

Child Forensic Interview

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What is a Child Forensic Interview ?

Forensic interview is a formal, structured interview technique, that is used to investigate whether a child has experienced or witnessed physical or sexual abuse and if so, to get disclosure.

If a child discloses ...

... assist the child in providing sufficient narrative detailed information:

- on the nature and extend of the abuse, including those responsible
- sufficient details of the event to allow the CPS or the LE to take appropriate action

The goal of the child forensic interview

to get maximum information

while causing minimum stress and contamination

Child Forensic Interview



- ✓ The importance of a “child friendly” settings
- ✓ Specially designed interview room
- ✓ The specialized interviewer: a psychologist or a similar education
- ✓ NICHD protocol

Forensic vs. Therapeutic Interviewing



- the goal is discovering the truth, the facts
- objective standpoint
- alternative explanations are explored
- obtaining corroborating details is imperative
- establishing the child's competency is a concern
- the way information is acquired is strictly governed
- expression of emotions in a nurturing environment
- advocate who assumes the child is telling the truth
- subjective interpretations accepted
- nonspecific accounts of abuse are sufficient
- the credibility of the child is not questioned
- how information is obtained is not of concern

Interview Stages

- ✓ Introduction
- ✓ Rapport:
 - developmental assessment
 - competence assessment
 - ground rules
- ✓ Transitioning to a topic of concern
- ✓ Detail gathering and corroboration one event at a time
- ✓ Closure

Introduction

- ✓ Interviewer introduce him-/herself and people present
- ✓ Explain the documentation (video/dvd recorded, notes taking)
- ✓ Have child introduce him-/herself; name, age, where they live, with whom, school, grade, friend ..
- ✓ Practice narrative

Rapport building

- ✓ **Developmental assessment**
 - age dependent (time, date, soft/hard, smaller/bigger)
 - body parts inventory
- ✓ **Competence assessment**
 - difference between truth and lie
- ✓ **Ground rules**
 - if I ask you the same question more than once
 - if you don't know the answer
 - if you don't understand the question
 - correct me if I'm wrong

Transitioning to the topic of concern



“Tell me why you are here today talking to me ?”

- ✓ open-ended invitation
- ✓ use the child words
- ✓ followed by focused follow-up questions

“ ... tell me all about that”

“ ... tell me everything about that from the beginning to the end”

Gather details and corroboration



- “did (this) happen one time or more than one time ?”
- focus on one event at a time (last, first, most memorable, worst, etc.)
- who, what, where, how, ... when (young children can't answer that)
- five senses
- what was said
- how it started, how it ended

Corroboration

- computers
- cameras
- phones
- force or coercion
- bribes
- clothing
- other things from the child's narrative

Once you have details on individual events

- be sure to clarify details between different events
- ask any follow up questions necessary for you to understand what happened
- ask the child if there is something you forgot to ask or something else they want to talk about
- transition to closure

Closure

- ✓ maintain trust and rapport with the child
- ✓ neutral topic (cool down)

What makes a good interview



- ✓ Does the interviewer put the child at ease ?
- ✓ Warm and friendly presence
- ✓ Strong presence that shows „you can tell me anything and I can handle it“
 - „tell me ...“ vs. „can you tell me ...“
 - „everything“ vs. „a little bit“
- ✓ Gentle persistence – knowing when to push as well as knowing when to stop
- ✓ Pacing – allowing for silences
- ✓ Use of developmentally appropriate language

There is no such thing as a perfect
interview!

Thank you 😊

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