of the interview and in understanding its strengths and limitations. We have made every effort to provide a comprehensive addition to the original instrument and to share our thinking on those points where obviously more than one method could have been used.

