



01/06/15

Invitation to be a partner around a ground-breaking tool for child interviews

Linnæus University has developed a groundbreaking training tool that prepares any kind of professional working with children and youth on how to handle regular or sensitive conversations – including when a child might be a victim of violence.

The online tool uses an avatar-based system to achieve an authentic experience and has achieved good results in preliminary tests. The project team foresees that the tool will help countries provide coordinated training across professional groups, thus improving common understanding and case coordination. When completed, the tool will be available for free for non-commercial use.

A prototype of the tool is now ready for testing and the team is looking for partners. Linnæus University develops the tool, while the partners test it and give feedback.

At no cost to you, this is an opportunity to train a handful of professionals in your country for free – who could include teachers, healthcare workers, social workers, investigators, judges, etc. It is also an opportunity to steer the development of this important tool to meet your country's training needs.

Avatar-based Interview training (AB-IT)

Linnæus University is developing the avatar-based interview training tool in order to enhance child-friendly yet professional conversations with children. There are many different types of professionals who must have sensitive conversations with children and adolescents. At present there is little or no opportunity to authentically train professionals on how to have sensitive conversations. This tool, administered online, offers an authentic and effective form of training.

Project advantage

- Cooperation among the authorities dealing with child abuse is important yet time consuming. Those who first meet the child must have the knowledge and confidence to deal with the situation effectively.
- With this internet-based model, it is easy to train professionals who meet with children in their everyday environments.
- Using a "help to self-help" approach, this training can be implemented by many parties. Thus, the model can easily be widely disseminated, which would reduce workloads and promote a significant increase in quality of handling child abuse cases.

- The training model can be used by several different professions and at different levels. For example, teachers can improve their ability to talk to children who they suspect are victims of violence, and social workers or investigators can develop their interview skills. The participant and the instructor adjust the level of training as needed.
- Coordinated interview training for the range of professionals who come in contact with children should result in increased consensus and mutual understanding across professions, thereby improving case coordination.

Project current position

The prototype can be previewed at the following link: <http://tinyurl.com/prototypsamta>. (NOTE: the trainee sees the child on the entire screen). The training model has been developed in collaboration between the Department of Police Education and the Department of Media Technology at Linnaeus University. The prototype has already been used to train social workers with good results.

The project was presented at the conference on Child-friendly Justice, organized by the Council of Europe and Council of Baltic Sea States in Tallinn, 19 February 2015. The presentation received very positive response from the participants. The presentation may be viewed at the following link: <http://tinyurl.com/avatartallin>

Project development

The project is now in a phase of intense development where we are keen to receive feedback to ensure that the tool responds to users' needs. New partners are invited to participate.

Benefits

- Countries involved at an early stage have the possibility, to a greater extent, to affect the alignment of the training model to meet the needs of the country.
- Influencing further development of the model does not require a large time commitment because all development will be done by Linnaeus University.
- Countries should convey their training needs and also which parts of the model have the greatest value.
- Benefits to countries include increased professionalism among many workgroups and a simplified way to train individuals on how handle situations when a child is a suspected victim of violence.

Costs

- Participation in the project is without costs (see project plan 2015 below) and the use of future prototype models will be free. The objective is that the training technology in its finished form will be offered for free for non-commercial use.

Development Plan

A prototype of Avatar-Based Interview Training will be tested at Linnaeus University institutions in autumn 2015. Partners in the project are:

- Department of Education (pedagogy)
- Department of Education (education science)
- Department of Social Work
- Department of Media Technology
- Institute of Police Education
- Karl-Oskar school (years 4-9), Vaxjo

Project plan autumn 2015

Our ambition is to develop this Avatar-Based Interview Training in collaboration with the states around the Baltic / Nordic region. We are therefore looking for partners who want to be involved in this development. We will seek financing on this project through the Swedish Institute.

What do we expect from partners who want to work together on this project?

- Obtain input from professionals such as social workers, teachers, and students from your country to see if the model meets your needs.
- Various professionals try the training technology via the Internet and give feedback on the value and possible improvements.
- A representative from your country attends a conference (travel, accommodation and fees financed by the project) to discuss common goals of the project and ensure that the views of the country and its prospects are known by the project management.

Next steps:

- After this Baltic Sea Region project is completed, a common EU project application will be developed - preferably also including the Baltic Sea Region partners.

Advisor:

- Turid Heiberg, CBSS.
Senior Adviser & Head of the Unit for Children at Risk (CAR)
E-mail: turid.heiberg@cbss.org

Kind regards,

Pär Stihl
Chief Detective Inspector
Project manager
Institute of Police Education
Linnaeus University
+4670 584 70 24
par.stihl@lnu.se
[par.stihl@skype.com](https://www.skype.com/people/par.stihl)