

Conference Facilitator's Script

1. Preamble

"Welcome. As you know, my name is (your name) and I will be facilitating this conference."

Now introduce each conference participant and state his/her relationship to the offender/s or victim/s.

"Thank you all for attending. I know that this is difficult for all of you, but your presence will help us deal with the matter that has brought us together. This is an opportunity for all of you to be involved in repairing the harm that has been done."

"This conference will focus on an incident which happened (state the date, place and nature of offense without elaborating). It is important to understand that we will focus on what (offender name/s) did and how that unacceptable behavior has affected others. We are not here to decide whether (offender name/s) is/are good or bad. We want to explore in what way people have been affected and hopefully work toward repairing the harm that has resulted. Does everyone understand this?"

"(Offender name/s) has/have admitted his/her/their part in the incident."

Say to offender/s: "I must tell you that you do not have to participate in this conference and are free to leave at any time, as is anyone else. If you do leave, the matter may be referred to court/handled by the school disciplinary policy/handled in another way."

"This matter, however, may be finalized if you participate in a positive manner and comply with the conference agreement."

Say to offender/s: "Do you understand?"

2. Offender/s

"We'll start with (one of offenders' names)."

If there is more than one offender, have each respond to all of the following questions.

- "What happened?"
- "What were you thinking about at the time?"
- "What have you thought about since the incident?"
- "Who do you think has been affected by your actions?"
- "How have they been affected?"

3. Victim/s

If there is more than one victim, have each respond to all of the following questions.

- "What was your reaction at the time of the incident?"
- "How do you feel about what happened?"
- "What has been the hardest thing for you?"
- "How did your family and friends react when they heard about the incident?"

4. Victim Supporters

Have each respond to all of the following questions.

- "What did you think when you heard about the incident?"
- "How do you feel about what happened?"
- "What has been the hardest thing for you?"
- "What do you think are the main issues?"

5. Offender Supporters

To parent/caregiver ask: "This has been difficult for you, hasn't it?
Would you like to tell us about it?"

Have each respond to all of the following questions.

- "What did you think when you heard about the incident?"
- "How do you feel about what happened?"
- "What has been the hardest thing for you?"
- "What do you think are the main issues?"

6. Offender/s

Ask the offender/s: "Is there anything you want to say at this time?"

7. Reaching an Agreement

Ask the victim/s: "What would you like from today's conference?"

Ask the offender/s to respond.

At this point, the participants discuss what should be in the final agreement.
Solicit comments from participants.

It is important that you ask the offender/s to respond to each suggestion before the group moves to the next suggestion, asking "What do you think about that?" Then determine that the offender/s agree/s before moving on. Allow for negotiation.

As the agreement develops, clarify each item and make the written document as specific as possible, including details, deadlines and follow-up arrangements.

As you sense that the agreement discussion is drawing to a close, say to the participants:

“Before I prepare the written agreement, I’d like to make sure that I have accurately recorded what has been decided.”

Read the items in the agreement aloud and look to the participants for acknowledgment. Make any necessary corrections.

8. Closing the Conference

“Before I formally close this conference, I would like to provide everyone with a final opportunity to speak. Is there anything anyone wants to say?”

Allow time for participants to respond. When they are done, say:

“Thank you for your contributions in dealing with this difficult matter. Congratulations on the way you have worked through the issues. Please help yourselves to some refreshments while I prepare the agreement.”

Allow participants ample time to have refreshments and interact. The informal period after the formal conference is very important.